

A Timeless Decision

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[0:00] Let's open our Bibles this morning to 1 Peter chapter 1.

! Yes, we're still there. 1 Peter chapter 1, and we're going to begin with verse 18. Verse 18, and we'll get to that in just a moment.

But before we do that, I thought it would be good to refresh our memory as to just why Peter wrote this letter, 1 Peter. Sometimes when you're studying a book of the Bible, or teaching through a book, or in my case, preaching through a book of the Bible, it's easy to really focus upon a particular text and lose sight of the entire context or the entire objective of the letter, because everything that Peter writes in this letter is attached in some way or another to his reason for writing.

I've already defined that or described that, but did so several weeks ago, and it'd be good to consider it again, to remind ourselves of it. Peter is writing this letter, or wrote this letter, rather, to Christians.

That's pretty easy, pretty obvious. He wrote to Christians, I believe primarily Gentile Christians, though there were some Jews as well, scattered around a certain region of the world.

[1:40] conceivable that they would be part of churches scattered around that part of the world. And so he's writing to Gentile Christians primarily, who are experiencing persecution, as really all of the first century Christians did experience.

And I think it's safe to say that these Christians were experiencing unimaginable suffering. and persecution as a direct result of their faith in Christ.

And so the Apostle Peter wrote from a deep desire to help them, to help them. And what was his approach?

What was it that Peter wrote here with this in mind to help them in this time of persecution? What was his theme? His subject?

Well, it's interesting. Peter gave them a lesson on theology. That was his approach. Peter greatly desired to help these Christians.

[2:53] They were suffering tremendous persecution. And so he gives them a theology lesson. That's what he does in the opening verses of chapter 1.

And really what we're looking at this morning or going to look at this morning as a continuation of that. He gives them theology, specifically salvation theology.

That's his approach. He reminds them of the glorious details of their great salvation with particular emphasis on its future result or future tense.

We've already discussed all of that. And then he commands them to obey its demands. That's Peter's approach.

Now let me ask you something. Would that work for you? Would that work for you?

[3:52] I mean, just think about it for a moment. You are a suffering Christian. Suffering for Christ. And you're suffering the loss of many things. Loss of liberty. Loss of land.

Loss of loved ones. Loss of life itself. Loss of life itself. And your principal church leader. Your most revered church leader. I mean, after all, this is the Apostle Peter.

He reminds you of your salvation. That's how he seeks to help you. He reminds you of your salvation.

And he commands you to live hopeful lives. To live holy lives. To live God-honoring lives. Would that work for you? See, I'm trying to take the context of our lives.

This American Christian context. And try to impose it back or move it back to the first century. And I ask you again.

[4:56] Would what Peter has been teaching us here in chapter 1. Would that work for you? Well, it should, shouldn't it? Couldn't we admit that?

It should. Should help us. But I am afraid to say, sadly, it most likely would not for most of us here. And we might as well just admit that. And why is that? Because unlike the believers in Peter's day. And by the way, unlike a lot of believers in other parts of the world in our day. Most American Christians living today have never experienced a time where all they had was Jesus. Right? I'm one of you.

I relate to that. There's never been a time in our lives as believers, as American Christians, where we had nothing but Jesus.

[5 : 57] Nothing but our communion with Him. Our relationship with Him. And so, sadly, our theology has devolved into the thinking that our salvation is not all God wants us to have.

That there's more to it. That it's not enough. And in reality, we have bought into the idea that God wants us to have happiness as well.

And God wants us to have material blessing. Now, I doubt very seriously that anyone in this room here this morning, I think I could say this safely. I don't think anyone in this room has bought into a theology of health, wealth, and prosperity.

That somehow salvation is for that. Not any of us would identify ourselves with that kind of theology being propagated very strongly in our world today.

I don't think you'd buy into that. And yet, to some measure, we believe that. That somehow we deserve more.

[6 : 59] And because we're Christians, God wants us to be happy Christians. That is, happy in the sense of happenstance. That all of our happenstance would be good and positive.

And that God wants us to prosper materially. I mean, we really do believe that. Because the minute we suffer the loss of any of those things, right off the bat, we normally think God is mad at us.

Or that somehow we have sinned a certain sin and God is punishing us. Now, think about that. I think if you'll think about that, you'll come to the conclusion that I'm right.

And so it's difficult for us to kind of put ourselves here, immerse ourselves in the culture, in the first century, and to identify with the Christians living in that day.

And therefore, since it's difficult, maybe even to some extent impossible for us to identify with them, it is equally difficult for us to take in what Peter is saying and allow that to mean something to us.

[8 : 12] That he would be identifying and detailing the great features of our salvation. That somehow that is the answer to our sufferings, our points of suffering, our points of persecution, whatever they may be in you, which compared to the first century are quite small, quite minor, really.

It's hard for us to understand it. And so, you know, we ought to admit that there may be coming a day where American Christians will suffer the loss of all the things we hold dear.

There may be coming a day. It may happen in our lifetime where we lose life and liberty in the pursuit of happiness. Those things that we cherish as Americans. Now, they're not bad things. But someday we may suffer the loss of those things.

And the only thing we'll have left is Jesus. Just him. Our relationship with him, which, by the way, would not be such a bad thing for us. Really?

Not that I want that to happen. But let your mind imagine what that would be like. All you have is Jesus.

[9 : 29] Just him. All you have is sweet communion with him. Can you imagine yourself that way? All you have is your salvation in all of its fullness.

Pardon for sin. Adoption into the holy family of God. Communion with Jesus Christ. Hope of heaven. Eternal life with Jesus in heaven.

And that's all you have. And you cherish it, don't you? I mean, if that's all you have. That's what you would cherish that. Because it is your one possession that cannot fade.

It cannot perish. It cannot be lost. It cannot be taken away. It cannot be legislated out of your life. It cannot be lost through imprisonment.

It cannot be lost, certainly, even through death. In fact, we realize the fullness of it through death, don't we? Just imagine yourself there.

[10 : 33] Let your mind imagine that reality. And then you will be able to place yourself, possibly, in the shoes of the first century Christians, those to whom Peter was writing.

And you will agree with Peter's approach. And you will begin to understand Peter's method of encouraging these persecuted believers through giving them the details of their salvation.

Their redemption. But you know, if we bring ourselves back to our world, what Peter said to them is just as valid for us.

Or should be. And his commands, based on our great salvation, are to be obeyed by us.

Persecution notwithstanding.

There are certain demands our salvation places upon us, including this one that we've been looking at for a couple of Sundays. And that is to, verse 17, conduct yourselves.

[11:39] In this short time you're here as a stranger. Conduct yourselves in fear. Conduct in fear. That is a command. And so we've been discussing that.

The concept of fear. We have been looking at the context of fear. We have already looked at the conduct of fear because this is all about conduct.

Not just talking about an attitude of fear, but a conduct of fear. And last Sunday we started to look at the content of fear. And what is the content of our fear?

What is the content of it? What is the substance of it? That is, is there any basis for conducting our lives in the fear of God, other than, of course, just the mere command to do so?

Is there any basis for that? The issue here is one of motivation, isn't it? Motivation. Motivation. And God, as I have already introduced to you last Sunday, starting last Sunday, God has provided two very strong motivations for living our lives in the fear of God.

[12:48] In awe of God. In hopeful reverence of God. He gives us two, has given us two motivations. The first one we looked at last Sunday, we fear God because of who He is to us.

That's number one. We found that in verse 17. And who is He? Who is He to us? Well, Peter tells us that He is loving Father and just judge.

He is both of those things at the same time. Number two, and this will be our focus this morning and however long it takes.

Because it's such a huge subject. And we can just barely scratch the surface of it. We fear God because of what He has done for us.

We fear God because of what He has done for us. And what has He done for us? Well, according to Peter, He has redeemed us with the blood of His Son.

[13:57] That's what He's saying here, starting with verse 18. Let's read it and see how He spells this out for us. 1 Peter chapter 1, starting with verse 18.

Knowing. Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory so that your faith and hope are in God.

A tremendous passage of Scripture. Now let's get right into it. According to verse 18, and we're dealing with this command, conduct yourselves in fear.

According to verse 18, we are to conduct ourselves, our lives, our behavior, is to be in keeping with fear. That is, we are to fear God. We're to conduct ourselves in fear because we know something.

[15:16] That's what he says. We're to conduct ourselves in fear because we know something. Know something.

Peter said, knowing. And then he introduces this tremendous statement or tremendous statement of the theology of redemption. We conduct ourselves in fear knowing something.

And the word, the particular word he used there, translated knowing, is the word that means to have a full knowledge of it. So much so that we are sure of it.

So full is this knowledge. Not necessarily full in the details of it because we're going to continue to learn all the details of our great redemption in Christ even after we leave this world.

Not full in the details, but full in the sense of it's intuitive. It's almost intuitive to us. That's the word that Peter selected that we have translated knowing. Full knowledge.

[16:20] Sure knowledge. Now, what is it, according to Peter, Christians know for sure or ought to know? What is it? That we have been redeemed.

That's the knowledge. That we have been redeemed. We as Christians have been redeemed. Now, if that doesn't ring your bell, to use kind of a colloquialism, then maybe it is because you don't understand the word redeemed.

It's a tremendous theological word. It really is. And I know that's not too exciting. But it hasn't always been a theological word.

All of the great words of the faith, the great theological doctrinal words of the faith, began with secular usages. And that's the case with the word redeemed.

In fact, the word redeemed, and this is why we have a hard time understanding it, the full implications of it, the word redeemed or redemption takes us all the way back to the slave block.

[17 : 30] And maybe you could imagine yourself there. You're a slave. And you can kind of see the whole scene there.

Imagine that in your minds. We've seen movies. We've seen what they may have looked like. And so you have the auctioneer there and have a crowd of people who have gathered potential masters or masters of slaves already.

And they've come with money in their pockets. And they've come to purchase some slaves. And so you're one. And you're standing there. And the auctioneer has just described all of your admirable features.

That is in the sense of being a good slave. You know, here's, he's strong. He can do hard work. He has stamina. He can work all day without complaining. Maybe.

Good looking guy. Comes from great stock. Mentally, he can do some good work for you. I mean, just look at this man.

[18 : 35] He's standing there. You're going to want to pay a lot for this when he's going to be a good slave. And so who will start the bidding? And so over here, there's \$100. \$200, \$300, \$500 for this slave.

And the bidding commences. And then finally at the back of the crowd, let's say, just as we're imagining, someone yells out, \$1,000. And the auctioneer says, Sold!

To the man for \$1,000. And so he comes forward and lays down his money. And there you are with chains, in chains, and he leads you away.

You now belong to this new master for \$1,000. And he paid the price for you. And then to your amazement, as you move away from the crowd and away from the slave block, the master turns to you, your new master, and he says to you face to face, he says, I have bought you.

You now belong to me. You're my property. To do with as I wish. And then to your amazement, he pulls the key out of his pocket and he unlocks your chains and your chains fall to the ground.

[20 : 03] And you look at him in wonder and he says to you, you're now free. I set you free. Do you know what he's just done for you?

He has redeemed you. Paid the price for your freedom. In fact, there are people today, missionaries and other organizations who come into countries, those countries that still have slavery today, still have auction blocks, slavery auction blocks today.

And from resources, possibly here in the United States, money is pooled and money is paid to free slaves for purposes of evangelism and benevolence.

There are those who do that today. Traveling into countries and pay the prices and free slaves. The difference is that in those instances, those slaves that are now free are not really guaranteed that their freedom will last.

They may be captured again. They may be enslaved again. But with our redemption, the price paid by our Savior, our Redeemer, we're freed forever.

[21 : 39] Redemption. This is what Peter's talking about. This is what he says you know. Even if you have not considered it of late, even if it's been a season since you have considered your redemption, worshiped the Lord because he bought you with a price.

He freed you from the slavery of sin and condemnation, and he has set you free. Even if you have not considered it, Peter is saying, this is something you know.

You know this, don't you? You've been redeemed. So conduct yourself in fear. That's the idea here. Now he says more about it, but this is the basic idea.

It's as simple as that. And so what I want us to do starting this morning, and we'll just barely scratch the surface today, say, I want us to trace this redemption, this plan, God's purposes and plan of redemption.

Trace it all the way back to its beginning point and trace it all the way through to its ultimate objective.

[23:01] The fruit of redemption. We trace the whole thing. Is it possible to do that? Is it possible in the first place to trace it all the way back to its beginning? That's what we're going to do this morning.

Peter does. Just with a few words. He traces our redemption all the way back to its beginning. Is it possible to do that?

Someone has said or described it this way in order to trace redemption, our redemption. We first have to go all the way back to the cross, don't we?

And that's where we would naturally go first. We would go to the cross and we would stand there and look at that cross and see the Lord Jesus Christ hanging upon that cross with nails pierced through His hands and through His feet and the spear in His side and the blood that has been shed and know that our redemption has been paid by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

To trace redemption, you would have to go back to the cross. But I would have you consider that we need to go back further than that. It didn't begin at the cross.

[24:11] God's plan, God's purposes. We'd have to go all the way back through the Old Testament. All the way back through the hundreds of years of the sacrificial system where every year, year after year, lambs are slain and blood is shed for the atonement, for atonement, for the people's sin, for their sin.

We'd have to go back through the Old Testament sacrificial system and then we'd have to go back even further. I think we could go back to the land of Egypt and see God's people Israel in bondage there in Egypt.

A type of the bondage of sin that all unbelievers are in. All of us were in at one time. We go back to Egypt and see how God delivered, redeemed His people out of the bondage of Egypt.

And they did so with each family sacrificing a lamb and taking the blood and striking it on the doorposts of their homes. And so that when God came down to kill the firstborn when He saw the blood, He would pass over them.

And He redeemed them. He delivered them. He ransomed them out of Egypt by the blood of a lamb. So we have the Lamb of God dying upon the cross and we go back to the Lamb slain there in Egypt and we go back to the Garden of Eden and see how Adam and Eve who sinned, our parents who sinned, and they were out of fellowship with God and they were guilty of their sin and God sacrificed some animals.

[25:45] I think they were lambs and shed the blood of those animals so that their sins could be forgiven. But even then we'd have to go back further.

Go back through the eons of time and see the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world and go to the very throne of God and crawl up into His lap and place our ear against His chest and listen to a heartbeat for a people He had not yet created.

And even if we could do that we would have to admit who's sufficient for these things. Can we trace it? Can we really?

Maybe not every detail. And it's shrouded in much mystery. And the mystery of godliness for great is the mystery of godliness. Can we trace it?

Can we go back? Where and when did it begin our salvation? Well, according to the Apostle Peter the plan of redemption began with a timeless decision.

[27:13] That's number one. It began with a timeless decision. And that's our focus for the remainder of our time.

So there's something you know. That's what Peter says. You conduct yourselves in awe of God and fear of God and hopeful reverence of God because you know something.

You know you've been redeemed. And you know because of what Peter said that it began with a timeless decision. A timeless decision.

Would you look at verse 20 again? I'm going to begin with verse 20 and take these verses out of order really. Because I want us to consider tracing redemption in a chronological order in some sense.

And so we'll begin with verse 20. Where Peter says he that Christ Christ from verse 19 Christ a lamb without blemish without spot he Christ indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last times for you.

[28:38] Now I want you to pay close attention first of all to that phrase foreordained before the foundation of the world. Now pay attention to that phrase.

Let me say it again. You see it there in your Bibles. New King James version translated foreordained before the foundation of the world. That one phrase dear people that one phrase represents an incredible theological truth about our salvation.

A truth worthy of our highest praise. Foreordained before the foundation of the world. Speaking of Christ and His coming and His redemptive work there upon that cross was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

Now what does all that mean? I mean really. What does it mean? Well listen I really think before we consider what it means we need to look at one other thing first.

Before we consider what it means foreordained before the foundation of the world and manifest in these last times we need to consider the last two words of that sentence and then we'll get back to this phrase.

[29 : 58] Do you see the two words? That is in my translation it's two words. By the way in the original Greek these are the last two words of the sentence as well.

What are they? Last two words of verse 20. For you. Pretty small words aren't they?

For you. And dear people before we grasp the gravity weight of anything that Peter says in this particular text regarding redemption before we delve into the meaning of foreordained before the foundation of the world manifested in these last times before we get a hold of that we need to understand that it is applied to you.

He did that for you. For the sake of you. In your behalf. This is a great great truth.

The truth of verse 2 or verse 20 rather indeed the entire text here pertains first of all in the immediate sense to the Gentile Christians and some of them Jews who were being persecuted these Gentiles to whom Peter addressed first but it also the truth here also pertains to all blood-bought children of God for you.

[31 : 33] Now get that squarely in your mind as you consider what else Peter says about this redemption not only what we're going to look at today but in the weeks to come for you.

You got that for you. For your sake. In your behalf. And so let's then quickly pick this apart. First notice the word foreordained.

Foreordained. Some translations have the word foreknown. And that would be a strict translation. Foreknown. Know something in advance.

Before knowledge. Now Peter has already used this word in this letter. Do you remember back there in verse 2? We've already seen it.

Seen this word here. Look at it. Verse 2 chapter 1. Elect or chosen. Some translations have that word up in verse 1.

[32 : 40] according to the what? Foreknowledge of God the Father. Foreknowledge.

Same word. Now I grant you here in the New King James Bible and some other translations the word foreknowledge knowledge is translated that way when you get over here to verse 20.

foreknow. But the idea here is not that God simply knew certain things before they happened. It's much more than that.

The idea here is that God predetermined certain things. That God in His own counsel and for His own glory He ordained certain things.

that's why the translators of the King James and also now the New King James translated foreordained because that's the idea here. When it came to Jesus the Son of God leaving the halls of heaven coming to this earth taking on human flesh living and dying upon a cross to pay the supreme sacrifice for our sin in effect purchasing with His own blood our freedom our redemption when it came to all of that God foreordained that in eternity past.

[34 : 11] God did not look down through the eons of time and see that Jesus would do that. He decreed it that He would be our sacrifice that He would pay that price.

Do you understand? Foreordained before the foundation of the world. I want you to look at a passage in Acts chapter 2.

Acts chapter 2 this is on the day of Pentecost and this is kind of the opening the introduction to Peter's sermon a sermon that would culminate with thousands of people coming repenting and coming to Christ in faith and his subject matter is Jesus that's his subject that's a good subject to have specifically the cross his crucifixion and in verse 22 would you notice Acts chapter 2 verse 22 he says men of Israel hear these words Jesus of Nazareth that that identifies the person he's talking about they knew who this guy was Jesus of Nazareth a man attested by God to you by miracles

wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst as you yourselves also know he's identifying who he's talking about here this the

Christ the Messiah is none other than Jesus of Nazareth and it was confirmed by miracles wonders and signs and so forth and he says you know this you yourselves know verse 23 him being delivered by the predetermined purpose and for knowledge there's our word again and for knowledge of God you have taken by lawless hands have crucified and put to death I want you to pay attention to a couple of terms here words here predetermined purpose it is the word in the Greek from which we get our word horizon and the idea here the meaning is that God defined the boundaries the horizon that is he decreed the coming of Messiah he decreed that that was his purpose his predetermined counsel or purpose or plan and it was something he foreordained and so you put that all together

God decreed his plan of redemption to be accomplished through his son the Lord Jesus Christ and God did that for you in eternity past I'm jumping ahead because then we need to move there from foreordained to the next phrase and so the question is when did he ordain that Christ would be our redeemer when did he do that did he do that after the world was created and after he created Adam and Eve and they were living along there in the garden everything was great and he walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day every morning and they had sweet and wonderful communion with him and then one day they messed up and sinned and so God says I've got to do something about this Jesus would you one day come and be their redeemer no that's not the way it happened when did God ordain that Christ should redeem his saints when not according to

[38:03] Coleman according to Peter before the foundation of the world that is in the timeless eons of eternity past when was that you define eternity for me in the timeless eons that's really redundant and contradictory in timeless eternity past before sometime before God according to Peter laid the foundation of the world word foundation means to throw down really a very vivid picture for God threw down the world world is the word cosmos it's not just this planet but the entire universe all creation sometime in eternity past sometime back there before

God cast out into space all of the universe all of creation before he did that God saw that mankind would fall in sin he saw it they would fall into the slavery of sin they would fall into the condemnation of sin and God made two decisions two choices he chose to redeem to purchase their freedom the freedom of a people for himself he chose to purchase to redeem a people for his own personal possession for his own glory he chose that in

Ephesians chapter one verse four he chose us in him that is in Christ before the foundation of the world that's that phrase again only Paul is using it this time before he cast out cast down cast forth all creation before he did that that we should be holy and blameless without blame before him in love that we should be separated people for his own possession in love and holiness before the foundation of the world he made two choices to redeem to choose to redeem a people for himself and secondly he chose a redeemer within the God head within the counsels of God a redeemer was chosen the only one who could do it the only one that could pay the price necessary to satisfy a holy God a just God the only one who could do it he chose a redeemer and first

Peter chapter 1 verse 19 tells us who it was we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ who whom God foreordained foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last times so we're talking here about our redemption a timeless decision made in eons past before God cast down threw down all of creation and even the creation of mankind and God saw the fall and he chose to redeem out of the human race of people for himself and he chose a redeemer and he foreordained that he would come and Jesus did come he was manifest in these last times for you for you that takes us to the cross takes us to the cross to

Calvary where Jesus is hanging and dying upon that cross he see this is God's plan the plan of redemption that was a timeless decision and it's manifest for us right now for you the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is for you blessed redeemed precious redeemed seems now I see him on Calvary's tree what do I see wounded and bleeding for sinners pleading blind and unheeding dying do you see him

[43:48] Thank you.