

CHERISH THE BIBLE

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been chosen [by God] and who are refugees of the Dispersion, [residing] in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia—²[chosen] in accordance with the foreknowledge of God the Father [and set apart] by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit for obedience, that is, by the sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (1 Pet. 1:1-2)

5 ¹²By Silvanus, the faithful brother (so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. ¹³She who is in Babylon, chosen along with you, greets you; and so does my son Mark. ¹⁴Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. (1 Pet. 5:12-14)

A note on the Scripture text that accompanies each individual message: The *American Standard Version* and the *New International Version*, along with the original Greek and Hebrew, have been used in an effort to achieve the greatest degree of accuracy and clarity. Where words or phrases have been added to the original text in an effort to better express its meaning, those words or phrases have usually been indicated by means of [brackets].

Introduction

Back in the 14th century, a copy of the Bible cost the equivalent of \$2000 in modern currency. The Gutenberg Bible printed in the year 1455 cost \$500. In the 17th century a Bible cost \$100; by 1925 the cost of a Bible was down to \$3 (*Wheaton Alumni*, Autumn, 1994, p. 7)

Does this mean that the Bible has become cheap? God forbid! May it ever continue to be very precious, only now a lot more accessible; consequently, may it be cherished by many more people. The Bible has become very inexpensive. But may we never think that it has become cheap. May we receive it and cherish it as a precious letter from God.

Suppose you have been drafted into the armed service. You are sent overseas to a dangerous war zone, half a world away from home; there you receive a letter from your father, expressing his love, giving you valuable counsel, and anticipating your safe return home. You would not throw away such a letter as that; you would keep it, reread it, cherish it—let us do the same with the Bible. Let us cherish the Bible, because through it the Lord communicates His loving concern for us.

I. Cherish the Bible, ...Because It Comes from God

Peter is the human author of this epistle, but he is writing as “*an apostle of Jesus Christ.*”

Consider the role of an apostle: First, an apostle was personally commissioned by Christ to be His ambassador, His spokesman, and one through whom Christ Himself speaks. The Lord Jesus, with reference to His chosen apostles, declares: *“I tell you the truth, a servant is not greater than his master; neither is **a messenger** [literally, **an apostle**] greater than the one who sent him ... ²⁰I tell you the truth, whoever receives anyone whom I send is receiving me; and whoever receives me is receiving the one who sent me”* (Jn. 13:16,20.) The Apostle Paul testifies, *“In the sight of God we speak by Christ”* (2 Cor. 12:19,) and again he testifies, *“Christ ... speaks by me”* (2 Cor. 13:3.)

Second, the apostles were anointed with the Holy Spirit to communicate the Word of God. Just prior to His arrest and passion, the Lord Jesus made this promise to His disciples, who were called to be His apostles: *“the Counselor whom the Father will send in my name—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you all things and remind you of everything that I said to you”* (Jn. 14:26.) He also made this further promise: *“when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak of his own accord; on the contrary, he will [only] declare the things he hears, and he will reveal to you the things that are still to come”* (Jn. 16:13.) Following His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples/apostles and bestowed upon them the Holy Spirit: *“Again Jesus said to them, ‘Peace be with you. Just as the Father has sent me, so now I am sending you.’ ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’”* (Jn. 20:21-22.)

Third, the apostles were empowered by the Lord to do miraculous works that served as their “apostolic credentials.” The writer of the Book of Hebrews reminds his readers of this apostolic empowerment: *“This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. ⁴God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will”* (Heb. 2:3b-4.)

Fourth, the New Testament apostles are identified with the Old Testament prophets as being God’s spokesmen through whom He communicates His Word. Peter informs us that the Spirit of Christ was in the Old Testament prophets:

*“With regard to this salvation, **the prophets**, who prophesied about the grace that has come to you, searched diligently and with the greatest care. ¹¹They were trying to find out the time and circumstances **the Spirit of Christ** (who **was in them**) was indicating when he foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.”* (1 Pet. 1:10-11)

Revelation 10 informs us that the Lord declared the gospel by His servants the prophets, and the prophets in turn exhort John (as an apostle) that he must *“prophesy again”*—i.e.; he, as a New Testament apostle, must continue the God-given ministry initially entrusted to the Old Testament prophets:

But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets ... ¹¹Then they [the Old Testament prophets] said me, You must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and languages and kings. (Rev. 10:7,11)

The writings of the New Testament apostles are placed along side of those of the Old Testament prophets, together forming sacred Scripture, as is seen by Peter's testimony concerning the writings of his fellow apostle, Paul:

Recognize that the great patience of our Lord is [intended for] salvation, just as our beloved brother, Paul, also wrote to you, in accordance with the wisdom given to him. ¹⁶Just as in all his letters he speaks about these things. In [his letters] there are things that are difficult to understand, which those who are ignorant and unstable distort, just as they do the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Pet. 3:15-16)

In summary, consider the testimony of the Apostle Paul:

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. (1 Thess. 2:13)

Let us cherish the Bible, because it comes from God:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

II. Cherish the Bible, ...Because It is Addressed to You

As a Christian, you are identified as one of those "*who have been chosen [by God]*" (vs. 1.) By way of illustration: When a nation has an election, they choose a man to serve in public office; that man does not merely claim the office on his own initiative, he is given that position by those who have elected him. Likewise, the Scriptures teach that God redeems those whom He has sovereignly chosen to save out of the fallen race of humanity, and those whom He has elected He brings to Christ—in the matter of salvation, as in everything else, it is God who has the first and the last word. The Apostle Paul presents this truth to the Thessalonian Christians:

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴He called you to this through our

gospel, so that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 2:13-14)

As a Christian, you have been chosen *“in accordance with the foreknowledge of God the Father”* (vs. 2.) Again, by way of illustration: When a candidate runs for public office, he puts his name up for election; he tells the voters of his qualifications, he spends much money, time, and effort in campaigning, seeking to convince the public to vote for him. But in striking contrast to a political election, your spiritual election as a Christian is **not** because of any personal qualifications, but solely because of the grace of God. You were not chosen because you were good: *“as it is written, ‘There is none righteous, no, not one’ ...²³for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:10,23.) You were not chosen because you had potential; by nature, we were spiritually dead: *“[he raised] you also, when you were dead in your transgressions and sins”* (Eph. 2:1.) You were not chosen because you would exercise faith; saving faith itself is a gift of God: *“And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed”* (Acts 13:48.) Note that the text does not say, “as many as believed were ordained to eternal life.” Faith itself is the gift of God:

It is by grace that you have been saved through faith—and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹it is not of works, therefore no one can boast.¹⁰We are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance in order for us to walk in them. (Eph. 2:8-10)

You were chosen *“in accordance with the foreknowledge of God the Father.”* *“Foreknowledge”* is not only referring to God’s intellectual knowledge as to whom He intended to redeem, it is also referring to the fatherly love that moved Him to redeem us: *“In love⁵he predestined us to be his adopted sons through Jesus Christ, by his own will and desire”* (Eph. 1:4b-5.) God the Father loved us long before there was anything loveable about us, note the testimony of Romans 5:8, *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Note: In one sense, God, as a good God and loving Creator, looks down upon His entire creation with an attitude of love, compassion, pity; but Scripture also teaches that God has singled out those whom He has sovereignly chosen to redeem, because they are the objects of His fatherly love. By way of illustration: The love you have for something you have made is genuine, but the love you have for the children you have fathered or adopted is in a class by itself.

As a Christian, you are further identified as *“a refugee”* (in this present world.) The Greek word translated *“refugees”* (παρεπίδημος) has the meaning, “temporary resident;” literally, it means, “someone beside the public assembly,” as opposed to one who is a citizen and member of the assembly. Note: Peter is writing to Jewish and Gentile Christians who were residents of what is present day Turkey, many of whom were no doubt born there—yet he identifies them as

“refugees,” “spiritual sojourners,” “temporary residents.” In what sense are you as a Christian, a “spiritual refugee” in this present world? We understand what Peter is referring to when we contrast such a passage as Revelation 3:10 with Philippians 3:20. In Revelation 3:10 the people of this world, those who are in their natural state of sin and without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, are identified as those *“who dwell (κατοικέω) upon the earth”*—those for whom this present world and this present life is their “home,” the place to which they belong, as opposed to having a home in the kingdom of God—the Greek word means “to inhabit, to settle, to make a home.” In Philippians 3:20, the Apostle Paul identifies the Christian in these terms: *“our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

We tend to develop deep ties to this present world, especially to the place of our birth or longtime residence. But Peter is reminding us that as Christians we need to develop a different perspective: we must view ourselves as sojourners and even as “spiritual refugees” in this present world, note Colossians 3:1-4,

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things; ³for you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:1-4)

Even if you were born and raised in the community where you presently reside, view yourself as a sojourner, one whose primary citizenship is in heaven, one who is only temporarily residing in this earthly community. What kind of impact will this new and corrected perspective have on your daily life and decisions?

As Christians, we have been *“set apart by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit for obedience, that is, by the sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ”* (vs. 2.) One of the ultimate purposes of our redemption is *“obedience,”* as the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:29, *“those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”* The means by which our salvation is accomplished is *“sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ.”* That is to say, by faith, participating in Christ’s death so that we may also participate in His resurrection life, a life He lives unto God. The doctrine Peter presents here in abbreviated form, the Apostle Paul presents more fully in such a passage as Romans 6:3-4,

... do you not know that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:3-4)

The water of baptism symbolizes the sprinkling with the blood of Christ, indicating our relationship with Christ in His death: He not only died in our

place, we were also united with Him in His death. Being spiritually joined with Christ in His death, we are also joined with Him in His resurrection life, a life lived in obedience to God in the presence of God, as Paul writes in Romans 6:10, *“the life he [Christ] lives, he lives unto God.”*

Let us cherish the Bible, because it is especially addressed to us as Christians—addressed to us as beloved children of God who find ourselves living as “spiritual refugees” in this present world. Note: The Lord desires the word of the gospel to be preached to all men so that they may hear of the way of salvation and receive the Savior; but in a special way the Bible is addressed to the community of believers and is for our benefit—the word of the heavenly Father addressed to His beloved children in Christ Jesus whom He has redeemed for holy fellowship with Himself.

III. Cherish the Bible, ...Because of What It Communicates to You

Writing as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter desires to communicate the grace and peace of God to these Christian people (vs. 2)—and the Holy Spirit desires to communicate these spiritual blessings to all who read and receive the Word of God. *“Grace,”* as used here by the Apostle Peter, includes all those godly resources of spiritual strength, guidance, and blessing.

In the closing verses of this epistle the Apostle Peter speaks in more specific terms as to why he has written to these Christians:

By Silvanus, the faithful brother (so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. ¹³She who is in Babylon, chosen along with you, greets you; and so does my son Mark. ¹⁴Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. (1 Pet. 5:12-14)

Peter’s intention is to give these Christians further assurance and confirmation that what the apostles have communicated to the churches is *“the true grace of God.”* Here is true spiritual life and blessing, which cannot be found any place else. Note John 6:67-69, where Peter testifies, *“Lord, to whom [else] shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have believed and know that you are the Holy One of God.”* Peter’s further purpose is to exhort these Christian people to *“stand firm”* in the Lord Jesus and in grace (the spiritual life) He ministers.

Let us cherish the Bible, because of what it communicates to us: the true grace of God—the true spiritual life and blessing that can be found nowhere else.

Conclusion

Over the course of the centuries the Bible has become far less expensive, far more affordable. But may the Bible never become cheap—may it never be viewed as something that is insignificant and of little value to us! May we increasingly cherish the Bible for what it is: the very Word of God being communicated to us, His children in Christ, for our assurance and exhortation.