

Alton Baptist Church e-Service 4th July 2021

Praise God for a living hope

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You that whether we are in the church building together or thinking about You alone, You are with us and hear our prayers. Help us to know You as You know us, and to love You as you Love us. We pray that this time spent in Your presence may be pleasing to You and a blessing for us.

Amen

Reading: 1 Peter 1:1-2 *A greeting to strangers in the world*

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To God's elect, strangers in the world {exiles}, scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling with his blood:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Song: It's Your blood that cleanses me –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLoXae0kQQI>

Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9 *Praise to God for a living hope*

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and

honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Song: Because He lives –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPW9xYEyijQ>

Prayers - In your own words just praise and thank Jesus. Praise Him, for who He is, for what He is, for what He has done. Confess your need of forgiveness. Acknowledge the price Jesus paid; so that justice might be served, yet our sins forgiven. He died that we might live.

Song: Holy, holy, holy –

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzM9P_Gqw-s

Prayers of Praise, Thanks and Intercession

Pray as you feel led.

Readings: 1 Peter 1:13-23 *Be holy*

¹³ Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'

¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live out your time as strangers here in reverent fear. ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

²² Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. ²³ For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

Some Thoughts:

Strangers in the world

We are starting a series of services based on the 1st letter of Peter. He was writing to mainly Jewish Christians driven out of Jerusalem and scattered throughout Asia Minor. It was a time when Christians were being tortured and killed for their faith. Peter was executed not long after writing his letter.

In addressing the letter to 'strangers in the world' he may be referring to the fact that most of them were Jewish exiles. But some would have been local believers. However as Christians they would have become strangers to the pagan culture in which they lived. Many were cruelly executed because they refused to worship the gods of their Roman overlords or bow to Caesar as god.

We as modern day Christians should also be 'strangers in the world' and not bow to the 'gods' of the culture in which we live. This means that we should see things differently to our fellow citizens. We should have a Christian worldview, which will be in conflict with the secular worldview.

It is very likely that we will face increasing persecution as these differences become more marked, in our increasingly anti-Christian society.

If you are not in disagreement with much of modern culture, you need to question whether you really are a Christian.

New birth – Born again

In verse three of our reading we see that God has given us new birth.

1 Peter 1:3-4

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you

It is this new birth that gives us new citizenship. We become citizens of God's kingdom in heaven. Not because of some earthly legal arrangement, but by inheritance due to our being born into His kingdom. We are, in fact, described as children of God.

1 John 3:1

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

John says the world does not know us, because it does not know Jesus. So there is a great division between believers and unbelievers. Born-again believers are citizens of a different kingdom. A kingdom that is at war with the earthly kingdom ruled by Satan and his demons.

Praise the Lord that we can know the joy of being citizens of God's kingdom, even if we have to suffer grief and trials here on earth.

A living hope

We have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is the fact that Jesus rose from the dead that is our hope. We believe His promise that He is coming back for us.

1 Peter 1:13-16

¹³Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'

As we await his coming, Peter advises us not to conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. If you don't recall such evil desires, take it to mean your thoughts when you were under the culture of the earthly kingdom before you were born-again and entered the heavenly kingdom.

How do we distinguish between members of these warring kingdoms? Those in God's kingdom are called to be holy.

Being holy is easier said than done. It should be our ambition and we should seek God's help and the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit to transform us into model citizens. For all of us, the transformation will not be complete until after Jesus comes and we are taken physically into His kingdom. That will be at the rapture, when the dead in Christ will arise and be followed by those still alive at the time.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Song: Christ is surely coming

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuN3nMM_ZGE

Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us now and always.

AMEN

If anyone has any questions about what it means to be born-again or how to be born-again, please ask or send an email to

contact@altonbaptist.org