

A Honorable and Privileged Faith

We are told that on the day of Pentecost, the early church was formed. You can find that in Acts 2:1 where we are told,

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Acts 2:1 (NASB)

In verse 2 we are told that while the apostles were in a house, they heard an incredible noise, like a violent rushing wind that came into the house. I was wondering what would it be like with a group of twelve people in my house to all of a sudden experience a rushing wind from heaven. It makes a great noise, and verse 3 tells us there were tongues of fire on their heads. We are not sure what that means.

The Gospel is Preached and People Believe. Verse 4 says,

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit . . . Acts 2:4 (NASB)

The early church began with the anointing of the Spirit on the apostles.

Verse 14 tells us that Peter started to preach.

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk . . .” Acts 2:14-15 (NASB)

Most of us are familiar with this passage. He quoted from Joel 2 to explain what was happening to them. The apostles were anointed by the Spirit. Then he started to present the Gospel in verse 22.

In 22, Peter said,

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know — Acts 2:22 (NASB)



When he said, “You yourselves know,” he meant this massive crowd of 3,000 people had a lot of information about Jesus. In verses 23-24, Peter added,

. . . this Man, delivered over by the prede-

termined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

That is the core message of the Gospel. Then in verse 25 he added,

For David says of Him, ‘I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRES-

ENCE;
Acts 2:25 (NASB)

Then in verse 27, he makes the comment,

**BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL
TO HADES,
NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO
DECAY.
Acts 2:27 (NASB)**

The key statement is “you will not allow your Holy One to undergo decay.” Now why did he say that? The answer is, Peter had just reminded the crowd that Jesus did miracles, wonders, and signs. In verses 23-24, Peter said He died on a cross and was raised from the dead. Then he referred to the Old Testament prophecy that the Christ, the Messiah, would come back to life.

Jumping to verse 29 Peter said,

Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. Acts 2:29-31 (NASB)

What did Peter tell the crowd? Peter told the crowd that David died, but God told David that one of his descendants would again sit on David’s throne. Who is that person? Verse 31 says He would be the resurrected Christ, and He would not be abandoned to Hades. His flesh would not undergo decay. That means that he would not be in the grave very long. This is a fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy about the resurrection of Christ. This is really terrific.

Verse 32 adds,

This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Acts 2:32 (NASB)

So Peter presented the Gospel and what happened?

Verse 37 gives us the answer,

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Acts 2:37 (NASB)

They heard and believed! Then verse 38 gives Peter’s response.

Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 (NASB)

Now I know some groups get excited about the fact that Peter said repent and be baptized. They teach that baptism is how a person is saved. But these men had already believed. Repentance is the response you should have to sin and baptism is an identification that you are dying to yourself and are committing yourself to Christ—the testimony that you believe in Christ. You are giving your life to Christ. That is all that Peter was talking about. So, a group of people came to faith. Next, look at verse 41,

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. Acts 2:41 (NASB)

If you were to look at Acts 4:4, you find five thousand more people come to faith later. In a very short period of time, there were 8,000 Christians in the early church.

In Acts 2:42 we read,

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42 (NASB)

So what were they doing? They were spending time together,

listening to the teaching of the apostles. They were having fellowship with one another. The breaking of bread just means that they were having meals together. People often think that means a communion or Lord's Supper service. If we look at Luke 24:28-35, we find that it says that they broke bread; but it is obvious that they were actually having a meal. So, this is a meal as opposed to having communion or the Lord's supper. They are committed to prayer.

So, what happened? These early Christians were fellowshiping together. They are bonded together. I could not help but think about what Scripture teaches about the body of Christ. There is only one body. There is one faith. There is one Lord and one baptism.

That is the message of Scripture. There is not one body at one church, another body at another church, and thousands upon thousands at churches around the world. There is just one body called the body of Christ. The early church was listening to the apostles teaching. They were eating together. They were having prayer together. It was really special how they bonded together. In 1 John 1:1, the apostle John wrote this,

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life . . . 1 John 1:1 (NASB)

Stop and think about that. He said, "What we have heard." Who did they hear? Christ. Then he said, "Our eyes have looked at." What did their eyes see? Christ. I cannot help but believe that John was thinking about a time that he had touched Christ. Maybe he was thinking about the time he leaned on Christ's chest.

. . . and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us . . . 1 John 1:2 (NASB)

John refers to Jesus as eternal Life. Jesus is eternal life that "was manifested to us— what we have seen and heard we pro-

claim to you."

True Fellowship is Found in Jesus. Now watch what he said in verse 3,

. . . what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. . . . 1 John 1:3 (NASB)

The early church had fellowship together as in Acts 2:42. Here John is talking about fellowship. But he makes the point that we only have fellowship in the Father. We only have fellowship in Christ. If you are not part of the body of Christ, you cannot have real fellowship. You might have a social time with someone. You can share a meal. But you are not really going to have fellowship in the truest sense. Fellowship is only possible if you are a Christian. John is thinking about this when he said,

. . . so that our joy may be made complete. 1 John 1:4 (NASB)

In other words, the only way you can have fellowship with other Christians is when you are connected with Christ. People must have faith in Jesus Christ to have fellowship with one another. Then in verses 5 - 9, the apostle John talks about the marks of a real Christian. He makes the point that a true Christian is one who commits sins, confesses their sins, and continually struggles in their battle against sin in order not to sin. In 1 John 3:7-8, he talks about the fact that those who practice righteousness are believers,

Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous . . . 1 John 3:7 (NASB)

The pattern of life for a Christian is one of righteousness. So this is how it is in the body of Christ. The body of Christ comes together, fellowships with one another, and pursues holiness. We are pursuing righteousness and we are doing it together. The rest of the world does not care about practicing righteousness. The rest of the world does not care about

Jesus. The rest of the world does not care about Scripture. The rest of the world does not care about the Lord's supper. They might be concerned about prayer when they are having a problem. Those are uniquely Christian realities. We are pursuing holiness and righteousness together.

This World is Not Our Home. Through the New Testament, whether Paul, Peter, James, John, or Jude wrote, they each addressed their epistles to Christians. It is interesting that the books of the New Testament are not addressed to the world in general. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and the book of Acts are, however. But the epistles are addressed to Christians because they open with the greeting, "to the saints."

In James the author writes to the twelve tribes that are dispersed abroad. Some people have said that ten tribes are lost. But if that is true, how is it that James wrote to the twelve tribes? In other words, all the twelve tribes exist. They are not lost. God knows their location. James was writing truth because he was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Peter, we are told that Peter was writing to the aliens. We are described as aliens. It reminds me of the song, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through." I am just passing through because I do not belong here. This world is not my home.

Who have Received a Faith. In 2 Peter 1:1, which is now our study, we read,

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ . . . 2 Peter 1:1 (NASB)

Our last study was the first part of this verse. But this study is about the last part of the verse. It says those "who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." To whom is Peter writing? Those who have received the same kind of faith. He is writing to those who have believed in Christ. He is not writing to the world. Now we are going to examine four surprising statements in this last part of verse 1. When we read the last part of verse 1, it does not seem like there is anything that

should be too surprising. It just seems Peter was writing to those who believe as Peter does. But there are some surprising statements here.

1st Surprise — Same Kind of Faith. The first surprising statement is that believers have received the same kind of faith. We have received a faith, just like the faith that Peter and the rest of the apostles Peter, Paul, James, Andrew, and John had received. He is writing to those who have the same kind of faith. That means, if you are a Christian, the faith that you have is just like the faith of the apostles. At first you might think, "Wow, like the apostles?" Yes! That is what he is saying. Just like the apostles. In other words, the apostles did not have a faith that was a grade above our own. They were not saved by a different faith than that by which we are saved. We are all saved by the same faith. That to me was very special.

I want you to notice, he said, "received." That word "received" in the Greek has a very unusual meaning. It is more than just "received." Some of your Bibles might say "obtain." The Greek word for "received" is "*lanchano*." Now I want you to discover what this word means. I want you to see how this word "received" is used. "*Lanchano*" shows up in verse 9. This is talking about Zacharias, and if you remember Zacharias has gone to the temple. Verse 8 says,

Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. Luke 1:8-9 (NASB)

Guess where our word "*lanchano*" occurs in verse 9? Remember in 2 Peter 1:1, it is translated as "received." In the ESV it is translated as "obtained." Here in verse 9, it is the phrase, "chosen by lot." Now the question is, how was he chosen? Was Zacharias involved? Did Zacharias choose himself to serve the priestly office? The answer is no. He was chosen by lot. I am not exactly sure how they used the lot to pick him to serve, but he was not in control. He was chosen by lot.

Now look at John 19:24,

So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be”; this was to fulfill the Scripture: “THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS.” John 19:24 (NASB)

“*Lanchano*” is translated as “cast lots.” In Acts 1:16-17, we read that Judas used to be one of the apostles,

Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry. Acts 1:16-17 (NASB)

Now if you move all the way to verse 26, we learn how they picked Judas’ replacement who was Matthias.

And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. Acts 1:26 (NASB)

The word “*lanchano*” is lots. So, what have we have learned thus far is that “*lanchano*” occurs four times in the New Testament. We have discovered three of them.

The fourth one is 2 Peter 1:1 – our study. We have just learned about all four verses in which “*lanchano*” is used. Three times it is translated as throwing lots to select someone or something. So the soldiers received a robe, or received a tunic as a result of the throwing of lots. We found out that Zacharias was chosen by the throwing of lots or however they used the lot. The same thing happened in the selection of Matthias. In every case the selected individual is not involved in the process; but in each case someone benefited from the throwing of the lot.

So Peter said, “To those who have received a faith.” What does that mean? That means that we had nothing to do with our faith. Interestingly enough, several Greek lexicons make the point that what Peter is talking about is divine activity. God is the one who gives us the faith. We receive the faith from God as a gift. Let me make an inaccurate statement, but

it helps to communicate a thought. It is as though God threw a lot and it fell on us. We received faith as a result.

Most of us think that when we become Christians, we did something. Most of us think that we became a Christian because we exercised faith. The message of this verse is that faith is not something you own or already have in your possession. That is the message.

Look at Ephesians 2:8 and 9. Let me expand on this thought a bit.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves . . . Ephesians 2:8 (NASB)

What does that mean? That means faith is not the result of something you did. You believed, but you did not generate that faith. You did not create that faith. You did not decide, “Oh, I am going to believe.” Personally, when I believed in Jesus Christ, I just believed in Jesus. What happened when you became a Christian? Did you stop and think, “It is time for me to decide to believe. I am going to believe that Jesus ...” Is that what you did? No! Suddenly, you just believed. You were convicted of your sins because you believed. You probably reacted as I did. You let God take over your life. This passage says that you are not the original source of your faith. God gave it to you so that you could believe.

Therefore, it is very clear in 2 Peter 1:1, Peter used the Greek word “*lanchano*” to teach us that faith is a gift from God. How clear does that have to be? Faith is a gift. Then in Ephesians 2:9, we read that faith is not a result of works. People often think about doing good deeds or works in order to demonstrate they are a good Christian. Catholicism teaches that you must have faith plus works and then you must work to prove your faith. That is not what Scripture teaches. Ephesians 2:8 and 9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith.”

So the faith that you received has nothing to do with anything you did. Now you might ask, “Are there any other verses?” We have looked at 2 Peter 1:1 and Ephesians 2:8-9. Acts 3:16 says,

And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of

Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.
Acts 3:16 (NASB)

Notice where the faith comes from. It says, “And the faith which comes through Him.” The Him is Christ. Where did we get the faith? Through Christ, not of or from ourselves. Another verse is Philippians 1:29. It says,

For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake . . .
Philippians 1:29 (NASB)

Now I want you to notice that it says, “for to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake to believe.” Did you notice that it has been *granted* for Christ’s sake that you would believe? Not only to believe but also to suffer reveals that your faith has been granted to you. That is exactly the message of 2 Peter 1:1.

Now I said that there were four surprising things in this verse. The very first surprise was that the word “received” means more than just “received.” The message is that faith is independent of us. I have to tell you that when I believed in Christ, I thought it was my own decision. When I was in the study hall in high school, on the day that I became a Christian, I prayed and asked Christ to forgive me of my sins. I told Him that I was willing to be a missionary if He wanted me to be one. That is the last thing I wanted to do! Tears were pouring down my face and I was not thinking about the students who were sitting next to me. I did not care what they were thinking. All I wanted, now notice what I said. I said, “I wanted,” I wanted my sins forgiven and I wanted to go to heaven. It was my decision. At least that was the way I felt. Yet, Scripture tells us that God gave me that faith that caused me to want my sins to be forgiven. But it felt like a real decision on my part. That is how God works. Faith is a gift. It is a divine gift. That is the first surprise.

2nd Surprise — Same Kind of Faith as Ours.

The second surprise statement in 2 Peter 1:1 is that we are told “the same kind as ours.” The word “a” appears in every

Bible translation. But the word “a” is not in the Greek text. There is no indefinite article in the Greek language. The way verse 1 should literally read is, “To those who received faith as the same kind as ours.”

Notice “same kind.” The two words “same kind” comes from one Greek word. That one Greek word is a compound word. The word is *isotimos*. The two compound words are “*isos*” which means “same,” and “*time*” which just means “honor.” Therefore, it means the “same honor.” I want you to think about faith for a second. Think about faith as having honor. He is talking to Christians and says, you have the same kind of faith as ours. When he says the “same kind,” he really says the faith we have has the same honor. We have the same high-honorable-faith. Sometimes this word is translated as “equal in dignity,” “equal in honor,” or “equal in privilege.” Flavius Josephus in one of his books referred to this word as referring to “equality among superiors, kings and persons of fame.” It has the idea of an honorable thing. What Peter is saying is that the apostles received this faith and we received this same faith too. It has an honor or privilege associated with it. It is a privileged faith.

That thought led me to wonder what kinds of faith are there. Let me describe four types of faith.

Blind Faith. The first type of faith is blind faith. There are people who have blind faith. When I think of blind faith, I think of a child who is easily deceived. Young children believe in Santa Claus or the Easter bunny. They believe in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, and Little Red Riding Hood and the Three Bears. That is blind faith. They believe because they are told these creatures or personalities exist.

Irrational Faith. Another kind of faith is irrational faith. This faith is a belief in things that are not true. These beliefs are not supported by Scripture. This is the kind of faith that cults have. They believe that Jesus was not God; yet Scripture states clearly that He was more than a man. He was God. Some cults teach that Jesus was an angel. There is no proof of that anywhere in the Bible. In fact, Hebrews clearly teaches that Jesus was greater than all of the angels. That is the message of Hebrews 1. Yet, one cult says Jesus was just an angel, Michael the Archangel to be specific. Mormonism believes that Jesus and Satan were brothers. We cannot find

that in Scripture.

Factual Faith. A third type of faith is factual faith. This faith is not supported by facts. In Luke 1, Luke writes to Theophilus so that he might believe. Luke gave him facts so that he would believe. In Acts 26:1-28, Paul is talking to King Agrippa and he makes the comment that King Agrippa knows all of the facts about Christ. It is interesting that King Agrippa mentions Christians. Then Paul says, I know that you believe the facts. I just wish you would become a Christian. That means that King Agrippa knew all the information. So, you can have faith in the basic facts about Christ's life, but not have saving faith.

Saving Faith. So what is saving faith? Saving faith is faith that believes the facts about Christ to the point where you repent of your sins because you realize that Jesus died on a cross for you so that your sins could be forgiven. Then you realize that because you are a sinner, you are going to hell. When you only respond in fear and do not want to go to hell, that means you believe the facts. But those who have true faith want their sins forgiven, confess their need of Jesus as their Savior, submit to Christ and follow Him.

3rd Surprise — The Righteousness of Our God. So, Peter writes to those who have been given a faith of the same high caliber, the same honor, the same privilege as his own. Then he says, "by the righteousness of our God." That is the third surprising statement. He makes the point that we are saved by the fact that God is righteous and we are given righteousness. In Romans 1:16, 17 Paul writes,

[For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16 \(NASB\)](#)

Now watch what he says,

[For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith . . . Romans 1:17 \(NASB\)](#)

Now when he says "righteousness of God is revealed," he is saying that the Gospel proves God to be righteous. The Gospel demonstrates that God is a righteous God. The mean-

ing of righteousness focuses more on how you treat another person. It has the idea that God treats us righteously. When we are told "from faith to faith," I think it is talking about your faith, my faith, someone else's faith—faith to faith to faith. God has given us that faith. Romans 3:25 is a special verse. It actually says that God proved Himself righteous in the way in which He saved the Old Testament saints. What do we get?

Romans 10:3-4 reminds us that God is righteous. Now 2 Corinthians 5:21 states,

[He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 \(NASB\)](#)

This verse is talking about what Jesus accomplished by His death on the cross. He bore our sins, died, and rose again so that we might become the righteousness of God. Did you know that when you became a Christian, when you were given your faith, God also did something else at the same time? He declared you to be righteous. As far as God is concerned, when He looks at you, He sees a righteous person. That is why Paul calls everybody he wrote to, "saints." Saints actually means "holy ones." Before God, we are declared to be holy even though we still sin. In other words, we have been legally declared to be holy. We are not always holy in our behavior. That is why in the Epistles, Christians are repeatedly admonished to behave in a holy manner and to live up to where you spiritually are in reality.

4th Surprise — Our God and Savior Jesus Christ. The fourth surprise, the last surprise in 2 Peter 1:1 occurs at the very end of the verse. It is, "Our God and Savior Jesus Christ." You might look at that statement and say, what is the surprise? It turns out that our English Bibles will not help you understand the fourth surprise. But if you were to look at the Greek text, you would discover that the Greek phrase "God and Savior Jesus Christ" conforms to what is called the Granville Sharp rule. The Granville Sharp rule says that if you have two nouns and the first noun begins with the definite article and they are connected by a conjunction called "*kaí*", then the second noun is equal to the first

noun. Now that means since there is a definite article in front of God and “*kai*” occurs before “Savior and Jesus Christ,” “Savior and Jesus Christ” is equal to God. That is, we have a definite declaration here that Jesus is God.

The Granville Sharp rule occurs other times in the New Testament. It occurs in Titus 2:13, at the very end of the verse. It says,

... looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus . . .

Titus 2:13 (NASB)

Here Peter makes one statement. Paul makes another statement and both times, they use the Granville Sharp rule to make the point that Jesus Christ is God. So, we have seen two statements of proof that Jesus is God.

Conclusion. The last part of 2 Peter 1:1 is filled with four wonderful surprises. I was wondering what is the meaning of this verse? We have picked apart this part in little pieces. But what is the meaning? Therefore, let me tie all this together and conclude our study. This verse is telling us that if you are a Christian, God wanted you. God gave you the faith. He gave you a privileged faith. A faith that is honorable, dignified, and precious. God gave it to you. If God gave it to you, do you think you might lose it because of something you do? No, you never did anything to earn it! It was a gift to you in the beginning. So if you wonder, can I lose my salvation, the answer is, no—because you were saved when you were already a wicked person, right? If God saved you when you were wicked, then why would He “unsave” because you sin later? God asks His children in 1 John 1:9 to simply confess our sins to Him when we do fail and turn from them. He promises to cleanse us if we will confess our sins to Him.

God did not save you based on anything that you did. He saved you because He wanted to. This passage should be a comfort. It should encourage you that God wanted you. It should be an encouragement that you will not lose your salvation. You have been given this incredibly precious, privileged faith that you do not deserve. It tells you God is loving and righteous. Then finally, the jewel of the passage is the fact that Jesus our Lord and Savior is God. Let us pray.