

## Greetings To You In The Name Of The Holy Trinity!

Text: 1 Peter 1:1-2

1) We are strangers and pilgrims

Suggested Hymns:

2) We are objects of God's eternal love

140, 505, 141, 847, 538

3) Grace to you and peace be multiplied

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Peter 1:1-2, <sup>1</sup> *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,* <sup>2</sup> *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

*“Greetings to you in the name of the Holy Trinity!”* That is the sum and substance of our Trinity Sunday text and the theme of our Trinity Sunday sermon. Our altar is vested in white, a reminder that Trinity Sunday is one of the major festivals of the Christian Church.

After today we begin the long non-festival half of the church year. How appropriate that on this first Sunday of the Trinity season we remind ourselves that all spiritual blessings come to us as gifts of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Once again therefore: Greetings to you in the name of the Holy Trinity! *Grace to you and peace be multiplied.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. We are Strangers And Pilgrims

Our Trinity Sunday greeting has meaning only for a select group of people. Not everybody understands it and not everybody is interested in it. Peter's greeting in the name of the Triune God is intended for *“the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.”*

Some people will insist on localising this verse. They apply it exclusively to the Christians scattered here and there by the persecutions of the day.

Certainly, to them the greeting was originally addressed, but it is Scripturally correct, however, to assume that every Christian is a pilgrim and a stranger on earth, an alien in the country in which he lives, and a foreigner to this present world.

The Bible says plainly in Hebrews 13:14. ***“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.*** Only for such strangers will the greeting of Trinity Sunday have real meaning.

As long as a child of God, a would-be citizen of heaven, still feels and acts like a native of this earth, completely satisfied with the here and now, there is danger that his Christianity is on the verge of being a mere hollow sham, too fragile and of too short-lived nature to survive.

The person who feels perfectly at home in this world, content and satisfied to live here forever, with never a longing for ***“the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God,”***<sup>1</sup> will hardly be interested in our Trinity Sunday greeting, much less in the things which the Triune God has in store for him.

He is too much like the man in Christ’s parable whose barns were too small for his bumper crops. He tore them down to make room for barns bigger and better than he ever had before. When he was through building, he said to his soul, ***“Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”***<sup>2</sup> Because he was so exclusively a citizen of this earth that he left the kingdom of God completely out of his planning and scheming, he lost his soul in hell that night. There was no room in this man’s life for the Triune God.

Trinity Sunday is a great day only for the person whose heart is set on God and whose goal is eternal fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, His Son. If your heart is where your treasure is, and if your treasure is the Triune God and all His blessings, then you belong to the many children of God scattered here and there, in smaller or larger groups, over the entire earth.

These are people who are in the world but not of the world, children of the heavenly Father who, because God is in them and works in them by His Holy Spirit, are the salt of the earth and the light of the world while they are here, but whose hearts are always yearning, and whose eyes are always fixed on that

heavenly realm in which they hold eternal citizenship. Because you are such people, greetings to you in the name of the Holy Trinity!

## 2. We Are Objects Of God's Eternal Love

Our Trinity Sunday greeting has real meaning for you because only the Triune God can make you *“fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”*<sup>3</sup> You will be interested first in what Peter has to say about your relationship to the First Person in God, the Father, and His relationship to you.

In our text Peter calls every believer one of the *“elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”* You are today what you are as Christians not because of some special merit or some peculiarly deserving quality of your own. Scripture says in Ecclesiastes 7:20, <sup>20</sup> *“For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin. “Thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”*<sup>4</sup>

It was out of free and unmerited grace God the Father, in the eternity before there was a world, made us the special objects of His love. He set His mind on us, predestinated us, elected us, according to the good pleasure of His will, that we should be His people.

Everything the Triune God has done, for you and me, is the result of God's eternal decree of election. This phrase of our text, *“elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,”* brings this abiding comfort, because firstly, I know that my election is founded in God's eternal counsel and will, and secondly, I can have the assurance that my redemption through Christ is sure and that no one will ever pluck me out of His hand.

For many people this great doctrine of the eternal election of the believer on the part of God is only a bit of fine-spun theological speculation over which theologians get into each other's hair. Because men have debated the doctrine and argued about it from a rational standpoint instead of simply believing what God says about it, and instead of joyfully drinking in the deep drafts of comfort contained in this doctrine, endless confusion and bitter strife have resulted in the church.

If you are ready to take God at His word and believe His promise to you that He has chosen you in Christ before the foundation of the world, then greetings to you in the name of the Holy Trinity!

Perhaps you ask, “How can I know that I am personally one of the elect of God? What evidence is there that I am one of the chosen?” Peter adds a very significant phrase to his statement on election, “*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit.*” When the eternity before the world began became time, God sent His Holy Spirit into the lives of men to sanctify them, to make them holy, to make them acceptable to God so that His eternal choice would not be frustrated by the sinfulness of man.

This sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit has been going on ceaselessly since the moment Adam and Eve lost their holiness, for to sanctify means to make holy. It was at work in the days of Noah, when mankind scoffed at the God-fearing ship-builder and his sons for building on dry land an ark in which eventually only eight people survived the great Flood which destroyed those who quenched the Holy Spirit’s work in their hearts.

This Spirit of God was at work on Pentecost Sunday, as we heard a week ago, making believers out of such people who had helped to crucify the Lord of Glory fifty-two days earlier.

That same Holy Spirit of God is at work all over the world today wherever and whenever the Gospel is preached. He is at work here in this house of God every time the eternal truths of God are applied to the disturbed minds and to the troubled hearts of men. He is at work every time we administer the Sacrament of Baptism.

If only we would always realise what tremendous things are happening in the soul of a child when it is washed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is doing His sanctifying work, and a child born in sin is born again to become a child of God.

The same Peter who wrote this Trinity Sunday text says in Acts 2:38-39, “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*”<sup>39</sup> “*For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.*”

Wherever a missionary carries the message of God's forgiving love in Christ Jesus to sinful men, the Holy Spirit is doing His sanctifying work. ***"No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."***<sup>5</sup> ***"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."***<sup>6</sup> Wherever in the world a convert is gained for Christ, there the Holy Spirit has done His sanctifying work in human souls.

The most important thing about Sunday school is the fact that while the Word is being applied to the minds and hearts of children, young people, or adults, the Holy Spirit of God is doing His sanctifying work.

When in the worship service you come to the altar and receive the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, the Spirit's sanctifying influence is being made available for you.

Neither you nor I would ever be what we are as Christians without this sanctification of the Holy Spirit in our lives. You can do yourself no greater favour, you can do your loved ones no greater favour, you can do your fellow human beings no greater favour than to see that you and they get and are kept under the radiant glow and the saving influence of the Holy Spirit's life and power in the Gospel.

When by that power of the Spirit of God you are sanctified, you have irrefutable evidence that God's election has achieved its purpose in your life.

All this, God's eternal decree of election as well as the Spirit's ceaseless stirring in the hearts of men has one grand and glorious objective, ***"elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."*** God wants His elect to be brought to the obedience of Jesus Christ. To be obedient to Jesus Christ involves first of all the obedience of faith. ***"This is the will of Him that sent Me,"*** says Jesus, ***"that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."***<sup>7</sup>

Our text says that this faith is wrought through the ***"sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."*** Through the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross the guilt of man has been removed. The ultimate purpose of God's election and the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification in us is to make us believers in Jesus Christ and thus to cleanse us from all guilt by His atoning blood.

If you believe that Jesus Christ is your Saviour, that He has declared you righteous and acceptable to your Father in heaven, then accept our Trinity Sunday greeting in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with deep gratitude in your heart. The Triune God's purpose has been accomplished in you. What more could you want? The resources of the Holy Trinity are at work in you and are at your disposal.

### **3. Grace To You And Peace Be Multiplied**

How gloriously the Triune God has mustered all His resources to make us the children of God! Long before we existed, God fixed His mind on us. In order that we could be His own, He sent His Spirit into the world and exposed us to His sanctifying influence in the Gospel so that we could become believers in Christ. The end result is expressed in this beautiful doxology, "*Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*"

Everything we are or shall be we owe to the grace of the Triune God working for us and in our lives. This is the crucial point at which all non-Christian religions falter and fail. They keep telling a hopelessly lost sinner that he must do something to set himself right with God. He tries it but fails. He tries again but fails again. He continues to fail until time is run out and the day of grace is over. Because the poor sinner missed out on God's grace, he will never have peace in his soul in all eternity.

But in the power of the Triune God he can succeed. The Holy Spirit of God offers him the salvation wrought by Christ and works in him the faith to accept that which is offered. This wonderful grace of the Triune God brings eternal peace into the human soul. That is why Peter concludes his doxology with these words, "*Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*"

These are the truly worthwhile things to live for from day to day, the things the Father planned in eternity, the things the Spirit weaves into our lives, the things Christ has made our own by His atoning life and death.

Not bubbles that burst! Not a life built on sand which will be swept downstream when the great flood comes and be dashed to pieces! Not fleeting and fleeting joys that are only a disillusion!

The things which have their eternal source in the mind of God work themselves into our lives by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit and are

completely our own the moment we are cleansed by faith in Christ. That must be our treasure. Once again therefore, greetings to you in the name of the Holy Trinity! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 11:10

<sup>2</sup> Luke 12:19

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 2:19

<sup>4</sup> Romans 5:12

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:3

<sup>6</sup> Romans 10:17

<sup>7</sup> John 6:40