

We Aspire To Be A Gospel Centered Church - 1 Peter 1:1-9

The gospel pulsates power! More lives are being changed today as this Good News about Jesus Christ is told then in immediate aftermath of the events themselves 2,000 years ago. 3,000 people met Jesus on the Day of Pentecost only a matter of weeks after Christ's crucifixion, today in China alone in excess of 25,000 people will experience the transforming power of this story in their lives. Here are 6 observations from the passage in 1 Peter...

1) The Gospel Redefines you (verse 1a)

Look at how Peter introduces himself in verse 1 and consider what an incredible transformation occurred in his life. When Jesus was paraded before the hating mob that demanded his crucifixion, and as he was dragged before the hill where he would be executed, Peter, he 'closest friend' refused to be associated with him – denying their acquaintance on 3 occasions, even before a child. Peter's whole identity has been redefined by the power of the gospel – from coward to apostle – from wimp to warrior – from unbelief to belief – from denier of Christ to Herald of Christ.

A Gospel Centred Church celebrates the transforming and redefining power of the gospel.

Q. In what ways does the gospel redefine us?

Q. What does it mean for us to be a New Creation in Christ?

2) The Gospel Repositions you (verse 1b)

Verse 1 concludes by Peter identifying the intended recipients of his letter. The places mentioned will largely be unfamiliar to us, however God in his 'foreknowledge' intended for the Christians to move there in order that the gospel message might spread. They are referred to as 'exiles', in Hebrews 11 those men and women of faith similarly called 'strangers and exiles'. When the gospel enters your heart you are given a new 'home', a heavenly one with Christ. The places we live on earth are not a true home, however they are our 'mission fields', the places God has called us to in order to witness to the love of Christ.

Q. What is our 'mission field' as a church and as individuals?

Q. How can our city know that we love Portsmouth?

Q. How does knowing we have a 'heavenly home' affect how we live on earth?

3) The Gospel Removes the Wrath of God from you (verse 3)

In Verse 3 Peter says that we are given life in Christ on account of God's 'great mercy'.

Read Ephesians 2:1-3

Q. What does it mean to be 'by nature children of wrath'?

Q. Why is it necessary for a Holy God to hate sin and thus be full of wrath towards sinners?

Jesus substituted himself for us at the cross and bore God's wrath in our place. Christians needn't fear God's judgment as we know in Christ our sin has already been judged, this is 'great mercy' that while we deserved hell, Jesus took our 'hells' for us.

Q. How can we know that God's wrath has been removed from us? (Love for God/Hatred of sin etc)

4) The Gospel Regenerates you (verse 3)

When the spirit of God makes the gospel call effective in a person's heart they go from spiritual death to life, this is being regenerated. Look at Peter's reaction to Jesus after his resurrection (John 21:2-8), how very different this is from the Peter of 'Good Friday'. When we encounter the resurrection power of God our shame is exchanged for joy and we are able to worship God.

Q. Why do we need to be 'born again' in order to know God? (We are spiritually dead – there aren't degrees of 'deadness' we are incapable of knowing love and life towards God unless he makes it happen)

5) The Gospel Rewards You (verses 4-9)

The ultimate treasure of the gospel is not forgiveness of sins, forgiven though they are, it is not everlasting life in paradise, assured though this is, it is not reconciliation, it is not the power to heal your physical bodies, although a perfect heavenly body awaits... No, the greatest reward of the gospel is Christ Himself... It means that even in times of great trial, indeed, especially at times of great trial and suffering – despite not seeing Him before you – you nevertheless rejoice, because whilst you may lose your health, or your job, or even those you love; you can NEVER lose your ultimate treasure, your faith more precious than gold is guarded by GOD himself!

Q. Why is Christ Himself the greatest reward of the gospel?

Q. How do we show those around us who don't know Christ how precious He is to us?

6) The Gospel Results in praise and glory to Jesus Christ (verse 7)

The gospel is the essential road we must take in order to arrive at our great destination, to be worshippers of God our created purpose! Remember our chief end is to 'glorify God and enjoy Him forever'.