

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 27 October 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

“He Is So Precious to Me”

1 Peter 2:1-7a

Just a few minutes ago, we sang the hymn “He Is So Precious to Me.” This hymn was composed in 1902 by Charles Gabriel. Now, I don’t know much about Charles Gabriel’s testimony, other than that he produced many famous hymns; however, the second verse of “He Is So Precious to Me” presents an unmistakable description of Gabriel’s own conversion to Christ. The words go like this:

He stood at my heart's door 'mid sunshine and rain,
And patiently waited an entrance to gain;
What shame that so long He entreated in vain,
For He is so precious to me.

In contrast to this sincere testimony of a genuine Christian, consider the words of a world-famous musician who *masqueraded* as a “Christian.” I speak of Elvis Presley. Elvis Presley maintained a certain image of being a “Christian,” because it was profitable for him to do so. For instance, one of the most famous religious songs that he sang was “Take My Hand, Precious Lord.” Its first verse goes like this:

Precious Lord, take my hand, lift me up, help me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn,
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light,
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

Sounds good, doesn’t it? Elvis called the Lord “precious,” just as Charles Gabriel did. He sang it so emotionally, too! However, the problem is that he didn’t believe a word of it! The people who were closest to Elvis knew that he was deep into the occult, and that he had very real demonic power over people. He pored over the writings of the infamous 19th-century satanist, Madame Blavatsky, and carried her satanic book *Voice of Silence* with him everywhere. He denied that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, and told those closest to him that he had the “christ spirit” (which he viewed as a universal “energy”). To his more religious fans, he threw out “Christian” words and songs; but his life showed that he was anything but a Christian. He was a chronic fornicator and adulterer, and a severe drug addict. A candid movie that was taken while he was riding in his car one day reveals the extent of his hypocrisy. While he was boasting of his sinful orgies in a hotel the night before, one of his bodyguards informed him that the camera was rolling; and he suddenly cursed, smiled, and then mockingly began to lead his bodyguards in singing, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” Toward the end of his life, Elvis’s opposition to God became increasingly vehement (though still hidden to the masses). Among his friends, he boasted of his influential role in the satanic New Age. He said, “Someday in the near future we’ll see how the so-called ministers of God react as they see their worn-out ways and the whole ‘old age’ start crumbling. They’ll all get theirs. I can’t wait ‘til this NEW AGE comes...”¹

To Charles Gabriel, who had experienced Jesus’ saving grace, Jesus was “precious.” To Elvis Presley, who never experienced Jesus’ saving grace, Jesus’ name was useful for making money; but to him personally, the name of Jesus was an *offence*. So it is with every person on the face of this earth. No one can take a neutral position on Jesus Christ. Either He is “precious” to you, or He is an offence to you.

¹ Larry Geller, *If I Can Dream: Elvis’ Own Story*, p. 140

That is what the Apostle Peter points out in the passage of Scripture that we will be reading this morning. The title of this message is *He Is So Precious to Me*.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-8.

In **verses 1 through 7**, Peter describes the relationship that Christ has with those who are saved; and in **verse 7**, he describes the feelings that saved people have toward their Saviour. He says it all in one word: *“precious.”* To those who have entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ by faith, He is *“precious.”* In these verses, we shall see five reasons why Christ is *“precious”* to His people.

I. Christ’s relationship with His people is supernatural.

Just how precious is Jesus to the believer? Well, let’s take another look at **verse 1**. (Read **verse 1**.) So precious is Jesus to those who know Him, that they are willing to lay aside attitudes and actions in their lives that are completely....natural! All the attitudes and actions that Peter lists in this verse (*“malice,” “guile,” “hypocrisies,” “envies,”* and *“evil speakings”*) are totally natural to the rebellious descendants of Adam. Our fleshly nature produces these things as naturally as our lungs breathe air. Yet, the child of God strives to put these natural passions to death on a daily basis; and he does so through the supernatural power of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, *“For if ye live after the flesh* (in other words, if you live according to the old fleshly nature, because you’ve never been saved), *ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body* (in other words, if you are saved, and thus are allowing the Holy Spirit to put sin to death in your life), *ye shall live”* (Romans 8:13).

The mark of a true believer is that he “mortifies,” or puts to death, the deeds of the flesh. However, *how much*, and *how consistently*, to you mortify the deeds of the flesh, Christian? To what extent are you *“laying aside”* these things that Peter mentioned in **verse 1**? How about **“malice”**? “Malice” comes from the Greek word *kakia*. *Kakia* refers to “malignity,” or “loving to cause trouble.” Are you secretly pleased when you hear that someone you don’t like is experiencing trouble? Do you subtly utter a few words, in a seemingly innocent way, so as to throw more fuel on the fire of a quarrel? How about **“guile”**? “Guile” simply means “deceit.” Do you tell lies indirectly—such as by allowing someone to have a false impression, because you didn’t give all the pertinent information? To God, outright lies and subtle “half truths” are both an abomination. How about **“hypocrisies”**? Do you slip into a little “act” around certain people in order to get what you want? This is so natural, that little infants practice it before they can even talk! Yet, for the child of God, duplicity in any form should be abominable. Jesus said, *“let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay”* (Matthew 5:37). In other words, don’t be double-tongued! Are you the same person when you are in the privacy of your home that you are when you are at church, in your workplace, in the shops, or on holiday? How about **“envies”**? Do you bear inward ill-will toward someone, even though you may not express it outwardly? How about **“evil speakings”**? Evil speaking doesn’t necessarily mean “lying”; it can simply mean “reporting evil” to someone that you shouldn’t, for a reason you shouldn’t. (In other words, gossiping.) The Bible has a lot to say about this! **Proverbs 16:27-28** says, *“An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire. A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.”* Let’s see what James said about the destructive power of the tongue.

Read James 3:1-18.

James gives us a dismal picture of ourselves in this chapter, doesn't he? If James had stopped at the words ***“but the tongue can no man tame,”*** and had given us no remedy as to how to tame our tongue, this passage would offer no hope. In your own will power, you *can't* lay aside a wicked tongue: but in Christ's power, you can. The ability to lay these things aside comes from above. It is the product of the ***“wisdom that is from above.”*** (Read verse 17.) How precious is Jesus to you, Christian? Is He so precious to you, that you are willing to wage war against your natural sin inclinations? Are you trusting in Christ's power to do it?

II. Christ's word is like milk is to a new-born baby.

(Read verse 2.) Christ's Word is to the believer what milk is to a new-born baby. Just as a baby needs his mother's milk in order to grow, so Christians desperately need the Word of God in order to grow spiritually. Without God's Word, Christians wither away, and become spiritually sick—just as a new-born gets sick when he doesn't get his milk.

Christian, you need the ***“sincere”*** milk of God's Word! That word ***“sincere”*** means that it is the “real stuff.” Don't mix the world's ideas and philosophies in with the Word of God! **Colossians 2:8** says, ***“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”*** Don't listen to the psychiatrists, who tell you that you need drugs to control your emotions, or to subdue panic attacks. The Psalmist David wrote, ***“I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety”*** (Psalm 4:8). Don't listen to the “experts” who tell you that your kids have an “Attention Deficit Disorder.” They don't need therapy and drugs: they need to be brought up in the ***“nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*** Don't listen to the experts who tell you that you must “love yourself,” and have “self-esteem.” God commands us *not* to love ourselves, but rather to love *Him* with all our hearts. These worldly precepts are poison, folks! You and your family need the counsel of God's Word. God's Word brings life and health. ***“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”***

Everyone on the face of the earth needs the Word of God in order to live—even more than he needs physical food! First of all, if you have not been saved, you *must* heed God's Word, and receive Christ as your personal Saviour. Jesus said, ***“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*** Until you repent of your sin and place your trust in Christ, you will be miserable and unfulfilled. Christ is the only one who can make you complete, and fill that “God-sized hole” in your life. He is the *only* one who is able to fill that hole, because He is the God who created you. **Colossians 2:9-10** says, ***“For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”***

Now, if you be saved, you have the Spirit of God dwelling inside you. However, you need to be ***“filled with the Spirit”*** every day. **Ephesians 2:18** says, ***“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”*** What does it mean to be ***“filled with the Spirit”***? It means that you allow the Spirit of God to control every aspect of your life. It means that you allow *the Lord* to be your consolation—the One in whom you trust when you are afraid. It means that you allow *His Word* to be your guide as you face the problems and trials of life. It means that you go to God in prayer at the moment when you are tempted, and ask Him for the strength to overcome that sin, and to put it to death. It means that you allow your mind to be renewed by the Word of God, so that you can put on the “new man,” and live

a holy life. It means that you surrender your will to God on a daily basis, and turn from your “own way.” The Bible says, **“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.”** Your “own way” *must* be avoided like the plague, Christian. Don’t trust your heart, because it will lead you astray. **Proverbs 28:26** says, **“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.”** You must have a real, intimate, passionate walk with God every day; and you must teach your children how to have an intimate walk with Christ, as well. The only way you can have that kind of relationship is to *read His Word*. Have personal devotions every day. Teach your children how to have personal devotions. Have *family* devotion time. If you ignore the Word of God, you will have serious problems in your own life, and in your family; and until you decide to obey, your problems *will* grow bigger, and bigger.

Christian, you have been given a command: and it is not a grievous command. The command is to desire the **“sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”** What’s more, don’t stay at the “milk” stage. Move on to spiritual “meat,” through constant study and meditation upon God’s Word. Become skilled in the Word of righteousness!

Read Hebrews 5:11-14.

III. Christ’s fellowship with believers is like a delicious meal.

How precious is Jesus to the believer? Well, let’s go back to our text, and read **verse 3**. (Read **verse 3**.) What does Peter mean when he says, **“If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious”**? Well, this statement is very much like what Paul said in **Romans 8:9**.

Read Romans 8:5-9.

When Paul says, **“if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you,”** he is saying, “if so be that you are saved.” The Holy Spirit dwells *only* within those who are saved. The Spirit’s presence in a believer is the *evidence* that that believer is saved. Likewise, those who have **“tasted that the Lord is gracious”** are those who are saved.

Now, such is not the case with lost people. In **Romans 2:4** Paul addressed rebellious mankind, and asked them a question. He said, **“Despisest thou the riches of [God’s] goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”** God constantly shows His graciousness to lost men; yet, most men fail to recognise His graciousness. That’s why so few lost people repent and come to Christ. On the other hand, a child of God *has* tasted of God’s goodness; and he is now able to see it, and be grateful for it. The first “taste” of God’s goodness comes on the day when a person believes the Gospel, and is saved. However, it doesn’t stop there. A true believer *continues* to see God’s goodness in his life. David saw God’s goodness in *his* life. In **Psalm 34:8** David wrote, **“O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”**

Have you **“tasted that the Lord is gracious”**? I’m not necessarily asking whether you’ve had an *experience* in which you *could see* how God was being gracious to you—because sometimes God’s gracious purposes aren’t so easy to see. We are not able to see God’s ultimate plan, as God does. *God* knows how He is manifesting His grace in the midst of our trials; but oftentimes, *we* are not able to see what He is doing. That is why we must live by *faith*. Whether or not you can *see* how God is being gracious to you—in fact, whether or not

you *ever* see it in this lifetime—you must exercise *faith* in God’s promise that He *is* good and gracious, and that He *is* working all things together for your good. How can you have faith to believe this? By immersing yourself in God’s Word, so that you may know what His promises are! Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Now, having said this, I may as well warn you: reading God’s Word doesn’t always leave you with a “warm, fuzzy, feeling.” In fact, bitterness often follows the initial sweetness. Let’s take a look at how the Scripture affected the Apostle John on one occasion.

Read Revelation 10:8-11.

What is this passage all about? Well, first, we see that God gave John a “little book”; and this “little book” was filled with more revelations about the horrific judgments that God will pour out on the world in the last days. Then, God commanded John to eat the book. Of course, this wasn’t happening in reality; it was all in a vision. However, what it symbolises is very clear. John’s eating of the scroll is symbolic of *believing* God’s Word, and taking it to heart. Yet, how did John’s “eating” of God’s words affect him? At first, it was “sweet” to the taste, because it was God’s Word! Yet, when he began to digest the “little book” in his stomach (in other words, when he began to understand the reality of the judgments that God is going to bring upon the earth), it was “bitter” to his stomach. The judgments of the Tribulation period will be *exceedingly* bitter; yet, through these judgments, God will manifest His graciousness to mankind. As sinful men experience the judgments of God, many of them will awaken to their need of repentance, turn to God in faith, and receive His salvation.

So it always is with God’s words, and His judgments. God’s Word is often “bitter” when we begin to “digest” it, because it warns us of God’s judgment upon sinners, and His chastisement of His saints. Yet, at the same time, His words are sweet to the taste of believers—and they are *absolutely necessary* for the nourishment of our souls. My friend, have *you* tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious? (In other words, have you been saved, and adopted into God’s family?) Christian, are you continuing to taste His graciousness? Is His goodness becoming more precious to you every day?

IV. Christ wants His people to draw nearer to Him every day.

How else is Jesus precious to the believer? Well, let’s read **verse 4**, and find out. (**Read verse 4.**) When Peter says “*to whom coming*,” to whom is He referring? He’s referring to “*the Lord*,” whom He had just mentioned in **verse 3**. So, according to this verse, Christians *are coming*....to the Lord.

Now, there is an interesting thought. According to Scripture, those who are saved “came” to Jesus on the day when they were saved. Jesus said, “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*” (**John 6:37**). If you be saved, you have *already* come to Him. Yet, here in **verse 4**, Peter says that Christians “*are coming*” to Him. Is Peter saying that those who are saved are in a continual *process* of “coming” to Jesus? Yes, he is. *Why* are they still “coming” to Him? Because Jesus wants us to draw nearer to Him each day. To “draw near” means to trust Him more, and love Him more.

Read Hebrews 10:19-22.

Are you continuing to “come” to Jesus, Christian? I’m not asking if you’re still saved. If you have truly trusted in Christ alone to save you, then you are saved forever, just as Jesus promised. (**See John 6:37 again!**) What I’m asking is whether you are *drawing nearer* to your Saviour, in faith and love. Is Jesus becoming more precious to you every day, because you are talking with Him in prayer, and reading His Word? Are you trusting in His promises, and drawing your strength and power from Him?

V. Christ is the living Stone upon which a Christian’s life is built.

How precious is Jesus to the believer? Let’s read **verses 4 through 6** again to find out. (**Read verses 4- 6.**) Peter says that to the believer, Jesus is a “*living stone.*” What does this mean? Well, let’s break it down. First of all, He is “*living.*” This means that He has risen from the grave, and has conquered death. It also means that Christ is the Source of spiritual life. Christ is the one who imparted spiritual life to you on the day when we believed on Him.

Secondly, Christ is our “*stone.*” This means several things. First of all, Christ is the Stone who was “*disallowed of men.*” In other words, He was rejected. This rejection of the Stone was prophesied in the Old Testament. Let’s look at the specific prophecy that Peter is quoting.

Read Psalm 118:22.

Jesus Christ, the Foundation Stone and Head Stone of Israel, was rejected by His own people. We can see this truth illustrated in **Exodus 17**. In this passage, we are told of the time when the children of Israel were angry at Moses because there was no water for them to drink in the wilderness. The people complained to Moses that they were dying of thirst; and they accused Moses of purposely bringing them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. Yet, despite their rebellion, God already had a gracious solution to their problem. God commanded Moses to take his rod, and to go to a large boulder in a place called Horeb; and there, he was to strike the rock with his rod. When he had struck it, the rock opened up, and a stream of water came gushing out of it. Now, God could have provided the water for Israel in any way He wished; yet, He chose to have Moses strike the rock. Why? Because He was illustrating a truth about His Son. The truth is that *Jesus* is the Rock who was smitten for us. The day when Christ was smitten on the cross was the most awful and blasphemous day in history. Yet, because Christ was smitten, He was able to provide us with the living water of salvation, as He promised He would do. Jesus said, “*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*” (**John 7:37**).

Secondly, Jesus is the Stone upon which every true believer must (and will) build his life. As Peter said in **verse 6**, those who believe on Him “*shall not be confounded.*” That word “*confounded*” means “disgraced, ashamed, or dishonoured.” My friends, Jesus never disgraces, or lets down, those who build their lives upon Him. To the believer, Jesus is the precious Rock upon which his very life rests! Jesus said, “*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock*” (**Matthew 7:24-25**).

Thirdly, Jesus is the “Stone” upon which the “spiritual house” of the church is built. (**Read verse 5 again.**) Isn’t this a beautiful picture? Those who have been saved and baptised into the membership of a local church are like “living stones,” making up the “Temple” of God’s

House. In **Ephesians 2:20-22** Paul said that the members of local churches are *“built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”* Being saved, and being a “building block” in the Temple of the local church (in other words, being a member), is an incredible privilege! Yet, being a “building block” in the church isn’t the only privilege that Christians have. Peter says that every believer who has joined a local church is also a *“priest,”* offering up *“spiritual sacrifices”* to God within that Temple. How do we offer these sacrifices? We do this through our prayers; our tithes and missions giving; our proclamation of the Gospel; our songs of praise to God; our study of God’s Word; our exhortation and comfort of the brethren; our personal sacrifices for God and others; and in many others ways. In Old Testament times, only males from the tribe of Levi, and from the family of Aaron, could be priests in the Temple; but in the New Testament age, *every* true child of God can be a priest in the Temple of the local church. Being a priest in God’s House isn’t reserved for the specially gifted. God has given *every* Christian a spiritual gift, so that he may use that gift to serve Him. Every sincere offering of praise, thanksgiving, and service that you offer to God is *“acceptable”* to Him, Christian! Is this not precious?

Lastly, Jesus is the *“corner stone”* upon which the house of Israel will be built in the future. During the fiery judgment of the Tribulation period, one third of the House of Israel will finally believe on Jesus as their Messiah and King. At the end of that horrible seven years, Christ will return to earth, and set up His Kingdom; and those Jews who believed on Him will enter into the glory of the 1,000-year Kingdom. On the day when the house of Israel finally sees their long-rejected Messiah, He will be to them like a priceless treasure that has been buried in a field for ages, and hidden from them. On that glorious day, Jesus Christ will be *precious* to the house of Israel, and to all the believers of all nations!

Read Isaiah 28:16.

Conclusion: As I close this morning, I would like to tell you about an event that happened on a summer afternoon in 1993, when I was sixteen years old. I had recently begun to work my first job, at McDonald’s; and I was waiting that afternoon for my dad to pick me up from work. As I was waiting, a couple co-workers began to ask me questions. They said, “What’s up with you, man? Why do you insist on not working on Sundays and Wednesday evenings, so that you can go to church? Why do you read your Bible on break, and talk about Jesus all the time? Why don’t you smoke, and drink, and do drugs, and curse, and sleep around, and listen to Rock music? Doesn’t it bother you that everyone thinks you’re a fanatic?” I don’t remember exactly what I said; but it was something like this: “Jesus loves me more than I can comprehend. He died for my sins so that I could be forgiven, and spend eternity with Him. How could I turn my back on Him?” They smiled on me condescendingly, as though I were a naive child; and one of them said, “Just give it six months. In six months, you’ll be just like the rest of us.”

Well, that was about 27 years ago. Since then, I have stumbled and fallen many times. I have grieved my Saviour again and again. Yet, each time that I’ve grieved Him, He was dealt with me as a father deals with his son. He has chastised me, brought me to repentance, cleansed me, and set me back on the right path; but by His grace, I have not fallen into the lifestyle that my co-workers were so sure that I would fall into. Was it because my flesh wasn’t drawn to some of those things of which they spoke? No. It was for one reason: **Because He is so precious to me!** Is Jesus precious to you? Christian, are you drawing nearer to Him every day? Do you love His Word, and hide it in your heart? Perhaps there are some in

this room who do not know Jesus as Saviour. If so, I'm here to tell you that you cannot be saved by your good works or "religiosity." You need Jesus' forgiveness. He was wounded on the cross in order to pay your sin debt. Because the Rock was smitten for *you*, streams of living water are available to you. Will you humble yourself today, admit your need of Him, and receive Him into your heart?