

1 Peter 1:17-25  
Easter 3A  
April 26, 2020

“Infused with God’s Word!”

**Alleluia! Christ is risen! ... He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

This Easter season we’re focused on Peter’s first letter, written to recent converts from pagan idolatry and Judaism’s works righteousness to Christianity. They lived hundreds of miles from Jerusalem and decades after Jesus’ resurrection. These people were paying a price for their faith in Jesus ... and some were falling back into their old ways. Peter’s letter is a call from God to regain their focus saying, **(1 Peter 1:18-19)** *“You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”*

Peter fervently urges God’s children then ... and today – even in this difficult time ... to regain our focus on Jesus – whose blood has saved us all from sin and death – through prayer and God’s Word ... gifts God gives to revive our weakened faith and hope. Peter, seeing God’s people struggling, is like a doctor in the operating room seeing his patient collapsing, *“I need a unit of blood, stat!”* This transfusion of blood helps bring the patient back to life.

Today we’re navigating what for some of us is the most difficult time of our lives. COVID-19 has infected all of our lives in some way ... maybe literally as we or family, friends, or co-workers have been stricken with it. We’ve probably all seen and heard stories of loved ones being separated from each other as they struggle to heal ... or succumb. And even if you haven’t been stricken yourself, COVID-19 has still infected our lives by altering them in so many ways I can’t even begin to count them – working from home ... or losing jobs, learning from home ... or teaching, working under threat of infection as you provide the care and provision the rest of us need. Then there are the seemingly less critical, but still important things that’ve been impacted

... celebrations of births, marriages, milestone birthdays and anniversaries, and graduations.

We're all in difficult times. We're searching everywhere for a reviving transfusion!

Meanwhile, though it doesn't get a lot of press, people are recovering! And through God's gift of the mind, many are at work trying to find ways to bring healing and maybe even immunity from this disease. People are working on real treatments and cures. One of these being investigated is the use of COVID-19 convalescent plasma. The theory – transfusing plasma filled with COVID-19 antibodies from recovered patients into the blood of sick patients could have positive impacts – the transfused blood of another person, joined with and becoming part of the sick person's body could help them overcome this terrible disease.

But, as hopeful as the fruits of our own talents and gifts might be to bring us the healing we need in this difficult time, Peter urges us remember to keep the ultimate focus on one place ... just as he urged the people of Asia Minor centuries ago. He urges God's children to focus! Focus on the only thing that matters! He says, **(1 Peter 1:18-19)** *“You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”* Your old ways inherited from your fathers ... they won't rescue you from your sin-filled ways. But, God, your Father in heaven, has already rescued you. Focus on your rescuer, Jesus Christ, His Son ... His imperishable blood has paid the price to rescue you. His blood will strengthen you in your trials ... it will heal you from the eternal effects of sin and death.

Peter knows because he's experienced first hand the impact of both focus and loss of focus. Remember the time, in the middle of a storm, Jesus was walking on the water toward him and the other disciples? Peter couldn't believe it! So, he said, *“Hey ... if that's really you Jesus, let me walk on the water to you.”* Jesus says, *“Okay ... start walking!”* Peter begins walking on the

water ... then he looks around. He sees the storm raging, the waves heaving, the winds howling. The world distracts Peter from the One enabling him to do this amazing thing. Peter's lack of focus on Jesus ... causes him to sink ... until Jesus rescues him and brings him to safety.

God grants us all things ... including the gift of lifesaving technology ... to help us infuse His light into the world's darkness. But we can forget who the giver of these gifts is. Because our hands and minds fashion what we see ... the food we taste and smell, the music we hear, the tech we've built ... we can forget the ultimate provider of all things and why He gives them to us. Our focus can fall from our Creator ... down to the created ... we can take our eyes off Jesus our rescuer and let ourselves be led by the world, the things in it, and ourselves. Then we misuse the good gifts God has given us as we twist them to serve our needs and desires ... instead of serving God our Father and His creation as He desires. Satan took advantage of Adam and Eve ... moving their focus off God's will ... infusing the sin of self-centeredness into their hearts ... bringing the infection of sin and death into God's creation. Because of this, we're all in need of a transfusion to destroy this infection.

But God didn't leave His creation alone to wander aimlessly. He didn't abandon us to our own works to save ourselves. God took an active role in redeeming us and saving us from our decisions which led us out of paradise and into darkness.

From the first, God's Word points to the means He would use to ultimately save His creation from sin and death. When His children were enslaved in Egypt, God rescued them from bondage ... marking them with the blood of a lamb. **(Exodus 12:5-7, 13)** *"Your lamb shall be without blemish ... the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it ... The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are.*

*And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.”* But it wasn’t a lamb, or any other animal, which brought sin into the world ... it was a man ... and so, a man, ultimately, had to shed his blood for our sin.

God sent Jesus into the world for that purpose. Before His birth Gabriel revealed to Joseph, **(Matthew 1:20-21)** *“Mary your wife ... will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”* Then, as a man, Jesus came to John the Baptist, who proclaimed, **(John 1:29)** *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”*

The unblemished Lamb of God, a sinless man was crucified in the presence of sinners ... for all to see. As He hung ... His own blood infused the rugged timbers as the unblemished lambs of Egypt stained the doorposts centuries before. By His blood, Jesus opened the doors to the paradise of the new creation for all who believe in Him saying, **(Luke 23:34)** *“Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”* A short while later, one of the hardened criminals crucified with Him, confessed His faith in Jesus saying, **(Luke 23:42-43)** *“‘Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.’”* And then Jesus died ... ransoming all who believe from the futile ways of the world – from sin and death – with His precious blood.

His disciples witnessed His death ... they went away mourning ... they had put their faith and hope and trust in Him. They’d seen the many miracles, signs, and wonders. They’d heard the teaching ... and now He was dead. Their faith had withered. A couple of them decided it was time to return home to Emmaus to figure things out for themselves. A man came alongside them as they grieved and asked what was going on with them. They were incredulous at His ignorance ... *“Hadn’t you heard about Jesus? We saw Him die on the cross! Now we’re hearing crazy stories that His body is missing. Some even said angels told them He was alive again! It’s*

*insanity!*” They were truly distraught with no place to turn. Then the man began to speak ... to teach ... from God’s Word. He injected them with God’s promises spoken by the prophets. He infused their minds with Jesus’ promises that He would suffer and die before rising from the dead. Then, as He sat down with them ... He broke bread and gave it to them ... and their eyes were opened! The transfusion of God’s Word revived their faith! They saw Him. He’s alive! Just as He said He would be. Jesus has risen from the dead! The price of sin has been paid! The power of death has been defeated! By His blood all who believe have been redeemed ... forgiven their sins and ... (1 Peter 1:23) *“born again ... through the living and abiding word of God!”*

The Word of God, like a transfusion of blood in a critically injured patient, becomes a part of us. It revives our gravely weakened faith. The lifesaving Word of God infuses us with antibodies that destroy the sins which weaken our faith. His Word strengthens our faith ... so again we trust Him as we call to Him in prayer ... knowing He hears us when we cry out! We ask Him to forgive us for the times we take our focus off Him, forgetting He is our creator ... our provider ... who gives us all good things we need. Especially forgiveness. On account of the blood of Jesus – He forgives our sins. He revitalizes our lives of faith ... He restores our focus on Him and His will for us and His creation ... He enables us to remain focused on Him in spite of the storms raging about us! He enables us to see how He wants us to use His good and plentiful gifts to infuse Jesus’ lifesaving blood into our own lives and those He brings into our presence ... so we can all focus first on Jesus and the imperishable gift of God’s living and abiding Word!

**Alleluia! Christ is risen! ... He is risen indeed!**

James Kent