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so many questions...

well friends... it feels like
we've got more questions
than answers, right?

so many questions...

Health questions...

Wealth questions...

Questions about how to live
well now...

And questions about what life
will be like in the future...

and these questions are front
and centre because two things
confront us right now.

First, evil is present in this
world.

We expect to be healthy. But
sickness and death are our
constant companions. The
coronavirus has simply put this
front and centre.

Evil is ever-present and so this
second thing also confronts
us, we are not in control.

when days are normal our
progress gives the illusion that

we're in control...but these
are not normal days...

In these unprecedented and
uncertain days two things
confront us

evil is ever-present **and**
humanity is not in control

evil is ever-present **and** we're
not in control, are we?

And so, the question becomes
is anyone in control?

Are we creatures in a creation
that has a Creator?

Or put another way. In the
midst of a coronavirus
pandemic: 'What in the world
is God doing?'

Right? What in the world is
God doing?

Well to answer that question
we're turning to a letter
written by the Apostle Peter in
the first century.

Peter is one of the Apostles
trained and commissioned and
sent by Jesus to tell the world
the gospel, the good news
about Jesus and his kingdom.

Holy God – 1 Peter 1.1-12

Peter too lived in unprecedented and uncertain times. Before Jesus died, he told the apostles that desperate, dangerous days of distress were coming.

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Jesus said: [NIV 11, Matt 24.21]

For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.

We keep being told we live in unprecedented times. And, of course, COVID-19 is distressing. But according to Jesus our distress is not equal to the distress of Peter's day.

Peter recognises this at the very beginning of his letter which is addressed to scattered, exiles

scattered, exiles

we're scattered as we each sit in our homes... we're not gathered... we're scattered...

but we're in our homes aren't we... we have some safety

and security. We're not exiles...

Peter writes to scattered exiles... and he reminds them in unprecedented and uncertain times exactly what God is doing.

And first up he says God is

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1. **electing & choosing** (v1-2) his people.

That's the first point today. In times of unprecedented uncertainty God is **electing and choosing**

Peter writes, verse 1, have a look verse 1:

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*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's **elect**, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been **chosen** according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*

In times of unprecedented uncertainty and distress Peter

Holy God – 1 Peter 1.1-12

reminds scattered exiles...
that God has elected and
chosen them...

God knows beforehand what's
going to happen...

no circumstances take him by
surprise...

God's not reacting and making
mistakes and changing his
plans like our world leaders...
they can't help that... they're
not God!

God is God and even before
you were born... he knows...
he elects... he chooses

No matter what the
circumstances God is working
out his plan and purpose

God is in control

Even in times of
unprecedented uncertainty
and distress God is with his
people.

Have a look verse 2 again,
Peter says:

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God's people *have been
chosen according to the
foreknowledge of God the*

*Father, through the sanctifying
work of the Spirit,*

God's people are not alone.
God's Spirit works in us to set
us apart... that's what it
means to be sanctified or
made holy... God's Spirit
within sets us apart. And He
sets us apart for two things.

First, we're set apart to be
obedient to Jesus.

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verse 2 again:

*... chosen according to the
foreknowledge of God the
Father, through the sanctifying
work of the Spirit, to be
obedient to Jesus Christ*

Right now. You're not alone
in your circumstances. God's
Spirit is setting you apart for
obedience to Jesus.

That's what truly spiritual
people do. That's the
empowering work of the Holy
Spirit. He sets us apart for
obedience to Jesus.

And, of course, obedience to
King Jesus is simple... there's

Holy God – 1 Peter 1.1-12

just two rules to obey... Love God and love others!

And so in our current environment that's why we follow the guidelines, right?

We're loving God and others by obeying those he's put in authority over us.

And we're loving our neighbour by trying to do what is best by them.

Even right now... by physically isolating and yet virtually gathering we're trying to do what pleases God and what's best for each other.

We're listening to and praising God... and we're encouraging each other in that as best we can.

We're loving God and loving each other.

That's obedience to Jesus because God's Spirit is working to set us apart to be obedient to Jesus.

So what about when we muck up and disobey? Instead of loving, we're unloving?

Maybe you've stashed a dunny roll or two!!

Well like I said the Holy Spirit sets us apart for two things and the second one is for when we disobey.

have a look again... Peter says the Spirit is at work setting us apart for obedience **and** for sprinkling by the blood of Jesus... verse 2 again...

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*[We're] chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ **and** sprinkled with his blood:*

That's a magnificent verse, isn't it?

Every person in the trinity of God, the Father... the Spirit and the Son... all three are working in unity for the good of God's people.

God the Father choosing ... the Spirit empowering ... and Jesus reigning as the King we should willingly obey

Holy God – 1 Peter 1.1-12

and yet when we don't he died so his blood shields us from the punishment that our disobedience deserves.

That's the most amazing and wonderful good news you'll ever hear, isn't it? And so Peter rightly finishes this section:

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Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

To scattered exiles whose circumstances are far from peaceful ... *Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

I wonder in these unprecedented and uncertain times do you know peace in abundance?

You can by resting in the knowledge that God has a plan and purpose that nothing can stop?

No matter what the circumstances... God's working so powerfully for good that nothing can stop him.

He's electing and choosing his people by **showing mercy**

That's the second point this morning.

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What in the world is God doing? He's

2. **showing mercy** (v3-9)

have a look verse 3:

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Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

In unprecedented and uncertain times... when everything seems hopeless Peter reminds his readers that they have hope...

Everyday the TV reminds us it's hopeless... the world is scrambling for hope... some firm assurance... some certainty that tomorrow will be better.

Holy God – 1 Peter 1.1-12

Well Peter says we have that hope. We have hope that is certain and never fails even in dire circumstances... we have a living hope... because even in unprecedented times one unchanging unstoppable precedent holds true.

Jesus rose from the dead.

Jesus rose from the dead.

And so right now we have a living certain assurance that not even death can separate us from the love of God.

We've been born again into a living hope and so into a forever inheritance.

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Verse 3 again:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

Friends in uncertain times, here's the thing! God has got this.

COVID-19 could take away our earthly inheritances but here's your living hope. It can't touch your forever inheritance because God's got that locked away in heaven for you.

This evil coronavirus could attack you and take away your life here on earth – who knows right?

But because Jesus rose from the your living hope is that you're shielded by faith. And that shield remains not merely by your power but by God's.

God has got you now and forever!

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Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in

Holy God – 1 Peter 1.1-12

heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

God has got this.

And God has got you.

Now you might be thinking I get that Dave. For God to be God I need him to be great and in control.

But if he's so great and in control – why the suffering?

What in the world is God doing allowing grief and trials and suffering?

In the midst of suffering, I'm struggling to see how God can be good.

Well Peter reassures us that God is good too. Peter's real about life being a strange mix of real joy and real grief and real trials.

But Peter teaches us that it's in this strange mix that our faith in God proves real.

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Have a look verse 6:

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

In the Old Testament we're introduced to the great character of Job.

Job is a righteous friend of God. And one day God reminds Satan of Job's righteousness. And Satan responds by accusing Job of only trusting and obeying God

Holy God – 1 Peter 1.1-12

because God gives him good things.

Satan says God and Job are in a transactional relationship.

God buys Job's friendship. And Job is mercenary – he's only in it for what he gets out of it.

That's the accusation. There's no loving relationship between God and Job it's just transactional.

And so to prove the relationship is loving God allows the Satan to take away from Job every good thing.

His wealth...

His family...

His health...

And friends, the story of Job is really the story of life on planet earth.

We live in the story where Satan is trying to prove his accusation against God and his people.

The Job story is about one man who lost everything and yet loved God for who he is.

And it ultimately points forward to when in time and space we see Jesus, right?

As Jesus hangs dying on a cross he defeats the accusation of Satan.

Jesus had everything taken from him. He was willing to even die out of love for God and others.

God did not buy his love.

In the worst of circumstances the faith of Jesus proves genuine.

People sometimes feel bad that they turn to God in their trials and grief. But can I say it's only in trials and grief that faith in God is proven to be real.

It's at our lowest point we see past a God who buys our affection and we see a God who deserves our affection.

We see a God who calls us into a loving relationship that is beyond circumstance and better than transactional.

Holy God – 1 Peter 1.1-12

There's no love in transactional relationships, is there? In fact they're toxic...

God is love

How do we know?

Well because he sent his son to die in the place of sinners, like you and me.

And so as we suffer our faith is proven genuine and it's all to the praise and glory and honour of Jesus.

What in the world is God doing?

He's the kind of God who's powerfully good. defeating the Satan... proving your faith... saving your soul.

In unprecedented and uncertain times God is electing and choosing and showing mercy and all of this is by grace

That's our final point for today... God is not buying our allegiance. Nor do we earn God's favour... there's nothing that we do to deserve God's love... God gives his

love freely to people who are completely undeserving...

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He's saving us... and He's

3. **saving by grace** (v10-12)

that's our final point today

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Peter concludes this section:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

through the Old Testament prophets... God's Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus... always pointed forward to the Messiah who would suffer in the place of his people and so win them salvation that is by grace.

Because Jesus died and rose again God offers free and

Holy God – 1 Peter 1.1-12

undeserved salvation... God is saving by grace.

That's the gospel. That's the good news. In Jesus, the God who is love is showing mercy and saving by grace.

And that's hard for us to accept isn't it? Because by and large the world has bought into Satan's lying accusation.

we have reduced our relationships to transactions.

We are conditional in our love.

We keep records of rights and wrongs and we trade on them.

We obligate people and call in the favours that people owe us.

We make and break our relationships by what we get from them.

We try to buy each others' affections.

We seek to manipulate for our own advantage.

We play favourites in a mercenary game of what's in it for me.

In every facet of our relationships we lust but call it love

And we not only do these things, but we approve of them and idolise the people who seem to transact their way to the top!

So it's no wonder when we meet the God who is love... who freely gives salvation no strings attached... and who is rich in mercy...

it's no wonder we don't immediately understand... it's no wonder he's initially confusing and confronting...

but the more we see and hear and understand Him as he is... the more obvious it becomes that this God is exactly the greatness and goodness that we need.

and so we're wise to turn to turn to him and receive his mercy.

We're wise to stop trying to be right on our own terms and humbly accept we are helpless and hopeless and thank God for his saving grace.

Holy God – 1 Peter 1.1-12

We're wise to embrace his true love... to be set free from transactional relationships... to turn to the love of God and begin to truly love each other.

In these unprecedented and uncertain times there's a light at the end of the tunnel and it's God.

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There is one true and living God. He is *the holy God*.

And that means God is totally set apart in his greatness and goodness to bring about his plan and purpose.

In all the unanswered questions around the coronavirus.

What in the world is God doing is not one of them.

God is doing what God has always been doing. He's establishing the kingdom of Jesus in time and space and on into eternity.

For now evil is a clear and present danger and we are not in control.

But the God who is love is.

And he's defeating evil

And he's electing and choosing... and showing mercy and saving by grace.

So can I invite you today to start or keep looking deep into the God of love and receive His grace and peace in abundance.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

Let's pray: