

1st PETER BIBLE STUDY

1 Peter 1:1-2

Lesson #1

Introduction

Today we have the privilege of beginning our study of the first epistle of Peter. On a personal note, I've always found Peter's epistles to be among my favorite reading. While Peter's reputation is one of a simple fisherman, nevertheless, his two recorded epistles are among the most eloquent of the New Testament. Obviously this is a subjective statement. It is generally believed that Peter wrote this first epistle right around the time that the Nero burned down the city of Rome and blamed it on the Christians, in July of A.D. 64. This act commenced a period of persecution which was probably the most severe and brutal as any time in history. Peter's epistle is written against this background of brutal, and escalating persecution of Christians, and serves as a guide and encouragement to the Christian community as to how to live, and behave, and think under such horrific circumstances. So now let's begin our study, and pray that the Lord will grant us clarity of thought and proper interpretation, so that we might do justice to this literary masterpiece, authored under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We will be reading from Chapter 1, verses one through nine:

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:1-9 (NASB)

After reading these texts, one can't help but be amazed at both the depth and clarity of revelation that Peter puts into just a few sentences. It would be impossible for anyone to truly grasp the full depth, and all the immense ramifications of Peter's words from just a cursory reading. Therefore, let's take these sentences one at a time, and carefully examine them, so that we're sure that we grasp all of the richness, and we don't miss the full depth of his meaning, or the proper implications of his words. Let us think them through carefully, and be certain that we draw the full and proper conclusions. Therefore, let's start our systematic analysis with the first two verses which I've titled:

Chosen and Sanctified to Obey Jesus Christ

Verses 1-2:

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

Peter immediately identifies himself as the author of this letter and declares himself an apostle of Jesus Christ. This declaration both authenticates the source and establishes the authority of the content. He goes on to say that it's written to those individuals who are dispersed throughout the cities and territories which are now a part of modern-day Turkey. The words also carry the connotation that these people are residing as aliens, or temporary residents. The best way to understand Peter's implication, based on his later statements regarding the Saints being pilgrims and sojourners here on this earth, as he says in chapter 2 verse 11, is that he means that Christians are not entirely at home here on this earth, but are awaiting a permanent eternal residence. We aren't really comfortable here and don't truly fit in anymore.

Then, in the very same sentence, he says *“who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”* This statement means exactly what it says. It means that God the Father made a personal choice of His own free will before it ever actually took place in time and space. This statement does not mean that God foresaw the future and then reacted on that knowledge as some allege. This statement does not indicate a reaction by God based on something He foresaw in the future, but rather a choice made by the will of God before it ever came about. This statement means that God the Father, according to his own foreknowledge, made a definite choice of something (in this case certain people) which preceded the very existence of those people in tangible time and space.

Therefore, establishing the certainty of the foreknowledge of God in making a particular choice, the logical questions are; who did He choose, how does He carry out that choice, and what did He choose them for? Fortunately for us, all of these questions are answered before he even finishes the sentence. The sentence goes on to say *“by the Sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.”*

As you’ve heard me teach before, God the Father has chosen to use various **means** to accomplish his intended purposes. The Father implements His choice of the redemption of His elect through the means of the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Now, so that we understand what this means, we have to understand what is this sanctifying work of the Spirit. Sanctification, in its simplest definition, means being set apart from a larger group. It means being singled out of a larger body and designated for a specific purpose. This is a judicial act or choice made by God alone. But here we’re talking about the **sanctifying work** of the Spirit, which is not the initial choice, but the **effect upon** the individual by consequence of that choice. In other words, this is the resultant effect upon the individual of having been chosen and set apart by God for a particular purpose, and it is a work of the Holy Spirit.

Okay, so we’ve established that God has made a specific choice, by His own foreknowledge, and this choice is to set apart a specific people from within the broader group of humanity, upon whom He will do a sanctifying work by the power of the Holy Spirit. And what is it that Peter describes as this sanctifying work? It is *“to obey Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with His blood.”* So what does Peter tell us is the sanctifying work of the Spirit, it is to take those who have been chosen by God, and set apart for His purpose, and train them to become obedient to Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood for the redemption of their sins. So then, how is it that one of those who has been chosen by God, and set apart by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, may rightly demonstrate both their love and appreciation for Him? Peter says that the sanctifying work of the Spirit is to produce a people who will *“obey Jesus Christ.”* Of this fact we have substantial corroborating testimony of scriptures. Both from the mouth of Jesus himself and also from the Apostle John:

10 “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” John 15:10 (NASB)

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. 1 John 5:3 (NASB)

15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” John 14:15 (NASB)

It is beyond debate that the Scriptures directly tie obedience to the words of the Father and of Christ, to a genuine love for them. Anyone who says that they really do love God but they just don’t like to do the things He says is self deceived. God the Father, by His sovereign choice, has provided a means by which humanity may demonstrate their love for Him and for His Son. According to the Scriptures that **means** is our obedience to his commands.

Yes, we might assemble together on Sunday mornings, we might sing pretty songs, we might serve on numerous committees, and all of these things are wonderful, and they’re proper, but none of these is a sufficient substitute for obedience to the Word of God. Enthusiasm and good works are appropriate fruits of the Spirit, but they can all be performed either by the power of the flesh, or, as a fruit of the Spirit. That which differentiates, and authenticates the **source** of these good deeds, is whether one diligently strives to **know, understand, and obey** the word of God.

It's sometimes humorous how human beings can so comfortably live with obvious contradictions. For instance, it's altogether common to hear many of those who profess to be Christians turn right around and say that they don't like to read the Bible. They love the Lord they say, they just don't like to hear what He says. I wonder if we realize that what He says is the very definition of who He is? You cannot separate who He is from what He says. If you don't love what He says then you don't love Him, because He is what He says. His words reveal His attributes, and it's His attributes, and His character, that forms the very basis of our attraction for Him, if we truly know Him.

And this is why so many who claim to love Him don't want to know anything about Him, because the more they know about Him the more they realize how different He is from them and what they are. How different His words are from what their words are. How different His affections are from the things that they truly love. The churches are filled to overflowing with people who will claim to love Jesus, but would rather be horse whipped than to have to attend a regular Bible study. Let me make a bold statement here – anyone who doesn't love the **word** of God, doesn't love God. Because He is exactly what He says. (Jn 1:1) If you don't have a heartfelt desire to hear and understand what He says, then you don't really love Him at all, no matter what you say with your words, or even might think in your own mind.

(Make example of Christ's true calling to discipleship vs popular perceptions, using Luke 14:26,27,33)

Please understand that I say this not by any means to malign or discourage anyone, but rather as a warning and exhortation to all of those who claim the name of Christian, including myself, as to what constitutes a genuine disciple of Christ. A genuine believer. One who is undergoing the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. This is a very accurate means by which every one of us may test the authenticity of our claim of faith. **To love God, and His Son Jesus Christ, is to love the Word.** (Scriptures)

On the positive side, for those who do love the word of God, and do have a heartfelt desire to be pleasing to Him through our humble obedience, this is a great encouragement. Because we see that we've been given a means also, a means by which we may voluntarily display the authenticity of our love, and the depth of our gratitude for His great mercy. Regarding the kind of man that the Lord finds pleasing, we have comments from both David and Isaiah:

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

Psalms 51:17 (NASB)

Thus says the Lord, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? 2 "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the Lord. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

Isaiah 66:1-2 (NASB)

This passage from Isaiah puts it very well. Indeed what is there that mankind might offer to God? Considering that His hand has made everything that exists. So then, what is it that we can offer to Him in return, seeing that He is the creator of all that we have available to us in the first place. The answer – a humble and contrite heart, towards Him first, and then to our fellow man second. And a reverent, even fearful respect for His word.

It is this, and pretty much only this, that mankind might offer in return to the God who has made us, chosen us, redeemed us, and will eventually even glorify us. He will literally make us the Temple in which He eventually resides, in as much as He is a Spirit entity, and not a tangible creature such as us. And it is this for which we were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God, and into which we are being fashioned by the sanctifying work of his Spirit. And for which we were washed and sprinkled by His own precious blood for redemption from our sins.

There will be no one in the kingdom of God who disagrees with the Word of God. There will be no one in the kingdom of God who is indifferent toward the Word of God. And there will be no one in the kingdom of God who does not tremble at the Word of God. All who live this life in blatant disobedience, or even just indifferently to the Word of God will find that they are not among the chosen of God, because there was no sanctifying work of the Spirit taking place in their lives, which work is defined by Scripture as the work of humble, submissive, obedience to His commands. (v.2)

To all those who are among the chosen, according to the foreknowledge of God, there is the visible work of the Holy Spirit taking place within their lives, within their affections, and within their behaviors. There is a God given, reverent, holy fear within every true believer of flagrantly and consistently disobeying the Word of God, or even simply living in casual disregard to it. A true believer cannot comfortably remain ignorant of the Word of God, because the sanctifying work of the Spirit will not permit that. Verse two of our text tells us that it is God who has chosen to initiate this sanctifying work in His elect, and this work is to bring those elect into obedience to his Son. And it's obvious that to be obedient to anyone, it's first necessary to know what that One has said in the first place. Obedience necessitates information.

However, even from the very first century, as we know from reading the apostle John's description of the seven churches in Revelation, apathy, and even blatant disobedience, has invaded the churches. Apathy towards the Commandments of God is rampant in our churches. There are even churches who openly declare that obedience isn't even necessary, just belief in Jesus. But the Scriptures *define* belief as obedience. There is no such thing as "disobedient belief" found in the holy Scriptures, in fact the words "faith," "belief," and "obedience" are practical synonyms. The scriptures routinely use them interchangeably, as in the passages about the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt discussed in Hebrews 3:12-16. (Use example of 1Jn 1:9 and preacher with guitar)

Any and every use of the verses from 1st John 1:9 must be done against the background of the verses from chapter 3:4-10. It is against this background that they apply and are rightly understood. When wrenched apart from their rightful context they become, to many, a license to sin with impunity. A "get out of jail free" card. Just confess your sins and everything's okay. But it's not at all that simple. Let's read what else John said in this very same letter:

4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

1 John 3:4-10 (NASB)

Obedience to the commands of God, and reverent fear of His chastisement for disobedience, are, for all intents and purposes, completely absent from the vast majority of those multitudes of assemblies that call themselves churches. There are whole denominational empires that are entirely focused on how to make a professing Christian healthy, wealthy, prosperous, and wise. And others that are entirely convinced that their whole purpose of existence is to save people from hell, so they're obsessed with, and singularly focused on, systemized evangelism schemes for the salvation of the multitudes of indifferent sinners who have no interest whatsoever in God or in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But our verses tell us that the sanctifying work of the Spirit, on the chosen of God, is that of bringing those chosen into obedience to Jesus Christ, not making them prosperous and wealthy, nor making them accomplished evangelists. It's great to be prosperous, it's wonderful to be healthy, and we're commanded by scriptures to take the gospel to the ends of the earth; but our purpose for existence is to be made obedient to Jesus Christ, by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, which work transforms us into His likeness. (Rom 8:29; Eph 4:13; Phi 1:6; 3:21)

Our churches have become masters of the art of majoring on the minors. We take a simplistic principle and make it the whole purpose of existence. Like the verses that tell us that God will provide for His own, and the verses that tell us to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. These are wonderful verses, and we do appreciate those principles, but the scriptures are replete with the revelation that we are created by God first and foremost for His own purposes, not to suite or to save ourselves.

From the beginning of scriptures to the end, there is an unbroken theme that obedience to the word of God is the means by which man may commune with God. The means by which we may thrive and prosper, and live in His presence and His favor. Obedience to God, through obedience to His Son Jesus, is an absolute, non-negotiable mandate, for any and all, who seek to know Him and live in close communion with Him. Obedience to Him makes it possible to approach Him, and thereby qualifies us to offer acceptable worship. Apart from repentance from sin, and a sincere striving for obedience, He is unapproachable, and therefore beyond our range of worship. And, if we are unfit for worship, then we're useless to God, for He tells us that what He seeks from man is acceptable worshipers, and specifically those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. (Jn 4:23-24)

If all this is so, then why is there so much disparity in perceived church mission and purpose statements? Why are there so many different ideas as to what is our primary purpose? And what are the proper priorities that a Christian and a church should be pursuing? It's not that the scriptures don't tell us, it's that we don't like what they say. It's the same reason that we always hear 1st John 1:9, but almost never hear those verses from chapter 3, verses 4-10 that we discussed earlier. It's because resisting sin, and pursuing righteousness, isn't at all easy. It's hard, it's very hard indeed.

Obedying the word of God completely slays our own self-interests. We want to do "*what we want to do*," not what God wants us to do. Submitting to the word of God requires serious self-denial, a term that's unthinkable in our society, and sadly also in our churches as well. We don't want to deny ourselves, we want to satisfy ourselves, and then be justified in that self-satisfaction by the blood of Jesus. This kind of attitude is called antinomianism, which is a false and heretical belief that Christians are released by grace from having to obey moral laws in their daily lives. Matthew 5:17-20, and then chapter 7, verses 21 to the end of the chapter are entirely about the necessity of obedience to the word of God for the authentic salvation of the soul. The house built on the rock, is the house built on obedience to the word of God. In those passages from Matthew chapter 7, the **rock** being referred to is a metaphor for **obedience** to the **words spoken by Jesus Christ**. Read those verses carefully and see if I'm not telling you the truth.

There are no substitutes for obedience to the word of God and Jesus Christ. Enthusiasm is not an acceptable substitute. Beautiful music is not an acceptable substitute. Charitable works are not an acceptable substitute. Education and Bible knowledge are not an acceptable substitute. And even all of these combined together, in notable quantity, is not an acceptable substitute for obeying the word of God. Because apart from a lifestyle of diligent obedience to His commands, God simply will not accept any of them. Let me back that up with a scriptural example. There was a minor prophet named Amos who was sent by God primarily to the northern tribes of Israel. This was a time of political and economic peace and stability for the northern kingdom, and the people were living in safety and prosperity. But there was rampant corruption and escalating moral decadence among the people. So God sent Amos to give them a warning, because they mistook their economic prosperity as a sign that God was satisfied with their lifestyle, and pleased with their religious offerings. So Amos rocked them to the core with this stern warning from God himself: (Ch 5:21-24)

21 I hate, I despise your feasts!

I can't stand the stench of your solemn assemblies.

22 Even if you offer Me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept [them] ;

I will have no regard for your fellowship offerings of fattened cattle.

23 Take away from Me the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.

24 But let justice flow like water, and righteousness, like an unfailing stream.

Amos 5:21-24 (HCSB)

Amos told Israel that their religious assemblies were useless. Their offerings were completely unacceptable, and their music was just an annoying noise to his ears. That God found them all to be offensive, because they were offered by a people who were living in disobedience to His commands and flagrantly practicing lawlessness. All the sacrifices, and all the offerings in the world, are not an acceptable substitute for righteous obedience to the commands of God. In fact, they are not even deemed acceptable in His sight. They are defiled and polluted by unrepentant sin, and therefore an offense to God.

The prophet Hosea wrote very specifically concerning what God desires from His chosen. He wrote:

*6 For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,
And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

Hosea 6:6 (NASB)

And what does He mean by loyalty? He means being loyal to the observance of His commandments, which is the authentication of man's love and appreciation of God. He's not talking about loyalty to the offering up of many burnt offerings; for He doesn't desire offerings **for** sin, but rather He desires repentance **from** sin, and accepts the offering only as a means to span the gap. God takes no pleasure in the slaughter of animals, His desire is that we wouldn't have to slaughter the animals, but has instituted the principle for the sake of man and his innate weakness and inability to measure up to the glory of God. In the very same way now, Jesus wasn't crucified because God enjoys crucifixions, but because mankind's condition necessitated it. The desire of God is to have His children obey Him, not a bunch of rampant sinners who are constantly offering apologies for unrepentant sin and using the blood of Jesus to justify their behaviors. (1Pet 2:16)

The Jews came to believe that God took pleasure in the offerings themselves, and lost sight of the real purpose of them. Today we have multitudes that honestly seem to think that God is perfectly happy with a church of rampant sinners, just as long as they'll go to church on Sunday, wave their hands in the air and sing pretty songs, and then confess their perpetual sins. To them, that's precisely what the blood of Jesus is for, and that this is what delights Him. This is exactly like the Jews who thought that God desired and enjoyed the actual animal sacrifices themselves. This is called missing the point big time, monumentally missing the point, and our verses that we're studying now make this fact abundantly clear to any and to all who wish to actually know the truth.

Now I believe that we've extensively, if not exhaustively, covered this point, and sufficiently supported it with scriptures to make our conclusions regarding the scriptural mandate of obedience to Christ undeniable. So, I'd like to move on now to the next verse, but that opens up a topic that will surely require a whole lesson of its own, so let's just wrap this up with a brief summarization and we'll conclude tonight's lesson.

Summary:

We are told by Peter, in verses 1 and 2, that we Christians reside here on this earth as aliens, as those who are only temporary residents, because this isn't our real home or our real city. And while we're here, we must reside among a much larger community of people who don't share our beliefs, or our ethics, or our morality. In later verses he's going to tell us that this situation will often result in various trials and persecutions during our temporary stay on this earth.

He goes on to tell us that we have been specifically chosen by the foreknowledge of God to be set apart from the general community of mankind, and that we will undergo a sanctifying work performed upon us by the Holy Spirit. This sanctifying work is the means God uses to implement His intended purpose for those whom He has chosen and set apart. This sanctifying work will slowly and progressively begin to transform us into the likeness of our Savior Jesus Christ, and part of that transformation will be the work of teaching us to obey His words, which are His commands. And it is by this obedience **to** Him that we display our gratitude and affection **for** Him. **This is our means to offer Him acceptable worship.**

This Spiritual work will be done first on the inside; on the invisible parts of our being, but will inevitably begin to manifest itself in our outward and visible attitudes and behaviors. Our affections and appreciations will be very much influenced, and we'll begin to see things from a completely different perspective than we did before this sanctification process commenced. This sanctifying work which is being performed within us, and worked out by us, is our own validation of authenticity that we are truly beloved by God and among His chosen and elect children. Therefore, let us be diligent to cooperate and participate freely and actively in this sanctifying process of transformation to Christlikeness. To Him be the glory for now and evermore. Amen

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