

1 Peter 1 • God's Grace in Salvation

Introduction

Within every generation of the Church there are those who self-define the terms “grace” and “salvation” to something which basically ends with a simple, personal acknowledgment of Christ rather than having to follow through personally. Essentially although they “believe” in Christ to the degree that they cast a vote in favor of Him, they fail to follow through with the biblical definition that obedience to God’s Word and ways is the proof that someone “believes”. Peter begins by explaining not just what we can expect from the greater doctrinal working of God’s plan of salvation, but how it is supposed to be personally applied to a life truly experiencing it. As it turns out, the cross is the starting point of something much bigger which extends into not just eternity past, but future as well as it continues to work in us at present.

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen² 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.

[Read v.1-2]

Q: What is probably the dual meaning of calling those addressed by his letter “aliens, scattered”?

A: For Jewish believers it refers to those dispersed outside of physical Israel; for all believers regardless of ethnicity it is the spiritual condition of all who are no longer citizens of the world, but heaven. (Eph. 1:4)

Q: What is doctrinally significant about v.2 where the Godhead is concerned?

A: In a single sentence is mentioned all three members, “God the Father”, “the Spirit” and “Jesus Christ”; it takes all three to complete the work of salvation.

Q: What is doctrinally significant about their work?

A: It shows the basic plan of salvation:

1. Chosen by God.
2. Saved by Christ.
3. Sanctified by the Spirit

Q: Is there anything more to being “chosen” by God than just being selected by Him?

A: It is qualified as involving “the sanctifying work of the Spirit”, “to obey Jesus Christ”, and “be sprinkled with His blood”, the biblical meaning to be cleansed from the world according to God’s standards. (v.2) “Chosen” carries with it the simultaneous responsibility to live a changed life in Christ.

Q: What is the requirement on our part where this work is concerned? What does it mean?

A: “Obey”. The repeated biblical admonition is that obedience to Christ is proven by obedience to His Word and ways.

Application: God chose us before the foundation of the world, Christ saved us when He died for us, and the Spirit sanctifies us, but the requirement on our part is to “obey”.

³Blessed 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, ⁴to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[Read v.3-5]

Q: In v.3, what is the contrast initially presented concerning the work of salvation?

A: We are “born again to a living hope” refers to what takes place in this life, but it ultimately is realized “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”.

Point: Our hope of salvation in **this** life is actually for its fulfillment in the **next**. What is considered “living” in the present is anything but without Christ. “Living” and “dying” experience a role reversal when they are no longer seen as temporal for this life alone.

Q: What is to be expected to be gained in the next life from this present life’s “living hope”?

A: (v.4) “...to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away”. By definition an inheritance can only be obtained upon someone’s death.

Q: What might be revealing about the way our inheritance is described?

A: That it is not of a corruptible, temporary earthly nature but a heavenly, eternal one. (Mt. 6:19-20)

Q: How do we know for sure that this inheritance is not something to be received and experienced in this life? Where is it said to be located?

A: It is qualified as “reserved in heaven for you”. (v.4)

Q: But what IS provided to us in this life?

A: We “are protected by the power of God”. (v.5)

Q: Whereas in the opening section the requirement on our part is obedience, what is the related requirement here?

A: “Faith”. (v.5)

Q: How is the contrast of what is to be expected in this temporal life vs. the coming eternal life revealed in v.5?

A: We are working toward the completion of the work of salvation “ready to be revealed in the last time”. It will never be entirely fulfilled in the course of this life, but only in the next.

Point: Do we carry around the notion that somehow everything should be completed and fulfilled in our present life? What changes would we make if we lived as if all things will only achieve completion in eternity to come?

Application: We have a “living hope” through faith in Christ that what He has begun in this life is brought to completion in the next.

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so 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; ⁸and 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, ⁹obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

[Read v. 6-9]

Q: How does this provide a dramatic contrast to what we were just told where our inheritance is concerned?

A: Whereas our inheritance cannot be expected to come until the next life, what we **can** expect in the present are trials. (v.6)

Q: But what is common to both our heavenly inheritance and earthly trials? What do they both share where we are personally concerned?

A: They are both aspects of the working of our faith. “Various trials” are for the purpose of “the proof of your faith”. (v.7)

Q: What can we expect is going to take place where our faith is concerned?

A: According to v.7, we can expect that it is going to be “tested by fire”—that is, refined in the same way as all the useless material around gold is burned away so that all that remains is what is most valuable.

Q: And what is the ultimate goal of this refining process?

A: “Praise and glory and honor...of Jesus Christ”. (v.7) It is to completely lose our “self” and render all things for the glory and name of Christ.

Application: Obedience to God’s Word and ways is refined by trials so that all disobedience and self-will are burned away and all that remains is biblical faith.

Q: What do both the working of faith in the previous section and this one further have in common in v.5 & 7?

A: The previous goal is for salvation “ready to be revealed in the last time” (v.5), and likewise this is for “the revelation of Jesus Christ”. They are both aimed at making us properly ready for fulfillment in the next life when it matters most.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

— 1 Peter 4:12–13

Q: How is faith further defined in v.8?

A: It is unconditional love based on faith—“you have not seen Him, you love Him”, and obedience—“and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him”. The biblical definition of “believe” is always defined as obedience.

Q: What is common to the bottom line of both this and the previous section where the working of our faith is concerned?

A: “...faith for a salvation” (v.5) and “obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls”. (v.9)

Application: What the work of salvation has initiated in this life is intended for completion in the next. Everything we undergo in this life works toward that goal.

¹⁰As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, ¹¹seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

¹³Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

[Read v.10-12]

Q: What might be a very important lesson we can learn from those through whom God gave His Word to guide us in trying to understand His prophetic Word?

A: They were seeking to know their fulfillment in Christ, not just one milestone of prophecy concerning His coming.

Q: What is different for us now from the Old Testament figures then? How might this connect to what has been discussed so far?

A: We have the Gospel (v.12)—that is, our faith is not just active and working in this life, but proactively for the next, the complete working of salvation through the Gospel.

Application: *Our faith is assured of the working of salvation in this life for the next by the fact that the plan of salvation has fulfilled God’s promises given from the very beginning.*

[Read v.13-16]

Q: What are the actions taken by those in v.13 with an authentic faith in Christ?

1. “...prepare your minds for action..” Our thoughts are always submitted to the Word and ways of Christ in order to prepare us in advance to properly put our faith into practice accordingly.
2. “...keep sober in spirit...” Our emotions and attitudes are always in submission to Christ’s Word and ways in order to prepare us in advance to properly put our faith into practice accordingly.
3. “...fix your hope...” Notice that it is fixed on being completed not in this life, but “*at the revelation of Jesus Christ*”; live now for then.

Q: What is the definition of our being “obedient children”? How is this visibly proven?

A: “...do not be conformed to the former lusts”, (v.14) but “*be holy yourselves also in all your behavior*”. (v.15) Our behavior is completely changed from the old life to a new creation in Christ.

Q: Does being “holy” mean we are to live a perfect, sinless life?

A: Holiness means to be set apart and separated exclusively for God. It is the expression of living **IN** the world but not **OF** the world while we are here, visibly changed by our behavior. According to the Apostle John, a sinless life is an impossibility:

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

— 1 John 1:8–10

Application: *The biggest aspect of our faith requiring work on our part is to forsake the behaviors of the old life for those defining our new life in Christ according to His Word.*

¹⁷If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; ¹⁸knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. ²⁰For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ²¹who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

[Read v. 17-21]

Q: What is another motive Peter presents for us to live a visibly, changed life?

A: Because of the price Jesus paid for us on the cross.

Q: Why might this picture of redemption be particularly powerful to the original readers of Peter's letter who were immersed in the OT Scriptures?

A: Silver is associated with redemption in the Old Covenant, but there was also a requirement for fellow countrymen to redeem each other out of slavery. For instance, when many Israelites were taken prisoner and dispersed by the Romans, remaining Israelites literally paid silver and gold to redeem—that is, to “free” them. How much more precious this process by the blood of Christ and for eternity rather than just temporary freedom in this life.

Q: How does Peter provide yet another incentive to have faith in God's plan and working of salvation in v.20?

A: On the one hand it goes back to “before the foundation of the world”, and on the other it is about to be brought to conclusion because our present is defined as “these last times”. This work is not just for eternity to come, or for the present, but existed in eternity past.

Q: In v.21, how is what God did on Christ's behalf connected to this overall discussion of faith?

A: Just as the Father “raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory”, this is our parallel future to come, what in this present life has become “your faith and hope”. What has **already** been fulfilled in Christ is our personal assurance it **will** be fulfilled for each of us.

Q: So going back to v.17 to open this section, how might this be practically applied to our everyday life?

A: We would conduct ourselves—that is, change our behavior, knowing the standards by which we will be judged and the price that was paid for our opportunity to so change.

Application: *The working of salvation through the cross extends into both eternity past and future to engender a visible biblical faith and hope characterized by a changed life in the present.*

²²Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, ²³for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For,

“ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,
AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE
FLOWER OF GRASS.
THE GRASS WITHERS,
AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,
²⁵BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD
ENDURES FOREVER.”

[Read v.22-25]

Q: How does this reveal to us the ultimate, visible proof of Peter's opening statement that we are chosen by God to be obedient to Christ and sanctified by the Spirit? What is the result of authentic “obedience to the truth”?

A: It will ultimately be revealed by our “sincere love of the brethren, fervently...from the heart”. (v.22)

Q: Why is the “obedience to the truth” a critical part of the process producing biblical love for others?

A: This purifies the soul. “Purify” can be best understood as “unpolluted by sin”. Obedience to biblical truth does not simply make us smarter, but changes our heart, which is proven by the quality of our personal relationships. No longer do we live a lifestyle of sin, but biblical love.

And this is the word which was preached to you.

Q: What is specifically and exclusively here designated as “the truth”?

A: The Word of God.

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.
— John 17:17

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

— Ephesians 5:25–27

Q: What is revealing about Peter’s dual use of “love” in v.22?

A: The first “love” in Greek is “*philadelphia*”—that is, brotherly love and pertaining to man’s ideal; the second “love” in Greek is “*agapao*”—that is, the highest form of love pertaining to God’s ideal. Our “*obedience to the truth*” to become unpolluted by sin is to not just act in perfect brotherly love, but to achieve the greater ideal working of Christ’s love.

Application: *It is possible for unsaved people to demonstrate “philadelphia”—“brotherly love”, but only Holy Spirit-filled, sanctified Christians are capable of attaining to “agapao”—God’s unconditional love, when they live by the Word.*

Q: Given the repeated context of faith in each point Peter has made, what is the source to which he points in this last one?

A: A seed described as “*the enduring word of God*”. (v.23)

Q: How does this harken back to the Parable of the Sower? (Mt. 13)

A: We accept the Word implanted in us so that our obedience to the truth purifies us—that is, removes sin’s pollutive effects, and it changes us from the heart because it produces a spiritual harvest.

Q: What is the meaning of Peter’s quotation from Isaiah? (Is. 40:6-8)

A: Whatever is undertaken in the power of the flesh may look good for a time, but it will not last; obedience to God’s Word and ways produces results which will last forever. The Word of God produces things in us which are “*living and enduring*” (v.23), but the flesh, at its very best, only something temporal which comes to an inevitable and permanent end.

Application: *The working of salvation cannot be separated from the application and working of God’s Word in our daily life.*

Overall Application

- *Is there anything that is a part of this life which may be holding us back from fully living for the next?*
- *How well do we recognize that salvation requires on our part the pursuit of sanctification in, and obedience to, God’s Word? What might we still be holding back in this regard?*
- *What are the consequences for someone who thinks salvation means they can believe in Christ without following up with a changed life according to God’s Word going forward?*