

SERIES: “THE RICHES OF SALVATION”

MESSAGE #1 “THE PLAN OF SALVATION”

I Peter 1:1-2

The First Epistle of Peter is a relatively small package of truth, but it is precious and powerful. Do not let the package fool you! Some of the most precious and powerful things on earth come in small packages, like diamond rings and dynamite! This book had been called “the best encouragement literature in the New Testament.”

Let us begin this series of messages with an outline of the book:

Chapter 1 - Salvation

Chapter 2:1-11 – Sanctification

Chapter 2:12 – 3:12 Submission

Chapter 3:13 - 4:19 - Suffering

Chapter 5 - Service

The theme of the first chapter is “Salvation.” Theologians refer to the Doctrine of Salvation as the study of Soteriology. “Soteriology” is a term derived from two Greek words: “soteria” meaning “salvation” and “logos” translated “word, message or teaching.” Therefore “soteriology” means the word, the message or teaching about salvation. “Soteria” occurs 45 times in the New Testament . Salvation means “the deliverance from the penalty, power and ultimately the presence of sin.”

The word “salvation” appears three times in I Peter chapter one. It is the only chapter in the New Testament where the word appears three times. It occurs in v.5, 9, and 10. As we “dig” for the riches of salvation in this chapter, we begin with: **“The Plan Of Salvation”** which we find in v. 1-2 – ***“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”***

A few introductory remarks about verse one before we move on to the subject of this first study:

- A. The Writer** – “Peter.” The Greek is “petros” – meaning “a little rock.” So, here is a “little rock”, writing to other “little rocks” (2:5 - “you also are living stones”) about the Big Rock (2:6 - “I lay in Zion a Chief Cornerstone, elect, precious”).
- B. “Apostle”** - “a sent one”. Peter was a “sent one” to other “sent ones” for we too are sent – “as the Father has sent me, so send I you” Jesus said.
- C. “Strangers”** - See 2:11 also: “I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims.” (nkjv says, “I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims”; niv says, “I urge you as aliens & strangers”.) “Strangers” is from a Greek word which literally means, “refugees.”

ILLUST. I was speaking in Bangladesh to a meeting of Missionaries and Nationals. Bangladesh is officially “The Islamic Republic of Bangladesh.” Three men had come to faith in Christ and a group of militants came to the meeting looking for the recent converts to kill them! They tried to bribe one of the missionaries to tell them where the three new converts were being protected by the missionaries.

Also, I was speaking at a conference in the southern Philippines when a group of anti-Christ militants killed one of the pastors who was associated with the pastors in the conference. They cut out his tongue and then beheaded him.

This world is becoming increasingly opposed to Christians. I was in China and met with Christians who had to meet secretly. In a sense, we too are refugees and a refugee needs a refuge, Jesus Christ! Deut. 33:27 always lifts me up: “The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.” The words of the hymn come to mind: “Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on thee.”

D. “Scattered” The Greek: is “Diaspora” (“dia” = “through” and “speiro” = “to or scatter as scattering seed.” These Christians to whom Peter is writing had been scattered or sown about because of the persecution under the Roman Emperor, Nero.

If there existed a “Hall Of The Infamous” some of the portraits hanging there would be those of the likes of Hitler, Saddam Hussen, etc.– But the portrait that would be spotlighted above all others as most infamous would be that of Nero.

Nero, the Roman Emperor who fed Christians to the lions;

Nero, who made human torches of Christians;

Nero, who fiddled while Rome burned and blamed Christians;

Nero, who scattered the very Christians to whom Peter wrote this letter! Nero had ostracized these Christians from society; their possessions had been confiscated and many had been martyred for their faith.

He had dispossessed, disenfranchised and dispersed these Christians throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. They had no status and no rights in Roman society. So what does Peter write to them about?

- How terrible their plight? No!;
- How sad their condition? No!;
- How bad their Emperor? No!;
- How corrupt their government? No!;
- How poor they were? No!.

What does Peter write about?

- “Hope” v. 3;
- Their inheritance in heaven v.4
- Precious things - He uses the word “precious” three times:v. 7 “precious trial of faith”; v. 19 “precious blood of Christ”; 2:6 “He is precious” - precious person of Christ.
- He writes about “salvation” in v. 5,9,10 - If anyone needed to hear about salvation these people did – and so do we!

The purpose of this book is to give these persecuted people and us hope! We too are living in difficult days. (II Tim. 3:1) Christians are being targeted increasingly by anti-Christ forces and we are surrounded by the walking wounded.

ILLUST. I was in New Guinea walking with a missionary to a remote jungle village for services and met a man on the trail clad in a skimpy loin cloth with a bone through his nose and each ear. He had an arrow protruding out of his groin, having been shot by an enemy tribe the day before. He was dragging himself along with a bamboo pole seeking help. We were able to help him.

There are many walking wounded all around us. They do not have literal arrows protruding out of their bodies but the enemy of souls shoots “the fiery darts” (Eph.6:16) at us daily. Peter writes to encourage such. Jesus had said to Peter, “When you are converted, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:32) and that is what he does in this book. I Thess.4 tells us to “comfort one another”. Heb.10 says “encourage one another”.

ILLUST. I met a plastic surgeon in a Bible Conference where I was speaking on a cruise ship. I said jokingly to him, “When I get older and my face sags I’ll know where to go to get a face lift.” He said, “I’ll lift your face if you keep lifting my faith.” I said, “it’s a deal”. As you can tell, if you see my photo, I lost his address! A “faith lift” will result in a “face lift” and Peter’s purpose in this book is to give his readers a faith lift!

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

Now, let us get into v. 2 – “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”

God is The Master Builder and He never works without a plan. Paul tells us that we are God’s building (I Cor. 3:9) and we can rest assured that He has planned every detail beginning with the foundation (I Cor.3:11) which He laid before the world was formed (Heb.4:3) and every part of the building is “fitly framed together.” (Eph.2:21)

When we get to I Peter 1:2 we are plunged immediately and admittedly into deep water!

ILLUST. I used to teach swimming at the YMCA. We started at the shallow end of the pool – Peter starts at the deep end of the pool! Let us not drown as we swim through this verse.

We are introduced to several major doctrines in v. 2 – the doctrines of election, foreknowledge, sanctification, atonement, the trinity, grace, peace. There is too much here to digest in one meal, but let us begin by meditating upon “**The Plan Of Salvation**” and concentrate upon verse 2 as follows:

I. THE SELECTING BY THE FATHER “elect” v. 2

“Elect”, “election” and “elected” are found more than 75 times in the New Testament. The Greek word is “eklektas” and means “to pick out, to select out of a number, to choose.”

We are:

A. Chosen By The Father.

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” I have had the privilege of serving in the capacity of President of two Bible Seminaries and one Christian University. It has been my observation that one of the major theological subjects of Debate, that one can count on to cause an argument, is the Doctrine of Election. The debate has raged for centuries and it has not been resolved to the satisfaction of all in the past and it is not likely that agreement will be reached on earth in the future. Therefore, I am under no delusion that my brief contribution to the subject will settle the issue.

However, it is difficult to dismiss the plain statements of scripture relating to the subject and for that reason I will cite several Bible verses and keep my comments to a minimum.

- John 15:19 “I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”
- I Cor. 1:27-29 “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.”
- Eph. 1:4 “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world”
- II Thess. 2:13 “God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit”

C. H. Spurgeon writes on I Peter 1:2 as follows: “Christians were not ashamed of the doctrine of election in the olden time, but styled each other “the elect.” We are chosen to be holy, and who shall deny the Lord’s right to choose men for such a purpose?” (Spurgeon’s Devotional Bible, p.746)

The most important question that I can ask myself is not, “have I chosen God?” but “has He chosen me?”

B. Drawn By The Father.

- John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..."

The conclusion to which we come then is this: If we are chosen by the Father He will also draw us to Himself and we will come to Him. D. L. Moody is quoted as saying, “the whosoever wills are the elect. The whosoever won’ts are the non-elect.”

There are many who have been baptized and have joined churches, but there has been no change from their worldly lifestyles; they have no spiritual desires, no spiritual discernment; no spiritual appetite and no spiritual growth. They have religion but not

salvation. So what would we advise such persons to do, you might ask? The answer is already given us in 2 Peter 1:10 “give diligence to make your calling and election sure .”

The Plan of Salvation as presented in I Peter 1:2 begins with The Father. It continues with:

II. THE SANCTIFYING BY THE SPIRIT. v. 2 “through sanctification of the Spirit....”

The word “sanctification” in the Greek is “hagiasmos” and means “to be made holy; setting apart from sin unto God” and refers to the work of the Holy Spirit. When the Father chose us we were in an unholy state. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit that sets the chosen apart from unholiness to holiness.

How does the Holy Spirit accomplish this “sanctifying” work? In John 16 the Lord Jesus tells His disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit and His ministry to them and to the world of the unsaved. This is what He tells them about the Holy Spirit’s ministry toward the unsaved: “When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” (John 16:8-11)

The Holy Spirit’s accomplishes this work of :”sanctification” as follows:

A. By Charging The Sinner.

Conviction is not possible unless there is a charge. No charge, no conviction.

When the unsaved are confronted with the claims of Christ, the Holy Spirit drives home to the conscience of the sinner that he/she is guilty. Guilty of what? V. 8 - “When he comes he will reprove (convict) the world of sin ” And verse 9 states, “of sin, because they believe not on me” said Jesus. What are the charges against the sinner? Two: the charge of being a sinner and the charge of not believing in Jesus Christ for salvation.

B. By Convicting The Sinner.

Having been charged with being in a state of sin and the sin of not believing in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit now brings conviction to bear upon the conscience. To convict or convince means: “to prove guilty”. It always implies the presentation of evidence. It is a verdict that is legal in character; the verdict results in the fear of God’s judgment which is brought to bear heavily upon the guilty party’s conscience, resulting in agony of soul.

Note that in John 16:7 the Lord Jesus said, “If I do not go away the Comforter will not come to you.” The Holy Spirit comes to bring comfort to the saved. But look at John 16: 8 - “When he comes he will reprove (convict) the world of sin”! That is very uncomfortable to the sinner. The Holy Spirit is given to comfort Christians and to make the sinner uncomfortable! That sense of discomfort is the Holy Spirit doing His work – that work is called “conviction.”

When the sinning person hears the truth of God's Word there is discomfort – that is the Holy Spirit convicting. That is why a disobedient Christian and a disbelieving sinner tries to avoid hearing the Word of God! The Psalm writer said, "The entrance of the Word gives light." The Holy Spirit shines the light on the darkness in our lives and that is uncomfortable – that discomfort is conviction.

Question One: Have you been convinced that you are a sinner – the kind that God says that you are?

Question Two: Have you been convicted to the point of being willing to do what God says one must do in order to be saved?

Question Three: Is there any corroborating evidence that you have cooperated with the Holy Spirit and have been set apart from unholiness to holiness?

II Thess. 2:13 confirms what Peter says in I Peter 1:2 in these words: "God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the spirit and belief in the truth ..." Here is a clear balance between divine election and human responsibility. God does the choosing and sanctifying – we do the believing! Have you believed?

ILLUST. None of the people in Noah's day wanted to drown – but neither did they want to believe the truth! Our individual salvation comes down, in the final analysis, to our personal response to the truth.

III. THE SACRIFICING BY THE SON.

I Peter 1:2 – "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit are involved in the work of salvation. Without

The "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" there would be no salvation. Consider that:

A. Christ's sacrifice was vital.

Heb. 9:22 "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Peter refers to the blood of Christ again in I Peter 1:19 where he calls it "the precious blood of Christ." It is precious to the Father Who gave His Son to shed His blood; it is precious to the Son Who shed it; it is precious to The Holy Spirit Who applies it and it is precious to the sinner who is saved by it! Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "Atonement by the blood of Jesus is not an arm of Christian truth; it is the heart of it."

B. Christ's sacrifice was voluntary.

Concerning Christ's voluntary sacrifice of Himself He said, "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John 10:18) Jesus was not a victim! Neither was He a martyr. He came for the express purpose to "give his life a ransom for many." (Matt.20:28; I Tim.2:6)

C. Christ's sacrifice was vicious.

Death upon the cross was the most vicious death that the heathen Roman soldiers could conceive to execute criminals. Philippians 2:8 states that He died “even the death of the cross.” It was not just a death by any means, but the worst form of death, “*even the death of the cross.*”

Isaiah’s prophecy paints the scene most vividly: “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:4-7)

D. Christ’s sacrifice was vicarious. i.e. Substitutionary.

Heb.10:14 - “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”

I Jn 2:2 “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

E. Christ’s sacrifice was victorious.

Again Isaiah writes of the Suffering Savior from the Father’s perspective and says, “when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” (Isaiah 53:10-11)

And Philippians 2 records His victory in these words: “he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:8-11)

CONCLUSION:

We have only scratched the surface of the “Riches Of Salvation” in the mine of I Peter chapter one. We shall continue to explore the wealth of the Word in the next message.

We have seen in this first installment, “The Plan Of Salvation” from I Peter 1:2. God’s plan to save sinners involves all the members of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Let us:

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise Him, all creatures here below.
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.”

And,

“Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall.”

(II Pet. 1: 10)

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ADDENDUM:

A brief comment about the word “foreknowledge” in v. 2 - “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” The Greek verb form of the word “foreknowledge” is “proginosko” (“pro”- before” and “ginosko” = “to know before” and the noun is “prognosis”. The English words “foreknow” or “foreknowledge” do not convey the full meaning of the Greek. There are two actions in the Greek word “proginosko.”

The first action is “to know beforehand.” Some say, “God knew beforehand who would accept His son Jesus and on that basis chose them. If God chooses sinners to salvation because He knew the sinners who would choose Him, then sinners control God’s decisions. What kind of God is it that sinners can control?

God is not influenced in His elective choice by foreseen faith. Admittedly we have difficulty in trying to understand this great truth which God has not fully explained to us. But remember, finite minds cannot fully comprehend the infinite mind of God. We rest in the knowledge that He is in control!

The second action in the Greek word “proginosko” signifies a predictive appointment. So the full meaning is “to know beforehand and appoint or predict the outcome or determine the outcome.” Taking the English word “foreknowledge” at face value does not convey the full meaning of the original term and has led to erroneous conclusions on the part of some.

Later in chapter one, Peter writes concerning the redemptive price paid in blood by the Lord Jesus, that He “was foreordained before the foundation of the world.” We cannot separate “foreknowledge” from “foreordination.” God knew beforehand, yes, but He also foreordained, that is, appointed the outcome. Acts 2:23 is another example: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel (that is foreordination) and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

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