

Peter has told the scattered Jewish believers of the wonderful fact of having been chosen, sanctified, begotten again, and made heirs of unfading heavenly prospects. Earthly prospects, previously valued, were rapidly fading and they were in the midst of hardship, suffering and persecution on the earth simply as Jews and also now as Christians. These would more than amply be repaid by the wonderful heavenly inheritance and future public revelation, display and crowning of the Lord Jesus. The mystifying Old Testament prophecies concerning the future earthly glory of the Christ and His people Israel will yet be fulfilled to the letter in a later age. Meanwhile the rejection and suffering of Christ described by those same prophets has been fulfilled. Now they (and we) are partakers of His sufferings while looking forward to fulfilment of the remaining prophecies.

Having established their (and our) present situation in accordance with God's big plan and purposes, He begins with needed exhortations. "Wherefores" and "ifs" precede various action verbs exhorting as to our walk with God in present circumstances. It is not a time of leisure and entertainment but of work, and not just work but labor. Girding up the loins describes a man freeing the legs from loose garments that would hamper movement when working or running. Paul uses a similar illustration to speak of the girdle of truth, Ephesians 6. We freshly, as needed, gird up our minds to restrict our thoughts from wandering into areas that will defile our thinking (morally or doctrinally) and move us toward sinful behavior. Rather we are to recall and focus upon the **grace** that lies ahead when Jesus Christ is revealed to all the earth.

We are to behave as obedient children, subject to parental authority, and not return to conform ourselves to the way we ignorantly walked when still unsaved. There is a far more blessed state to enjoy. To be holy in all of our thinking and behavior. Holy? That's a large order! Unattainable many say. But Peter doesn't exaggerate. He points us to be "holy (sanctified, set apart) as He is who has called you is holy." He quotes Old Testament scripture (Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:7) familiar to the Jewish believers. Peter refers to many parts of the Old Testament in his letters, scriptures which by their very familiarity would both calm and inspire the saints of Jewish descent. As we become more familiar with the Old testament (which we should strive to do) we will understand and value the New Testament more.

Another "if." If they now call upon God as "Father" instead of His Old Testament name Jehovah, remember He still judges impartially. Just because we are now his children brought into tremendous favor and blessing doesn't mean we are free to "goof off" at will. No, we are to carry out our daily lives in fear because He judges impartially. He hasn't changed. Not fear of losing

our eternal salvation or status as saints. No, he has just assured us that He sovereignly chose us. But we fear hurting Him who gave so much to make us His own. Because we love Him. (And God is also a faithful Father who will lovingly chasten us, Hebrews 12:5-11. So we fear His displeasure as well).

Therefore Peter reminds us again of the tremendous sacrifice given and made for our redemption. It cost far more than anything of earthly value such as silver or gold. (Note again the weaning of their thoughts and values from mere gold and silver, both said to be corruptible.) And notice what they are redeemed from. The tradition of their fathers, the Law, instituted by God through Moses and added to by the Pharisees and others. It was now proven to be vain, empty, useless to them because of their proven inability to live up to it. Redeeming them (and us) cost the Father the death of His only begotten Son. It cost the Son a life of poverty, hardship, rejection, and a death of unparalleled suffering. The precious blood speaks of a violent or sacrificial death, not a "natural" death in which normally there is no blood shed. His death was as of a Lamb without blemish or spot, as was prescribed for the lambs used for the Passover and other sacrifices Israel was to carry out. A "blemish" speaks of a flaw one was born with. A "spot" is a stain or eruption from some disease or injury experienced during one's life time. Jesus had neither when He was crucified.

They had to be redeemed from the vain tradition of their fathers but this was not a surprise to God. He gave the Law as a schoolmaster up to Christ, Galatians 3:24. The need for a Redeemer was clearly proven to men and angels though God knew it all along. This Lamb was foreordained. Foreordained before the foundation of the world. Not an afterthought. Not an emergency stop-gap. Not Plan "B." No it was "Plan A" from before the foundation of the world. God's Plan was carried forward through creation, the fall of man, the degeneration of the race, the growth of corruption and violence, the flood, the establishment of government and nations, and further departure and independence from God. He then chose Abraham to father a nation to be His chosen people. It was the ancestry of the Christ who was to be the required sacrifice to redeem man kind. What Grace! What forethought! What wisdom! What blessing!

And the rest of the Plan is laid out here. God raised His Son from the dead and has given Him glory so our faith and hope might be placed in God and not in those traditions from which Christ died to redeem us. He already is glorified at the Father's right hand but still looks forward to believers receiving public glory with Him in the appointed day.

Peter isn't the only one to affirm God's foreordination of Christ to die, and election and

predestination of saints through sanctification of the Spirit. Paul does as well, Ephesians 1:4; 2Thessalonians 4:13; etc. So God in His grace has given us more than one witness to His marvelous sovereign grace. Accept it, trust Him, act in the light of this truth and rejoice in Him forever. They had.

But there is more. We have purified our souls. How? By simply by having obeyed the truth we have received in the gospel through the prompting and power of the Spirit. And He uses the word to bring about new birth. So we are to love one another fervently (intently). We can now love the brethren, our fellow believers. No halfway love here. Why? Having been born of God we are brothers and sisters. Not by natural human birth by corruptible seed, but born of incorruptible. By the word of God. It is the means of giving spiritual life. It itself is living, abiding, enduring, not merely existing, forever. As stated in Hebrews 4 it is “living and operative.” The

life it gives is as enduring as it is. All earthly things, material and philosophical reasoning, which man is so likely to rely upon and glory in, are as perishable as grass and flowers. The first frost last month ended much life for the season. The roadsides are brown now, where hours before they were green and living. Man is no more durable than grass, naturally speaking. How good to have eternal life that has been imparted by hearing and faith in the living, eternal word of the Lord. So the gospel, the good news, is preached to all mankind by the word of God. Salvation is not by man’s reasoning, promotions, eloquence, crowds, entertainment, persuasion, or coercion, just the simple living word of God brought to them by faithful believers. As He has promised, with the Spirit’s intervention, some receive it and are born again by it. Glory to God!

By Ron Canner, November 3, 2004