

1 Peter 1:2 'Saved For Obedience To Jesus!'

Two weeks ago we began our series on 1 Peter looking only at verses 1 and 2 of chapter 1. 'God's Elect' I called the sermon. We touched upon the difficult biblical truth that God "chooses", (indeed that He "chooses" and has chosen His people even before the creation of the world) according to Ephesians 1:4-5. Yes, it is God who chooses His people, we don't choose Him!

I made the statement that when we believe we have chosen God, we must first have been *enabled by Him* to make that choice. No, we don't actually *choose* Him, we in fact respond to *having been chosen by Him*. I explained our inability to choose God described in Genesis 6:5 "that every inclination of the thoughts of our heart is only evil all the time." And I also explained that not only are we the chosen of God, but we have also been chosen by Him! So we are chosen through his grace and mercy and we are chosen for His grace and mercy.

Brothers and sisters, I said that this truth can be confronting, because if God chooses only some, it also means that He doesn't choose others. To our humanistic thinking this does call into question the fairness or unfairness of God. Paul deals with this in Romans 9:21 and following.

Peter goes on to speak of God's Elect as being "strangers in the world", because as in Leviticus 11:44-45, God calls us to be holy. Those people who are the particular possession of God. Those who have been set apart. Claimed by Him for His Own. Not for common use. So we are called to be different. Even strangers, pilgrims, just passing through this world, on our way to our real home of heaven!

And that's where we pick up the text this morning. 1 Peter 1:2 'Saved For Obedience To Jesus!'

V2 "who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through the sanctifying work of the spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood." Beloved, we have before us The Triune God. Working in perfect harmony for the choosing, the setting apart, and the cleansing of His people. One God. One purpose. One outcome. The saving of His people! But each person of God having their own distinct role.

As I recapped this morning, we have already dealt with God's "choosing" last week. No, we don't choose Him, He in fact chooses us. The word "foreknowledge" does not stand alone. It stands alongside His choice of us. The one can be passive. We can know about something and yet not do anything about it. But God's choosing is active. So hand in hand we have God actively "knowing" and "choosing" His people. Psalm 139:1-16 and Ephesians 1:4-5: From "before the creation of the world" God has chosen us"! So God has "chosen us through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit."

But what does that mean? Well interestingly, the word "sanctifying" is yet another word which means set apart. So chosen, and set aside, or separated. And notice, this is the work of the Holy Spirit and it happens for a purpose. And that purpose is for "obedience to Jesus Christ." Now friends, may I suggest that this is very significant, because it shows, not only our purpose, but also the evidence of someone who is indeed being "sanctified" by the Holy Spirit. And the evidence is obedience to Jesus! Yes obedience to all that Jesus taught, commanded and fulfilled, when He came as the Living Word of God!

Matthew 28:16-20: "then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them

and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, and surely I'm with you always, even to the end of the age." Yes, and "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Some weeks ago at Bible study, Alan raised the question of what loving God looks like, and how we do it. Well here we see that love for God, being "Sanctified", set apart by the Holy Spirit, is evidenced in obedience to His Son Jesus. So for us to love the Father is for us to obey the Son! This leads to yet another question: what about when we fail Him? What about when we actually disobey Him? What about when we are travelling through one of those long deep dark valleys, and we seem to be constantly screwing up? Constantly doing that which even betrays the One who we profess? Does that mean that we are actually not really Christian at all? Are we not even saved? And they are valid questions for the person who truly wants to love and honour their Lord!

I begin my answer by asking two other questions. Who are these ones who do not fail Jesus? Yes who are they that "obey all that Jesus commanded"? Well we know that the religious elite, the Pharisees and Sadducees etc, religiously, kept the hundreds and hundreds of laws, (1100 odd altogether I believe), and yet obedience to God for them, was like Saul, expressed in murdering Christ's own church! So who are these people who 100% of the time, are loving God by "obeying" Jesus? Well of themselves, apart from Him they do not exist!

Another explanation of the word "sanctify" and sanctification is 'to be made pure'. And friends the thing about sanctification, is that its a process. We all know that we are saved by Jesus` Grace through His Blood once and for all time. We don't need to be saved over and over and over again. We are not like the Hebrews, who had to keep sacrificing animals etc. endlessly for sins that were committed. And we need to be reminded that the combined blood of those billions of animals, when put together, didn't even atone for one single soul: only Jesus can do that. But having been saved once and for all, there is a "sanctifying" process which is taking place within all of God's people, between now and heaven. And only there will it end. There is in a sense, this purifying process. That's what sanctification is. It is that process of the Great Sculptor, God, chip by chip, chiselling away those remainings of the world. Those things which are opposed to the Almighty, and are in fact at war within the man, woman and child of God! Yes it's that idea of being made pure, through the fires and trials of this life, as we seek to stand in Jesus` Name.

So in answer to my question 'Who are they of themselves who don't fail Jesus and obey Him all the time?' Of course they don't exist. But how do we answer Alan's question? What about when we fail, and we keep failing God endlessly? We know we love the Lord in our heart and yet we keep screwing up? In Matthew 5:8 in His sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Now again the question is: who are these "pure in heart"? We learned from Genesis 6:5 "that the thoughts of our heart is only evil all the time." So again, who are these "pure in heart"? Well yet again, of themselves, they do not exist either!

So will there be no one in heaven? Will heaven be empty? No! Jesus is talking about the purity of intention. The purity of intention of the saved soul. We know that at times the apostles themselves failed miserably. And yet their desire, (even Peter when he denied Jesus three times), yes his desire, his intention, "the intention of his heart" was to do that which would honour God. He went away and "he wept bitterly." He knew he'd screwed up in the worst way. But that wasn't his intention!

Romans 7:15 "I do not understand what I do, for what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do."
7:18: "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do

what is good, but cannot carry it out". V 19: "For what I do is not the good I want to do, no, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing." And let's remember, this is the Apostle Paul speaking here. He truly loved the Lord Jesus in that sense of seeking "to obey everything which he commanded." And yet his personal struggles with sin, were no less than yours and mine. He could not understand that the intention of his heart was to do only that which was good in Christ's sight. And yet according to him, it felt that he was so often failing miserably.

What is he going to do? Yes what *can* he do? Well, only one thing. That very same thing which you and I must do. Rest in Jesus! Romans 7:24-25: "Wretched man that I am. Who will save me from this body of death?" Paul breathes a big sigh of relief. "O thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

So in answer to Allan's questions, we see that our failures do not mean that we do not love God. Our failures are simply evidences of our struggle as we seek to love Him, as Paul does in Romans 7! Yes our ongoing struggle and war with the old person that does not want to let us go. And in Satan's hands, will continue to rage against us until Jesus takes us home! But Beloved, that struggle, yes that battle, that war from within, is indeed evidence of someone who is seeking to live for Jesus. If there is no struggle that is taking place against the old nature, and those things that war against us from this Dark World in which we live, then it is clear that we are not in the fight. And perhaps there is no desire of that purity of intention within our heart! Peter explains that the evidence of that fight is expressed in the "sanctifying" desire to "be obedient to Jesus"! Love is an action, not an emotion or a feeling. It is a deed. Not a word! So, we are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood."

There is an old hymn which goes: 'There is power, power, wonder working power in the precious Blood of the Lamb'. This hymn declares boldly that the only way that people can be set free is by the wonderworking, the miraculous working of being washed, and sprinkled with the Blood of Jesus! But to understand this sprinkling by His Blood, we need to return to the Old Testament, to Exodus 24. The scene before is after the giving of the Ten Commandments in chapter 20. Then a bunch of other laws and regulations are declared to Moses in the presence of the Lord before Mount Sinai. Moses would go on to build an altar, and 12 piles of stone, symbolising the 12 tribes of Israel. After he, Joshua, Aaron and his two sons, along with 70 elders had gone up to a set point, where they worshipped the Lord. Exodus 24:5-7 we read "then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said, we will obey."

So what do we have here? Well, as in 1 Peter 1:1-2, we have God choosing and setting apart a people for Himself. Sacrifices (or offerings) have been made; the blood of those animals divided into two halves. Half placed into bowls; the other half sprinkled on the altar (V6). Then in v7 Moses reads all of the stipulations and requirements of the covenant, the agreement between God and the people. V 7B they responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said, we will obey." Friends, clearly this is what Peter is referring to in v2 when speaking of the "sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and the sprinkling by his blood." The covenant that God made with His people was always founded upon their obedience to what God had said to them in His commands. That covenant was between the two parties. God declared; This is what I will do, as long as you honour your word, your word of obedience! Then in v8 "Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on

the people and said, this is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

The blood on the altar symbolises what Jesus would do upon the cross for the forgiveness of sin, and the blood on the people, symbolically binds them by obedience, to that covenant, or agreement which God had made! And it's important for us to note that the blood had to be applied to both the altar and the people. If the sacrifice had been made but not applied to the people, then atonement for sin had not yet been made.

So why is this so important for us today? Here's the thing: we can know all about the sacrifices of Jesus. We can know what the scriptures say. We can know what Jesus did, and what He did for His people, for us. We can profess our avowed agreement to all of those things. But if Jesus` Blood has not been applied to our souls, through the work of the Holy Spirit, yes through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, through Him being poured into our hearts and sprinkling our souls with Christ`s Blood, then all of that good knowledge will simply be carried with us to the grave. And from the grave be carried with us from there into Hell!

This sacrificial stuff, which is so foreign to us today is so important for us to grasp. In Hebrews 9:18-22 we read “This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said; “This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep. In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the Tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” Yes “and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

The first Sunday of each month what do we do? We symbolically acknowledge that the Body and Blood of Jesus has been applied to our lives and our souls. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 “for I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you; the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you, do this in remembrance of me”. In the same way after the supper he took the cup saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” Yes “this is the new covenant in my blood” Jesus said.

Beloved, for us these things are strange and foreign; but not to the Hebrews. They would have been taken back to Exodus 24 because all of that symbolism had been fulfilled in what Jesus did upon that cross! Peter was simply explaining that all of those things pointed to Christ. They were but a shadow that found their reality in Jesus! Moses sprinkled the altar and the people. The altar for forgiveness, and the people for binding then to that covenant with God. Jesus does the same. His blood was poured out at the cross, (that ultimate altar), and into the hearts of His People through the pouring in (the sprinkling) of the Holy Spirit! And the evidence of those things being true in each of His People is the sincere desiring and seeking to be “obedient to Jesus”! “Chosen by God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of his blood.”

Yes, the choosing, the setting apart, and the cleansing of His People. Father, Son and Spirit working together. One God with one purpose. The saving and sanctifying of His people! God saved His people through Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit *for* obedience, not *by* obedience. Remember, it's not what we do, but what He has done!

And he closes v2 with the wonderful words "Grace and Peace be yours in abundance." What wonderful words they are. The word "Grace" really sums up all that Peter has expressed so far, as he has sought to remove any presumption on our part, of in some way meriting our salvation.

"Grace." It means God's free gift. Now Beloved, wages are earned, but a gift is merely received. Wages are deserved, (well at least in theory that is), but a gift is unmerited. It comes from the heart and love of the giver. Wages are expected. But a gift comes to us often, in our unworthiness. When referring to Grace, when we consider who the givers are and what that gift is, we must be brought to our knees. God gave of His Son, and Jesus gave of Himself, that we might live. "For greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. That whosoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life."

Yes dear friends, when we reflect upon the Gift and the Givers, which Peter refers to here, we must be brought to our knees, as we are brought to the Cross of Jesus!

'My Lord, what love is this, that paid so dearly, that I the guilty one may go free? Amazing love, O what sacrifice, the Son of God given for me. My debt He pays and my death He dies, that I might live, that I might live!'

Let's pray.