

Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You An Expository Journey Through **1Peter** **1Peter 2:9-12**

17- Proclaiming the Excellencies of Jesus- Part 1

April 29, 2018

1Peter 2:9-12

9 But you are *A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION*, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 for you once were *NOT A PEOPLE*, but now you are *THE PEOPLE OF GOD*; you had *NOT RECEIVED MERCY*, but now you have *RECEIVED MERCY*.

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.

To the Glory of God

Now many of you have heard me use a phrase that is very common with me and my Ministry: "A Man- Centered Theology". And this seems, on the surface, to be a contradiction of terms. Because, if something is a "Theology", then it has to do with the "study of" or the "science of" God. So, "theology", by definition, has to do with what the Bible teaches about God. And the study of God used to be such a vital and important issue that even secular Universities had a "Theology Department".

All through this nation, during its formative years, business majors, and math and science majors, even those engaged in sports, routinely were exposed to what the Bible taught about God. And it

showed, as these people left that kind of exposure and went and made the United States to be the *freest* and the *wealthiest* and the *mightiest* nation in the history of mankind and the envy of the world.

For example, back during those years, the men at Harvard were required to have two hours of prayer and Bible-study under their belt before they went to their first class, and class started at 7:00 am. And that was the Business School! No wonder God blessed this country! The candidates for Ministry had to be able to read, write and speak fluent Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic in four years. No wonder we sent more Missionaries out from the United States than all the other nations combined!

But something horrific has happened since those days. The "Theology Department" of major Universities have been replaced with the "Department of Religion". Now that may not seem to be a very important difference to you on the surface, but it had huge implications. As we have seen, "Theology" is the study of what the Bible says about God. But "Religion" is the study of "how Man *relates* to God". And that isn't the same thing, not by a long shot.

Studying what the Bible said about God placed our efforts and our vision and our discussion solely on God and His Word and His Will and His Glory. While the study of how Man relates to God places our efforts and vision and discussion solely on Man and what benefits us. So, a "God-centered Theology" focuses on God, and how we may love and serve and obey and delight ourselves in Him. While a "Man-centered Theology" focuses on Man and how we may live better lives on this earth, using God to *our* glory.

Now the fact that secular Universities *abandoned* their study of God is *not* what made the Church become "Man-Centered". The Universities were simply *reflecting* what was already happening in the larger culture around them. The Industrial Revolution unleashed the amazing economics of Capitalism, and more people had access to more goods and services, at a cheaper price than ever before.

And as we began to prosper, we became deceived by what Jesus called "the deceitfulness of wealth". Please look at what our Lord said from **Mark 4:18&19**:

18 "And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word,

19 but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Here, Jesus said that three things have the power to “**choke the Word of God**” until it “**becomes unfruitful**”:

- 1. The Worries of the World**
- 2. The Deceitfulness of Riches**
- 3. The Desires for Other Things**

The Incarnate said that the “worries of the world” and the “deceitfulness of riches” and the desires for “Other Things” have the power and ability to literally *squeeze* the Life out of the Word of God until the glorious Truth of God’s Word no longer bears any fruit in our lives. In other words, these three things have the ability to choke what God spoke infallibly- until it becomes completely *ineffective* to us. What power must be in those three things! And how dangerous they must be!

And you would think that, since these three things are just that powerful and dangerous, that it would be a *priority* for Church Leaders to be faithfully teaching and warning and identifying and explaining just what Jesus meant here, so that God’s people could escape it. And for many years, that is exactly what the leaders of the visible Church on the earth did.

But over the last 150 years or so, more and more preaching, and more and more teaching, and more and more singing, and more and more discussions, and more and more activities in the Church have to do with “down here”, rather than “over there”. They have more to do with “how I may live a better and more prosperous life down here”, rather than “how I may walk this world in white”. They have more to do with what is “best for me” and what will “serve my ambitions” and help me to “fulfill my dreams” and assist me in “accomplishing my agenda”, than what is “best for God’s Glory” and what will “serve to obey God’s Word” and what will help to “fulfill God’s Desires” and what will assist in “causing the Will of God to be on earth even to the same degree and with the same urgency as the Will of God is done in Heaven”.

And so, we seldom hear God-saturated men thunder inerrant Words with a passion and anointing that allows sinners to behold the

Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. Instead we hear “tips on better living”, as though the Bible is really nothing more than a collection of Aesop’s Fables. The pulpits of far too many churches today are not filled with God. They are filled with politics and moral pronouncements, but they are not filled with God, and the amazing details of His Person that leave the hearers in stunned silence as they are exposed to what is Absolute and Eternal. People are not sitting with their mouths hung open as the magnificence of God and His spectacular Glory is unveiled through Scripture. And so, their minds are left empty and vacant, and they walk out the same way they walked in, unbroken, unbent, and unbowed.

Isaiah saw the Glory of God, and it put him on his face. It shattered his own arrogance and brought him to a place of humble repentance. And as he beheld God in His Magnificence, as he heard the seraphim cry, “*Holy, holy, holy!*”, Isaiah was so transformed that he immediately saw the great contrast between *himself* and this great God, and he cried out:

Isaiah 6:3

Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

... and his only desire at that moment, his only need, was to be cleansed. Nothing else mattered. Seeing God in His Beauty caused Isaiah to want the burning coal to touch his lips and purge his sin. And then, having been purged, Isaiah quickly volunteered to serve his King. So, the *seeing* produced the *change*. Beholding God, in all the particulars of His Glory, instantly brought Isaiah to utter despair about himself. Seeing God exalted high and lifted up brought about the immediate desire to repent and be transformed. And so, the “seeing” brought about the “transformation”, and the “transformation” brought about the “service”.

The Apostle Paul taught about this dynamic from **2 Corinthians 3&4**, let’s go there:

2 Corinthians 3:18-4:6

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the

Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

4:1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,

2 but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Now look again at what Paul said in **2 Corinthians 3:18**:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Now please, look again at the phrase:

... are being transformed into the same image ...

So, just *how* are fallen sinners transformed into the same Image?

... with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord ...

... and what is the process of this transformation?

... from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

So, we are transformed, from one realm of glory to the next. And that tells you that Paul is not simply talking about Salvation here, but he is also talking about the *process* of Sanctification. So, we are

progressively being transformed from what we are to what Christ is. Not that we are going to become Deity, but we will *gradually, progressively, from one realm of glory to the next*, becoming more and more "Christ-like".

So, please take notice that we are *not* just simply "changed". We are changed... **into the same image!** What Image? The image of a better life down here? The image of more money and a nicer house and nicer clothes, and more acceptability with the people of this fallen world? No. We are becoming what we have seen! We are being changed and transformed into what we see through our eyes and hearts and minds being "unveiled". And how does all this transpire? Through the Word of God being preached and taught and explained and modeled through Scripture.

For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Paul is teaching here that "in the same way" that God the Holy Spirit took the spoken Word of God (Jesus) at Creation and formed Light out of Darkness, that this is the very *same* way that He takes the preached and taught Word into our hearts. To do what? Paul said, "**To give the Light**". Now the phrase "the Light" has to do with the understanding or the illumination of something. So, just what does Paul teach that God the Holy Spirit gives us the understanding of- through the Word of God?

... the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

So, the first step is *not* transformation. The first step is *not* being progressively sanctified. No, the first step is God sovereignly unveiling our eyes so we may see! And what is the Image that we see that we are being transformed into? Paul describes it three different ways in this Passage:

- 1. The glory of the Lord (3:18)**
- 2. The glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (4:4)**
- 3. The glory of God in the face of Christ. (4:6)**

So, until God unveils our eyes so we can see these three things, we will *not* be transformed. Another way of understanding this is until we see what Isaiah saw, we will not be broken like he was, we will not be purged like he was, we will not be transformed like he was, and we will not be used like he was. So, for us to have what Isaiah had, we must see what Isaiah saw.

Now a “Man-centered Theology” is a lot closer to a “God-centered Theology” than you might think, which is why so many people are deceived by it. Both use Scripture to justify their positions and both teach many of the same things. For example, those who espouse this Man-centered” way of thinking use **1 Peter 2:9** which says:

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

... to justify that we are “special”, and therefore, God wants to bless us. But what these people teach and what Peter actually said are two different things. And to understand this difference requires that we spend some time here. Now, first of all, look again at the four things that Peter said that we were:

1. A Chosen Race
2. A Royal Priesthood
3. A Holy Nation
4. A People for God's Own Possession

... and then skip to the end of verse 9 to find out just *how* we became these four things. Peter said that we were “called”:

... out of darkness into His marvelous light;

So, we used to be in darkness and now we are in God's marvelous Light. Before we were saved, we were “slaves to sin”, and now that we have experienced the miracle of the New Birth, we are “bond-slaves” of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, of course, this is talking about Salvation.

God, through Christ, saved us. But look at *how* Peter described we became saved. Peter said God “called” us.

So, it was *not* through human effort or human initiation or human choice or human determinism that caused us to be removed from the Darkness of Sin and to come into God’s marvelous Light so we could become those four things. According to the Apostle Peter, the *reason* we are no longer in darkness, and the *reason* why we are now living and abiding in the marvelous Light of God, and the *reason* we are a chosen race and a royal priesthood and a holy nation and a people for God’s Own Possession, is because God “called” us. So, our dwelling in the Light has to do with us dwelling in Jesus. Us being those four things in **1Peter 2:9** has to do with our relationship with Jesus. And the *catalyst*, the *cause*, the *initiation*, and the *origination* of our Salvation is that God has sovereignly *overridden* our natural inclination to run and hide from God, and has effectually *called* us to Himself.

And then Peter says that there is one Reason *why* God called us. There is one Reason why we are no longer in darkness but are in the Light of God. There is one Reason why we are a chosen race and a royal priesthood and a holy nation and a people for God’s Own Possession, *so that* we may live and speak and act in such a way that displays the “Excellencies of Jesus Christ”. Look what Peter said:

... so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Now the phrase “**so that**” that we see often in the Bible always gives us insight into God’s main Purpose for doing something. And, so far in this Epistle, Peter has told us three different times *why* God did something:

1. We are told in **1Peter 1:6&7** to “rejoice”... **even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 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;**
2. We are told in **1Peter 1:20& 21** that Jesus was “**foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who 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.

3. And in **1Peter 2:1&2-** we are told to put aside malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander and then we are to “long” or desire or crave the Word of God, “**SO THAT** you may grow in respect to Salvation.”

... and now, here in **1Peter 2:9**, we are told that God has sovereignly “called” us out of the darkness of sin, and has graciously brought us into His Light, and that, by and through this Divine Calling, God has made us to be a chosen race and a royal priesthood and a holy nation and a people for God’s Own Possession, **SO THAT**:

... you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light

So, by sovereignly *calling* us out of darkness, by sovereignly *interrupting* our lives, and by sovereignly *inserting* Himself into our plans, and by sovereignly *violating* our wills and powerfully and effectually calling us, He made us to be those four things. But *why* did God call us and make us those four things? So, *we* could then become important people? No. So, *we* could be the focus of God in the Universe? No. Why?

So that we may proclaim the Excellencies of Jesus Christ

... so that our focus and words and lives and actions and thoughts could display the infinite Value and Worth of Jesus Christ! But sin stops that from happening. And not beholding the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ stops that from happening. And either not *knowing about* or not *appreciating* the various “Excellencies” of Jesus Christ stops that from happening. Because I would suggest that if you either don’t know about the many “Excellencies” of Jesus Christ or don’t care, if you have not first, seen, and then secondly, been radically changed by the Excellencies of Jesus Christ, then you could never and you would never proclaim them.

If the main Goal of being “called out of darkness and into His marvelous Light”, and of being sovereignly made to be those four things,

is to proclaim the Excellencies of Jesus Christ, how will we do that if we don't even know what the Excellencies of Jesus Christ are? How are we going to convince the pagan world that Jesus is better than anything this life can give to us, and He is better than anything this life can take away from us, if we are not realizing that Truth ourselves? How are we going to prove to the lost world that our Treasure and Home are in Heaven and not on this earth if all we seek after and all we pray about and all we talk about, and all we preach and teach about, and all we are happy about is how to get more stuff in this life?

And that is why I hate and despise the so-called "Health, Wealth, and Prosperity gospel". It isn't that I'm promoting us to sell everything we have and become hermits. But how can we live divided? How can we, on the one hand, pray and seek after, and preach and teach that the "Abundant Life" that Jesus promised to us is a Life that has an "abundance" of the goods and possessions of this life, and then, on the other hand, avoid the trap of loving money and of being covetous? How can we take comfort in God making much of us, and then seek to give God all the Glory? How do we *increase* and then *decrease* at the same time?

So, here is what I see. I see the main Purpose for which God called us out of darkness to do NOT being done. I see the main reason God made us to be a chosen race and a royal priesthood and a holy nation and a people for God's Own Possession NOT being fulfilled. Because if we do not "proclaim the Excellencies of Jesus Christ", either because we don't even know about them, or because we really don't see them as being a very big deal, then we are *failing* in the only reason why God has done what He has done in us!

So, what I *am* promoting is for us, by God's Grace and to God's Glory, to understand how we, as individuals, and as the Covenant of Peace Church, can be obedient to what Peter says here.

So, I pray that we can see that *ultimately* God's Work in us is to His Own Glory and *not* to ours. We are called so we can make much of Jesus. And we are made to be those four things so we can make much of Jesus. You see, God knows that making much of people *ruins* them. Building up people so that people can be large and important *destroys* us. Making us the center of attention only feeds into our fallen disposition to want to be the center of attention. And that robs God of

the Glory that belongs to Him, and that robs us of the fullness of Joy. Look what Jesus said in **John 17:26**:

I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.

Look closely here. Jesus called the Love that He has for us:

... the love with which You loved Me

... so, the very same Love by which God the Father loved God the Son should be in us. *That* Love. And so, this Love is *not* best understood by looking at a mother and her child. This Love is *not* best comprehended by visualizing a Father walking through the woods with his son. This Love is *not* best realized by thinking about a soldier dying in combat. This Love is best understood by God the Father taking pleasure in crushing His Son on the Cross. Because in delighting in the Agony of the Son, the infinite magnificence of the Glory of God's Grace in saving wicked rebels could be manifested and marveled at. Now look at what Jesus said in **John 15:11**:

These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.

Now look again at how Jesus described this Joy. He called it:

... My joy...

... so, this Joy is not *ours*. This Joy belongs to God the Father. And it is way beyond just being happy, as we normally think of happiness. And that means that this Joy cannot be produced in us by getting a new car or by being healed of cancer or by some other natural gift. This Joy is a gift from God to unworthy sinners who have been called out of darkness.

And that means that this Joy *cannot* be "manufactured". You can't rub the two sticks of your own will-power and your own agenda together to produce this kind of Joy. This kind of Joy is best illustrated when God looked at His Son and saw that Jesus never initiated any

Word or any Act on His Own. So, Jesus modeled "perfect submission" to His Father's Will, up to and including dying on the Cross. Jesus was *perfectly* led by God the Holy Spirit. Jesus never sinned. He never transgressed the Law of God in either thought, word, or deed for a single milli-second for the entire time he walked this earth.

So, because God loves *Himself* first and foremost, He *makes much* of Himself, and He *refuses* to make much of us. And, in doing that, the Love that God the Father has always had for God the Son will be in us. So, it is precisely because God *does* love us that He will not, ever in any way, allow us to *reduce* His Importance and *rob* Him of His Own Glory.

And because God loves *Himself* first and foremost, He makes much of Himself, and He *refuses* to make much of us. And in doing that, *His Joy*, the Joy that God has always had and has always shared with the other two Persons of the Trinity, God will give that Joy to *us*. And it is only then that *our joy* will be "full".

God the Father sees and knows and understands God the Son and God the Holy Spirit *perfectly, fully, completely*. We only see and know what God has chosen to reveal to us. But God the Father sees God the Son and God the Holy Spirit *perfectly, fully, and completely*. And He loves what He sees *perfectly*. He delights in what He sees *fully*. And He enjoys what He sees *completely*.

God the Father is the happiest and the most complete and the most satisfied Being in the Universe, precisely because He sees and knows and loves and enjoys the infinite perfections that are radiated back to Him from God the Son. And God desires that we see what He sees in Jesus. God desires that we know what He knows about Jesus. And God desires that we love what He loves in Jesus. God desires that we enjoy what He enjoys in Jesus.

Proponents of the so-called "Prosperity Gospel" completely miss the entire point of this. They believe and teach that the "Abundant Life" is one that is free from the troubles and problems that lesser mortals face. And they supposedly obtain this "abundance" through the "power of their faith". And that means, to those deceived by this false gospel, "Faith" is nothing more than a "tool" that we can learn how to use that will allow us to get more stuff and to avoid trouble. One of the most listened to proponents of this false gospel is Kenneth Copeland. And he said:

“There are certain laws governing prosperity revealed in God’s Word. Faith causes them to function. They will work when they are put to work, and they will stop working when the force of faith is stopped” (*The Laws of Prosperity*, 19).

... and what is sadly obvious and prominent is that *material* prosperity, not spiritual prosperity through hardship, is the focus. Or, as a more contemporary representative says more simply:

“God desires us to become wealthy for Him.” (Tecoy Porter, *Releasing Your Inner Treasure: 8 Kingdom Keys to Unlocking the Wealth Within You*, xxvi).

But that would mean that the greatest examples in the entire Bible were actually failures. Because an honest examination of the 66 Books of the Holy Bible reveals that the most godly men in the Bible suffered the most. And Jesus Himself was not only the greatest example of Purity and Perfection, He was also the greatest Example of suffering. No one, before or since, has believed and trusted and had more faith than Jesus. And yet, Jesus suffered more, and more often, and to an infinitely greater degree than anyone else.

The “scattered aliens” who were the immediate readers of what Peter was “moved along” to write in this Epistle were all suffering *unspeakable* torments and agony at the hands of evil men. And so, for these modern-day prima donnas to twist what Peter was saying here and to suggest that **1Peter 2:9** is promoting the notion that more material possessions is a sign of spiritual maturity (as the Health, Wealth, and Prosperity preachers do) would offer *no* comfort at all to the believers of Peter’s day. Telling suffering saints that all they need to do to be relieved of their torment is to believe more is to doom them to fail. Telling sick children of God that the lingering of their disease is *their own* fault, and if they only could “work up” enough faith God would heal them isn’t just wrong, it is one of the most *evil* and *cruel* deceptions satan has ever developed.

Jesus absolutely does give genuine believers an Abundant Life. But His Abundant Life, is completely *independent* of and *unconnected* to our earthly circumstances. Therefore, a diagnosis of cancer, or a stock-market crash, or a child’s rebellion cannot possibly *diminish* the

Abundant Life that truly born-again souls have in Jesus Christ. So, bad, evil, and unfair circumstances do not have the power to make the Abundant Life in Christ less abundant.

But that also means that a miraculous healing, or a financial windfall, or a prodigal's return doesn't make the Abundant Life in Christ to be better than it was before God moved and gave us that Blessing. The genuine Abundant Life rests in the God Who is Lord over both the good things and the terrible things in our life. As Job says:

Job 2:10b

... Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity? ...

When we believe and teach that pain-free lives are God's Reward for the righteous, we insinuate to the wounded that their problems are of their *own* making. So, not only are they suffering, but God is horribly disappointed with them for not having enough faith to be relieved of their trouble. Randy Alcorn says:

“Tragically, the prosperity gospel has poisoned the church and undermined our ability to deal with evil and suffering. Some churches today have no place for pain. Those who say God has healed them get the microphone, while those who continue to suffer are shamed into silence or ushered out the back door. I personally have been ushered out the back door at healing services, after being publicly chastised. Many other disabled people have experienced similar treatment under the assumption that if you're not healed, it's your fault. *'Because God's Will is for everyone to always be healed. Always. The faithful will never suffer.'*”

This belief is contrary to the Bible. Jesus promised that all genuine believers would have tribulation. And the Apostle Peter said:

1Peter 4:12-16

12 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;

13 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.

14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

16 but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

... and James said:

James 1:2-4

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

... the Apostle Paul taught extensively on the Reality that our Sanctification is reached by walking joyfully and humbly on the Road of Suffering.

Romans 5:1-5

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Now, of course, physical healing and material prosperity in this life can bring God Glory. There are times that God, mercifully and sovereignly, intervenes in our lives in supernatural ways to graciously and miraculously heal and bless His people. And God is glorified when that happens.

But there are other times, and I would suggest that it is the overwhelming *majority* of the times, that God chooses to be glorified by not intervening to heal or deliver or bless. And, in those times, God has chosen to exalt Himself and change us by empowering us to *endure* the suffering with Joy and Peace, and with a powerful and strong *determination* to be faithful and fruitful, and busy *in* the sickness and *in* the poverty and *in* the persecution.

And, in those times, by and through our patient enduring, we proclaim *unmistakably* that Jesus is *infinitely* better than *anything* that the evil people in this world can take away from us, and that He is *infinitely* better than anything that the evil people in this world can give to us.

It is one thing to sing, "*I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold*", when we don't have any silver or gold. But it's quite another thing to sing that song when you had silver and gold, and it was taken away from you for the Sake of Jesus Christ. That proves to the world that Jesus truly is our Treasure. The "prosperity gospel" simply *cannot* display Jesus like that. It's too weak. And in its inherent weakness, the "prosperity gospel" can extol the virtues of good health and a fat bank account, but it simply *cannot* proclaim the Excellencies of Jesus Christ.

The "Prosperity gospel" teaches that we are to live for God's material blessing, now. But the Bible teaches that we live for God's *eternal* Glory. So, at the very *heart* of the "prosperity gospel" is *our own* value. But at the very core of the sacred Scriptures is the magnificent Value and Worth of the one, eternal God.

Before any human ever was deceived and proclaimed the false gospel of Prosperity, satan did. The fallen arch-angel appeared before God and told the Lord that Job's faithfulness was predicated on God's Blessings. And if those Blessings would be taken away, satan said that Job would curse God to His Face. So, satan was implying that God is valuable only for what He gives His people, and that faithfulness to God is predicated on living in an abundance of this world's goods.

But God contended just the opposite. God asserted that Job loved Him for *Who He is*, and *not* for what He graciously gives. That is what the entire Book of Job is about. And Job forever ended the discussion by proving that what God had said was true. Because when Job was in the agony of his soul, after having lost all of his blessings, including his children, he cried out:

Job 1:21

... Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

... so, without knowing even *half* of what God has revealed to us through the 27 Books of the New Testament, Job declared the surpassing Worth and Value of God. So, satan was wrong. It was God *Himself*, not His Gifts, that was Job's true Treasure. And we have to understand that Job didn't have this ability, to behold God in His Glory and proclaim His Excellencies, because he was super-spiritual. No, Job could see and be changed into what he saw, because he was saved. And he understood what Asaph meant when he said in **Psalm 73:25&26**:

25 Whom have I in heaven *but You?* And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

26 My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

So, at the heart of true biblical Salvation is that with the radical and supernatural *transformation* of the human nature in the miracle of the New Birth, there is the gift of being both *willing* and *able* to die to the very cravings that the prosperity preachers exploit. Salvation causes human beings, who are inherently self-centered, to suddenly desire to live simply and give lavishly.

And the amazing Truth about this is that at the very heart of true, biblical Sanctification, is suffering, not merely as a *result* of proclamation, but also as a *means* of proclamation. The Bible teaches that our suffering is a wonderful "means of Grace" that make the saving Sufferings of Christ known to the world. So, Christ's Sufferings are for Propitiation. And our sufferings are for Propagation.

1Peter 2:9 says:

You are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION

And Peter teaches that the reason God has wondrously made us to be that chosen race and that royal priesthood and that holy nation and that people for God's Own possession, is, so that:

... you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

... and so, this is simply another way that God the Holy Spirit has to define what a Christian really is. All genuine believers have been called "out of darkness into the marvelous light of Eternal Life". And that means that all of us are meant to "proclaim the Excellencies of Jesus Christ", wherever we are and whatever state God has either sovereignly and actively *caused*, or sovereignly and passively *allowed* us to be in.

Now look at the amazing way that the first part of **1Peter 2:9** compares with the wording of **The Revelation 5:8-10**, that says:

8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

10 "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

You can hear the connection in the parallel words.

- ✓ "Nation" in **1Peter 2:9** links with "nation" in **The Revelation 5:9**
- ✓ "People" in **1Peter 2:9** links with "people" in **The Revelation 5:9**
- ✓ "Priesthood" in **1Peter 2:9** links with "priests" in **The Revelation 5:9**
- ✓ "Royal" in **1Peter 2:9** links with "kingdom" and "reign" in **The Revelation 5:10**

In both texts, God has made, for Himself, a “royal priesthood”. It is called a “royal priesthood” in **1Peter 2:9**, and **The Revelation 5:10** says:

You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth

But **The Revelation 5:9** makes something crystal clear that **1Peter 2:9** only *hints* at. This “Kingdom of priests”, this “royal priesthood”, will be made up of persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. So, when **1Peter 2:9** says:

“You are a chosen *race*, a royal *priesthood*, a holy *nation*, a *people* for His Own possession”, one race, one nation, one people, one priesthood, it actually means that this “one new *race*” is made up of *all* races. And it means that this “one new *people*” is made of *all* peoples. And it means that this “one new *nation*” is actually made of *all* nations. And this “one new royal priesthood” will reign with Jesus Christ, and have personal access to God through Him, and will be made up of ordinary converts from every Kingdom and every culture on the earth. Because the Lamb Who was slain is worthy. He will have an Inheritance from *all* nations.

So, at the end of this Age, God will have for Himself *one* chosen race, *one* royal priesthood, *one* holy nation, and *one* people for God’s own possession. And that singular, unified Reality will be composed from *all* races, and *all* nations, and *all* languages and *all* peoples.

So, Peter is telling these “scattered aliens” that, in their horrific suffering, that God is, in fact, forming one new race and one new nation and one new people and one new priesthood from *all* the races and *all* the nations and *all* the peoples of the earth. So, rather than see themselves as mere refugees, Peter is telling them that they are, in fact, Evangelists and Missionaries who are being sovereignly “sent out” by way of the terrible persecution enacted by the wicked Emperor, Nero, so that, in every nation into which they are being cruelly driven they can proclaim the Excellencies of Jesus Christ to the chosen elect of those nations.

And, rather than view themselves as simply wood for the fire, Peter is telling them that they are in the very center of God’s Will and Plan to have for Himself a people, who, because of what God through

Christ alone has done for them, will be able and willing to proclaim the Excellencies of Jesus Christ.

So, contrary to what the "Prosperity gospel" teaches, the Bible declares clearly and repeatedly that wealth is not usually a blessing. It is usually a curse. And so, we are never to think that all that we need to do God's Will and to carry out God's Plan is more money. That simply isn't true. What is desperately needed, infinitely more than money, is people who have been gifted to have their eyes unveiled so they can "behold the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ". And you will know if they have seen, because after seeing Him, Who is Absolute and Eternal, they will *change* into the Image that they see.

And through this radical and powerful change, they will become a chosen race and a royal priesthood and a holy nation and a people for God's Own possession, and they will be able and willing to display the brilliant and earth-shaking Excellencies of Jesus Christ to a dark and dead world.

The amazing comforts of the United States have made us soft and cautious and fearful and indulgent and self-protecting, instead of tough and risk-taking and bold and self-controlled and self-sacrificing. When prosperity preachers fly their personal jets to the peoples of the world and promise the poor that if they believe in Jesus, they will get rich, they are not preaching the Biblical Gospel. They are, in fact, fighting against the Gospel and seeking to destroy its foundations. The "Prosperity gospel" is not the gospel that saves and produces breathtaking sacrifice.

So, where do people come from that are more than willing to die for the Cause of Jesus Christ? How do you become a person like that? How do we, who are all neck deep in security and comfort, become a people who would rather die than compromise? We must first, see. And then we must be changed into the Image of the One we behold.

But we must take heed to ourselves, because *nobody*, who has the bought into the "Prosperity gospel", will be able to behold God's Glory in the Face of Jesus Christ. And therefore, they will not be able or willing to change. But the Apostle Peter can help us to be the kind of people who both see and change. When you read the words, "**You are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION...**" then you know that *whatever* condition you may be in is not *random* or *accidental*.

Those words tell us that God's Hand is upon us, guiding and directing and causing and allowing *whatever* is happening to you. And God is *not* doing that simply to prove that He is Sovereign and has the Power to do whatever He desires. No, you are being changed into the Image that you have seen. And God is using the fires of your suffering as the "means" of that change.

So, the fire of suffering is not meant to destroy you. It isn't even meant to slow you down or hinder you. No, God has chosen you to first see, and then to be changed, **SO THAT**,

... you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light

... and that means that the trial you're in, the unfair situation that has come upon you, the pain that racks your body, the cold sweats, the financial misery, the discouragement that you are faced with, the disappointment you deal with, every day, are *not* issues that you need to be "delivered" from. They're *not* "problems" that you need to solve. They're not the results of a "lack of faith".

No, the Apostle Peter says that the suffering of genuine believers is designed by God Himself to change you, so that you may "long for the sincere milk of the Word", and so that you may "taste the Kindness of the Lord", and so that you may "Come near and abide with Jesus". And so, by "longing" and "tasting" and "coming", you will behold Jesus in His magnificent Glory. And as you behold the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, you will be changed into the very same Image that you see. And in that process of changing, in the fires of suffering, in the midst of the process of Sanctification, God will equip you and empower you and anoint you and enable you to possess the most cherished and prized gift that any human could ever be given. And you will be both able and willing:

[To] proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light

Amen. Let's pray.

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse “journey” through the **Epistle of 1Peter**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.