



BETHEL
PRESBYTERIAN

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Volume 18 Issue 18

May 5, 2019

A Glorious Salvation, Part 2

The content of Acts 2 begins with the disciples in Jerusalem. They are staying in Jerusalem in obedience to Christ's instruction that they wait for "the baptism of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4-5)! The disciples simply do NOT retreat TO Jerusalem and then go about the business of the Kingdom; RATHER they retreated FROM the world — they hid ... in a room... behind closed doors!

But then the Spirit of God manifested Himself, came upon them and filled the disciples such

that they were *driven* by the Spirit out of their hiding to the temple where they preached the word of God with power!

From this I want you to see that the salvation the disciples received did far more than forgive their sin; it transformed them into something they were NOT before. In fact, this is explicitly stated in Acts 4. Peter and John were arrested for arguing the cause of Christ before the most accomplished theologians of the day, the Sanhedrin. Speaking of this religious elite which served as the Supreme Court in Judaism we read this:

Acts 4:13, “Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus.”

We are NOT simply talking here about the forgiveness of sin BUT transformed lives on account of “the mind” that now dwelt within them.

1 John 5:20a, “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding...”

Don’t miss it! Salvation involves receiving a new “understanding”- *διάνοια (dianoia)* in the Greek which refers to a mind that is oriented to God. This is the word Peter uses in 1 Peter 1 when he exhorts his persecuted brethren to “gird up the loins of their mind.”

Don’t miss it! When God saves us, He gives us an entirely new mind as it relates to God. We go from being a God-hater to one who now loves the Lord and longs to serve Him. This is the foundation upon which Peter is exhorting his persecuted brethren.

Having interacted with the glory of salvation in 1 Peter 1:1-12 — a salvation which involves...

- God loving us before the foundation of the world.
- Forgiving our sins in time.
- Giving us life and a glorious anticipation for the future.
- Transforming us by the sanctifying work of the Spirit.
- Encouraging us with the glorious future that awaits us in Christ.

Peter addresses the question that was raised by the crowds when first he preached at Pentecost thirty years earlier: “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)

Peter’s first answer was that they were to be ready (at all times) to serve in response to God’s Kingdom Work, v. 13a.¹ Note Peter says, Though we are in chains, the Lord and His gospel is never in chains! With that, Peter transitioned to his second response: Strive to be free of alien influence.

1 Peter 1:13b, “therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit.”

The command is better understood as “be sober.” The addition of “in spirit” is not in the Greek but was added because the exhortation is not literal. Now, like the previous expression this is a participial phrase which serves as the ground upon which Peter gave the main exhortation of this verse (which we’ll talk about in a bit).² Yet before we do, there is a necessary preface.

The word for “be sober” is νήφω (*nēphō*) which in Bible times had the literal connotation of not being drunk with wine. The idea behind this word is a mind free from any and all negative influence or, as I have labeled it, a mind free from alien influence. When a person is physically drunk or on drugs, they are under the influence of a foreign/alien substance such that they do not have full control over their body or their mind.

In time the word came to be used figuratively of any thought, worldview, impulse, relationship, or inclination outside of Christ which can take control of a person’s thinking or emotive process (which is why the NASB adds, “in spirit”). Accordingly, the exhortation to “be sober” was a call for the child of God NOT to lose spiritual control by imbibing the world’s sinful system.³ In this regard, three verses come to mind which serve as examples of “spiritual drunkenness.”

Galatians 3:1: “You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified?”

The idea behind “bewitching” is in reference to a person or thing (like a worship service) that is so enticing, good looking, or smooth talking that the individual follows them/blindly. Paul exhorted his brethren at Rome this way:

Romans 13:14, “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ [in other words, be bound in your thinking and desiring by Christ alone], and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.”

Many today are dazzled by the impulses of their flesh. Many are compromising their faithfulness on account of the pursuit of

- Pleasure
- Worldly Significance
- Money
- Power
- Sex
- A relationship

Colossians 2:8, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”

This is what goes on in mysticism. The naïve Christian has an experience that is so strong or influential, they approach God's word looking for justification. This makes them susceptible to being taken captive "...by philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." Many are not allowing Scripture to speak for itself but are imposing man-made thoughts or traditions upon themselves and are thus seduced into error.

Accordingly, Peter's call in for the believer to be driven NOT by anything or anyone in this world, but Christ, His will, His purpose, and so the salvation outlined in 1 Peter 1:1-12. Thomas Schreiner added this:

Peter was not merely saying that believers should refrain from drunkenness. There is a way of living that becomes dull to the reality of God, that is anesthetized by the attractions of this world. When people are lulled into such drowsiness, they lose sight of Christ's future revelation of himself and concentrate only on fulfilling their earthly desires. (Schreiner, 2003, p. 79)

That is the second exhortation Peter gives us.

In this regard, notice the progression here; it is quite intentional. When it comes to living out the salvation we have received in Christ, it begins with "a mind" that is prepared/ready to act when God provides an opening. Yet this mind cannot be ready if it is "under the influence" of a thought, worldview, or desire outside of Christ! And so those Christians being persecuted at the writing of 1 Peter must know that:

- If they value their life more than the Lord, they will compromise!
- If they are fearful of man, they will recant at the threat of arrest!
- If their possessions are most important, their family, or their status in the community, they most certainly will renounce Christ when the pressure is on.

What causes you to fear?... lust?... worry? Peter Davids put it this way:

For Peter the cares of this life and the pressure of persecution can 'intoxicate' the Christian and distract his or her focus just as easily as wine might. (Davids, 1990, p. 67)

And so, with a mind both Readied for service in God's Kingdom and Protected from "...any and every speculation or lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5),

Notice a third answer is that we must live exclusively in light of God's future grace.

1 Peter 1:13c, "fix your hope⁴ [expectation] completely [exclusively] on the grace to be brought to you⁵ at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Again, this is THE focus of the passage; is the main exhortation. Accordingly, it is this to which the first two points drive and is from this that Peter's last point is derived ("being holy as God is holy," v. 16)!

So, what is the command? If you've been with us from the start of our study of 1 Peter, you already know the answer because that which Peter exhorts here — each of the expressions — has already been discussed and addressed in 1 Peter 1:1-12!

- As to "fixing our hope," Peter talked about this in v. 3.
- As to "the grace to be brought to us," Peter discussed this in vv. 4, 5, 7.
- As to "the revelation of Jesus Christ," Peter addressed this in v. 7.

Accordingly, sound exegesis means that our understanding of Peter's exhortation is derived from what he already has said in vv. 1-12! In that regard, what is "the grace" that is going to be "brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ"? What therefore is the object of "our hope" as Christians?! Based on Peter's words in vv. 1-12, the answer is varied depending on the commentary that you consult.

- Some suggest that we interchange "salvation" with "grace" and so teach that Peter is calling us to focus on the salvation that is going to be more fully revealed in the last day.⁶
- Some take "grace" as the unmerited favor of God and so teach the Pater is calling us to focus upon the unmerited favor that God is going to bestow upon us on the Day of Judgment.
- Still others view the "grace" as the realization of all the promises that God has made to us OR a future blessing that has yet to come to us.

Which is correct? We would be hard pressed NOT to say, "*All of them!*" There is so much awaiting us when this world ends and the next begins. There is so much to look forward to when it comes to Christ and His Kingdom! God's plans for us truly "are for our welfare" (Jeremiah 29:11)! However, commentaries are quick to point out the parallelism that exists between our verse 13 and verse 7.

In 1 Peter 1:13, Peter is talking about something that is going to happen "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." And in v. 7, Peter talked about something that is going to happen "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Clearly the command in this v. 13 and v. 7 are parallel!

So, what is going to happen "at the revelation of Jesus Christ"? In v. 7 Peter tells us that at that time "praise and glory and honor" shall be brought to us. In v. 13 he speaks of a moment when "grace shall be brought to us." Based on the parallelism it seems obvious that if there is an emphasis in v. 13 Peter has in mind that awesome moment when Jesus heaps upon us "praise, glory, and honor." That is "the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of

Jesus Christ”!

In this regard, let us review and so be reminded of a certain event that IS going to take place in your life and mine — specifically “the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ”! If Christ should tarry, you and I are going to die and endure that horrible process by which our soul will be rent from our bodies and we will then spend hundreds, maybe thousands of years as disembodied spirits. You say, *“Putting it like that; I don’t want to die!”* And that’s good, for neither did Paul (even though he said that “death is better by far” Philippians 1:23).

2 Corinthians 5:4, “For indeed while we are in this tent [speaking of our bodies], we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed [that is, die], but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”

Paul declares that though we are in Christ, we don’t want to die physically and find ourselves in that very unnatural state of being a disembodied spirit — where the physical is passed away and so... no light, trees, sun, cool breeze, breaths of fresh air // no walking, playing, running, touching, or hearing. This is NOT to paint a picture of a bleak afterlife for those in Christ, FOR as Christians “...to be absent from the body [is] to be at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8)! “Death” is “better by far” (Philippians 1:23)! Yet as God did NOT create us to be disembodied spirits, death is unnatural and so something we must never seek.

That having been said, after spending hundreds/thousands of years as a disembodied spirit. Imagine the Last Day when Christ destroys the universe (2 Peter 3:10-12), recreates it in pristine glory without sin or decay (2 Peter 3:13), and then rejoins us to our bodies which now are glorified (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)!

You know what is going to happen next? Following the Last Judgment and the re-creation of this world, we are going to enjoy the Wedding Feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). At that time, we shall be escorted to a mansion with many rooms (John 14:2-3) and there in the courtyard sitting down at a large table we shall eat a meal for the first time in eons! Imagine:

- Seeing for the first time in a thousand years.
- Breathing for the first time.
- Stretching your arms and legs.
- Smelling and so being able to taste.
- Touching, feeling a breeze or the warmth of the sun...

Yet at this moment I don’t think we will spend much time marveling over what we have gained on account of the Second Coming. No! Our eyes will be fixed on Jesus- gazing upon the incarnation of grace, purity, and love! In the words of Samuel Rutherford:

The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bride-groom’s face; I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of grace; not at the crown He gifteth, but on His pierced hand: The Lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel’s land. (Great Commision Publications, 1990, p. 546)

But then imagine at this moment with our eyes fixed on Christ. The Lord rising from the meal (the way He did when He washed the disciples' feet, John 13)! Once again you notice that He has girded His loins, but this time it is NOT to wash feet (for they are clean). No! This time Christ has raised Himself from the table and is coming toward you! Upon reaching you, He then extends His hands, places them on your shoulder, and, looking directly into your eyes, says, "Well done, good and faithful servant... you have entered into the joy of your Lord" (cf. Matthew 25:21, 23)!

As we have seen, that is what is in mind in 1 Peter 1:7 (the parallel passage to ours) where Peter says that the faith we have in this life will "...result in [us receiving] praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ"!

And so Christian, when it comes to the things of this life, what is it that ought to drive us, influence us, and so impel us in all that we do? The knowledge that at the end of time, we are going to receive an imperishable reward!

1 Corinthians 9:25, "And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."

We all have that which motivates us in life! And though we are Christians, nevertheless that which drives us sadly is paralleled with that which drives the worldling. As Christians, we can be driven by:

- The lust for power.
- The desire for wealth.
- The longing for praise.
- The love of pleasure.

That again is why Peter exhorted us to be sober minded (v. 13b)! For we can be found longing for all these things as Christians even though they constitute a "perishable wreath." Yet with what Peter has taught us today, we now can and must compete in this life with our eye fixed on the "imperishable crown" that someday will be placed on our brow by Jesus Christ Himself. This, as we have seen: NOT ONLY casts a shadow and shame upon anything and everything this world has to offer BUT it provides the Christian with THE MOTIVE that alone provides for the life we have been saved to live in the here and now: the glory that awaits us in Christ! It is "the love of Christ" that alone can control us and so give us victory over any and all sin (2 Corinthians 5:14). It is the beauty of the Lord and so the taste of His sweetness that will make gold seem as a worthless metal in comparison to what we have and will have in Christ (cf. Psalm 19:10)! May this be that which drives us in all that we do in our lives! We will return to this next week as we are out of time!

Works Cited

- Davids, P. H. (1990). *The First Epistle of Peter (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Great Commission Publications. (1990). *Trinity Hymnal*. Atlanta: Great Commission Publications.
- Schreiner, T. R. (2003). *1 & 2 Peter & Jude: New American Commentary [NAC]*. Nashville: B & H Books.

End Note(s)

¹ It is the same exhortation Paul gave in Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

² Thomas Schreiner wrote, “The participles in the verse have an imperatival force, and hence the NIV translates them as ‘prepare [anazōsamenoī] your minds for action’ and ‘be self-controlled’ (nēphontes, RSV “be sober”). The participles should be understood, however, as subordinate to the main verb and thus should be construed as instrumental participles. Hence, the verse should read, ‘Set your hope fully on the grace ... by preparing your minds for action and by being sober.’” (*1, 2 Peter, Jude, NAC*, pp. 77-78)

³ This is why the NASB added the words, “in spirit.”

⁴ William Hendriksen wrote, “The concept hope is prominent in I Peter. In the original Peter uses the word as a noun in 1:3, 21, and 3:15, and as a verb in 1:13 and 3:5.” (*Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude, NTC*, p. 59)

⁵ Literally, “that is being brought to you.” The tense of the verb (a present, passive participle) indicates that it is already on its way!!

⁶ That salvation being: (1) The basis for “the living hope” of v. 3, (2) Our inheritance which is “imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away,” v. 4 (3) The life for which we are “protected that is ready to be revealed at the last time,” v. 5, (4) The focus and cause of all “rejoicing in this age,” vv. 6, 8, (5) the anticipated “praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” v. 7, and (6) The telos “of our faith,” v. 9.