

FERVENT LOVE FROM A PURE HEART

1 Peter 1:22-25

Intro: As we come again today to the first epistle of Peter who was an apostle of Jesus Christ (as he reminded his readers at the very beginning of this letter), let me encourage you again to be reading through this epistle as often as you can. And you will find your reading the most profitable if you read all five chapters at one sitting. Reading it over and over helps us to see how the various parts of Peter's letter fit together, and that is what is most important in the study of God's Word. It is always a blessing to memorize single verses of Scripture, but it is equally important to realize that the meaning of any verse in the Bible is brought out more clearly and forcibly if we notice the verses which lead up to a particular verse, and then the verses which follow.

And this is what makes expository preaching so valuable, where we begin at the beginning of any book of the Bible, and go verse by verse to the end, seeking to explain and apply each verse as we go along.

Today we come to the end of chapter 1, so we are really only getting a good start. But up to this point we have seen the strong emphasis that the Apostle Peter made on the Gospel. He mentioned being born again in verse 3. He called it salvation in verses 5, and again in verses 9 and 10. And he referred to the preaching of the Gospel in verse 12. So he was addressing people who had trusted in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls.

Thinking of Christ, he spoke of the blood of Christ in verse 2. Then he spoke of the resurrection of Christ in verse 3. In verse 7 he was looking ahead as he spoke of the appearing of Jesus Christ. In verse 11 he called the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of Christ" because it is the purpose of the Holy Spirit to speak of Christ and to exalt Him, and then before ending verse 11 Peter mentioned "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." In verse 13 he spoke of the second coming of Christ. In verse 19 we read of "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish."

So coming up to our text for today, which begins with verse 22 and goes on to the end of the chapter, Peter has had much to say about Christ. In fact, if you take Christ out of this chapter, you hardly have anything left. Christ is the subject of the Gospel. There could be no Gospel without Christ. Peter showed by his writing that he was truly "an apostle of Jesus

Christ" as he wrote in verse 1.

The people to whom he was writing were very familiar with the Bible's teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. They had trusted Him as their Savior. They had been born again (verse 3). They were redeemed (verses 18 and 19). *Consequently, beginning with verse 13 and continuing right on down to the end of the chapter, Peter was exhorting them to be a holy people. (See verses 15 and 16.)*

Now in order to be a holy people, so far we have seen that the Apostle Peter emphasized two things that they must do. In verses 13 through 16 it is that they should "hope to the end for the grace that is brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (v. 13). This means that they were to live in the certain expectation that Jesus Christ was coming back again. And to be prepared for that event, they were to be holy in their character and holy in their behavior, waiting expectantly for the Lord's return. *And we saw from that passage that it is important that we do the same thing.*

Going on to the next paragraph, verses 17 through 21, we saw that the main commandment in that paragraph was that we are to "pass the time of" our "sojourning here" in this world "in fear" – the fear of God! And fearing God means that we fear lest we disobey Him, or that we fail to do what the Bible declares that we should do.

Today we come to the third paragraph in this practical section in chapter 1, and again we find that there is one statement upon which the last four verses of this chapter are built. And that statement, again, a command, is "see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." You will see that at the end of verse 22.

So in the first statement in verse 13 we are to be looking for the Lord, and this calls for holy living. In the second statement we are to live in the fear of God. And that statement is in verse 17. Now in the third statement in verse 22, we are to see to it that we love one another with pure hearts fervently.

Do you see the order? First, we are looking for Christ. Second, we are to be living to please God. And third, we are to love one another fervently with pure hearts. And the use of the word "pure" emphasizes again that we are to be a holy people. As holy people we are looking for the Lord. And as holy people it is our main desire to live so as to please God. And finally in this chapter, as holy people, we are to love each other *fervently!*

Now let us notice, first, in coming to verse 22:

**I. THE BASIS OF THIS THIRD APPEAL TO HIS READERS
(1 Pet. 1:22a).**

It was that they had already purified their souls "in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren" By this statement the Apostle Peter was indicating that he was writing, as he had been from the beginning of chapter 1, to those who were already trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

They had "purified their souls." The soul, the inner man, is where man's problem is. All people are sinners, and all people have been corrupted by their sins. And it is this corruption which makes us unacceptable to God. Not only are we unacceptable, but we are under the judgment of God. And unless people have their souls purified, they will be lost and doomed eternally. The reason we do the wrong things, things that are displeasing to God, and the reason that we cannot do the things that are pleasing to Him, is because we are defiled by sin in our souls.

But Paul was writing to a people who were different from the masses of humanity. They were purified. They had been cleansed. Their sins had been forgiven. They had a new life, a life from God, which enabled them to please God, and which gave them that desire in the way they lived. And it was because of this change that had taken place in their lives that Peter was making this third appeal to them.

BESIDES,
SOLOMON
SAID, "WHO
CAN SAY, I
HAVE MADE
MY HEART
CLEAN, I AM
PURE FROM
MY SIN?"

But surely someone listening to what I am saying, and reading what Peter wrote here in verse 22, would say something like this, "But Pastor, I have heard you say time and time again that we can't save ourselves, that only God can save us. Wasn't Peter teaching a false Gospel here when he said to them that they had purified their own souls? The Apostle Paul taught that it is by grace we are saved, and that it is not of ourselves, nor of our own works that we are saved. Were Peter and Paul teaching two different ways of salvation? Well, let's examine this verse and see.

Peter said, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren."

First notice the expression, "in obeying the truth." What is the truth that the Apostle Peter was speaking about? Obviously it is "the Gospel." See verse 12. What is the Gospel? It is the message that Christ died for our

sins, that He was buried, but that He rose again from the dead, and is now seated in heaven at God's right hand. But are people saved just because Christ died for sinners? No! When the Philippians jailor asked Paul and Silas what he must do to be saved, did the Apostle Paul, "You don't have to do anything"? No! What did he say? He said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." So when we preach the Gospel we tell people that they must believe in Christ, they must receive Him as Savior, they must trust Christ for their salvation.

Now let me ask you a question. If that Philippian jailor was told by Paul that he had to believe in Christ, what was that Philippian jailor doing when he believed in Christ. *He was obeying the Gospel. He was doing what Peter said that they people had done, he was obeying the truth. The message of the Gospel must be obeyed if we are to be saved, and we obey it by believing in Christ.*

Now before you are ready to burn me at the stake for being a heretic, let me ask you to turn to the book of Romans where we will see that the Apostle Paul used the same language. Let me read to you Rom. 1:1-6:

- 1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
- 2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)
- 3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
- 4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:
- 5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:
- 6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1-6).

So when a sinner is told that he must believe in Christ in order to be saved, and he believes, he is being obedient to the truth of the Gospel, and his soul is purified. He is cleansed, forgiven of his sins, and made a child of the living God.

But now just a minute! There is another statement in this verse which we need to notice, and it is the phrase, "through the Spirit." These people had obeyed the truth of the Gospel "through the Spirit." Now this takes what I have been saying out of the realm of a work that we do, and we see that it is the Holy Spirit who gives us the faith to believe in the Lord Jesus

Christ. This phrase is omitted in some of the recent translations, but it belongs here. Faith is a gift from God. It comes to us through the Spirit. But look also at the verses we had last week, especially verses 18-21, especially the last part of verse 20 and the beginning of verse 21. Notice that statement, speaking of Christ, "Who by Him do believe in God."

So our faith comes from God, and from Christ, and from the Holy Spirit! And when anyone believes in Christ, it is only because faith has been given to them, the faith to obey the truth of the Gospel.

But look at the last of this first part of verse 22, and the words: "Unto unfeigned love of the brethren." Who are the brethren? They are those who members of God's family through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And what does "unfeigned" mean, "unfeigned love"? It means that when any person is saved, one big change that comes about in his life is that he had in his heart, not just a pretending that he loves the people of God, but that he has a sincere, genuine love for God's people. Before you were saved, Christians were the last people in the world that you wanted to have anything to do with, but after you are saved, they are the people that you want to be with more than anybody else. If you don't love the people of God, and want to be with them, you probably aren't saved. The Apostle John showed how much he agreed with the Apostle Peter when he, John, wrote,
We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death (1 John 3:14).

We have seen the basis of Peter's appeal, that he was writing to those who had trusted Christ, now let us notice:

II. THE APPEAL ITSELF (1 Pet. 22b).

"See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." First, Peter said that we are to be looking for the Lord's return. Second, that we are to live here on earth in the fear of God. Now third, we are to love one another with "a pure heart fervently."

This last point actually means that, although we were born into God's family with a love for other believers in Christ, we are to see to it that our love for each other is continually growing. But in order to be pleasing to God, it must be love out of "a pure heart." So here we are brought back to Peter's words in verses 15 and 16 that we are to be holy because God is holy. Only holy people have pure hearts.

Therefore, if our love is to grow, we must grow in holiness. Love among believers is most clearly seen where believers are growing in holiness, in likeness to Christ. The object of Christ's death was not just that we might be forgiven, but that we might become a holy people. So if we are to cultivate a greater love for the Lord's people, we must seek by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, to be more holy.

But what did Peter mean by the word "fervently"? This means that our love for each other should be intense and continuous. And the "love" to which Peter referred is a love which we manifest toward those who are precious, precious to us, but especially precious to God.

This leads to a third point.

III. THE POSSIBILITY THAT SUCH LOVE CAN BE ATTAINED (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

There are two reasons we can be assured that it is possible for us to love each other the way the Lord wants us to love each other. One, because of the change that the Gospel has made in us. Two, because of the unique character of God's Word.

A. Because we have been born again (vv. 23-24).

When we were born the first time, it was a "corruptible seed." Our parents pass on to us a corrupted nature, a sinful nature. We were born in sin like David said that he was. And that has been true of every person since Adam and Eve. And no person can change his nature which is the result of that corruptible seed. And so the only hope for holiness, the only hope that we can be pleasing to God, the only hope that we can be set free from the dominion of sin, is for us to be born again, a second time, not entering again into our mother's womb, but to be born of that incorruptible seed, the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever."

It is because of verse 23 here in 1 Peter 1 that I have said many times that no person is ever truly saved apart from the Word of God. And that is the reason that whenever we are talking to anyone about salvation, we need to make good use of the Word of God. It is "the power of God unto salvation.

By way of contrast, verse 24 gives us a picture of man, and this is placed along side of the character of the Word of God in verse 25. These verses

are a quotation from Isa.40:6-8:

6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:

7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Man himself is like grass, and his glory is like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls away, but God's Word abides forever.

When Peter spoke of man's glory, he was speaking of his physical appearance and strength, his intelligence and his achievements. It all fades, and man finally dies, dies in his sin, dies without hope, dies to face the judgment of God.

But in contrast the Word of God endures forever. Through the Word there is life and hope and blessing without end.

God does not seek to repair the old nature, but He gives us new life, with new desires, and new powers, and an eternal hope where there was no true hope before. And this comes through the incorruptible seed of the Word of God.

Concl: After reading a passage like this we need to ask ourselves, "Do I have this new life from God? Do I understand my true need in my relationship to God? And do I see that I need to seek from God Himself the faith to trust in the work which our Lord did when He died on the Cross? The answer is all right here in this passage, and there is no other hope for forgiveness and acceptance with God except through Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He made for sinners when He died on the Cross. If Christ is not your Savior, then purify your heart today by putting your faith in Him for the forgiveness of your sins.

For those of us who know the Lord, our goal is to be holy as the Lord is holy. Peter would tell us that the way of holiness is to live with our hopes set on the return of the Lord. And that in the meantime we are to live in the fear of God, fearing lest we grieve Him by our sinful disobedience. And, as we have seen today, we need to seek from God an ever increasing love for each other, which means that we need to seek to be the kind of people that other believers will love because of what they see of Christ in

us. And it is only the Holy Spirit that can do this for us, prompting us to be obedient to the Word of the Lord.

Such living as Peter has set before us, will not only enable us to live to the glory of God, but it will also open the way to the enjoyment of greater and greater blessings from the Lord.

THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1 Peter 2:1-3

Intro: Have you noticed in your reading of 1 Peter how the chapters are tied together with words which show that they are all connected with each other? For example, the first word of chapter 2 is "wherefore," which indicates that what he was about to say was connected with what he had just said in chapter 1. Moving on to chapter 3 we see that he started that part of the epistle by saying, "Likewise." This is very likely due to the fact that in verse 15 of chapter 2 he told the servants to be subject to their masters, and so in chapter 3, verse 1, he said that "likewise" wives should be subject to their husbands. And then when we get to chapter 4 we see that he began with "forasmuch then." He had been speaking of the sufferings of Christ in the latter part of chapter 3, and then he said that the believers themselves should get ready for the same kind of treatment from the world.

In chapter 5 he was writing in the first four verses to elders, but then in verse 5 we come to the word "likewise" again. This probably follows what he had said to husbands in 4:7 where you have that same word, "likewise."

These might seem like insignificant details, but they are not really insignificant because they are designed to show how Peter's epistle is all connected together.

I point these out to show that when we move from chapter 1 to chapter 2, we are not leaving one subject to take up another subject, but Peter was continuing on with what he was saying. Therefore, we need to look back into chapter 1 to see how what Peter said here in chapter 2 is tied in with chapter 1 – *and that is not difficult at all to see!*

Peter had spoken in chapter 1 of salvation in one particular way – as a new birth. He first mentioned this in verse 3. (Read.) Notice the words, "hath begotten us again." We were all "begotten" the first time by our parents. We were born into the family of our father and mother. We were born as their children. But, if we really have been saved, this means that we have been born again, a second time, into the family of God.

The second mention of this new birth was in the text we had last week – in verse 23. And it is the same verb that Peter used in 1:3. In verse 3 Peter emphasized that we were born of God; in verse 23 he said that we were

born by the Word of God.

So these expressions clearly indicate that we have new life, the life of God Himself, because we have been born of God.

You will remember that when the Pharisee, Nicodemus, came to Jesus at night, the Lord told him that if he were not born again he could neither "see" nor "enter" the kingdom of God. So this means that if we are really Christians, if we really have been saved, then we have been born again. And with this new life, we have been changed, and the way we live has been changed. If there is no change, there is no salvation.

Now let me remind you of another point that we learned in chapter 1. Peter told us there that since the God Who has "called us is holy," we are to be holy in all of our conduct. What this actually means is that, since we have been born of God, we are to be like God. God is holy, and therefore we are to be holy. And those of you who have been with me in our study of chapter 1 will know that Peter actually gave us three basic commands to help us in our pursuit of this holiness. Those commands are:

- 1) In verse 13 we are told to "hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- 2) In verse 17 we are told to "pass the time of your [our] sojourning here in fear, that is, in the fear of the Lord.
- 3) In verse 22 we are told to "love one another with a pure heart fervently."

Doing these three things with the Lord's help and blessing, will greatly benefit us as we seek to be holy people.

Now, as we move on to chapter 2, we are not leaving this subject of holiness behind, but we are learning that becoming holy is not a matter of seeking some kind of an experience where suddenly we are holy, but that if we are to become a holy people, it will come about as a result of *growing spiritually*. This is the point that the Apostle Peter was making in chapter 2, verse 2.

You see there are some very interesting similarities between being born into this world, and being born again into the family of God. When we were babies we were on capable of drinking milk. It is the same way when we become Christians. We begin our Christian life by feeding upon "the milk of the Word." This feeding on the Word of God strengthens us so that we grow. And this is how we become mature as Christians; this is how we become holy. Holiness of character and holiness of conduct is the

result of growth. Now do you see that Peter in chapter 2 was going on with what he had been talking about in chapter 1. *We can never become holy except we grow!* And that is what we are going to be thinking about today: THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH. So let us begin by looking at 1 Peter 2, verse 1. Peter began by speaking about:

I. SINS WHICH NEED TO BE LAID ASIDE (1 Pet. 2:1).

This is very similar to what the Apostle Paul meant when he told believers to "put off the old man" and to "put on the new man."

Do you ever wonder why it is that you may be getting very little benefit out of reading your Bible, or out of hearing it as someone else reads it to you? Have you ever stopped to think why it is that going to church, and hearing the Word of God doesn't help you as much as it seems to be helping others? It very likely could be that there are sins in your life that you have not *laid aside*. It may be that you are trying to ignore them, or that you refuse to deal with them because you have not put them off, as you would put off dirty clothes. You have not confessed your sins to the Lord, asking Him to forgive you and to cleanse you. You have not asked Him to search your heart and to reveal to you things in your life that are not pleasing to Him. You have not asked the Lord to let the words of your mouth and the meditation of your heart to be acceptable in his sight. For Peter to begin this chapter as he did, was to show how sin can keep us from growing in the Lord.

Let's look at these words in verse 1 to learn what they mean.

A. "All malice."

Literally this means *all evil*. It means to get rid of wickedness in every form. But Peter certainly did not mean that we could do this without God's help. We can only do it with God's help, and we even have to ask Him to make us *want* to get rid of them.

The word that Peter used here is a word which speaks of thinking and feeling and acting in ways that are displeasing to God. And how do we know what is displeasing to God? Our consciences help us to know, but it is the Word of God that confirms what is displeasing to the Lord. Peter seems to have had in mind here the many ways in which our old nature manifests itself. This word may be a title for the sins which follow in this verse. If a thing is wrong in God's sight, it has no place in the life of a child of God.

One way you can tell that a person has been born again, is that he no longer wants to displease the Lord.

B. "All guile."

This includes all of the ways in which we may try to deceive people. One of them is lying. This is very common in business today. People will tell you almost anything to get you to do what they want you to do, and often we wake up too late to the realization that we have been deceived. Every form of guile must be laid aside by the child of God.

A. T. Robertson says that this is an old word which means "to catch with bait."

C. "Hypocrisies."

The Lord condemned the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. This means that they were pretending to be what they were not. We have all been guilty. When we are not what we are supposed to be, we pretend that we are. And often we are successful in convincing people that we are better than we are, or more devout than we really are. We are not to be mere actors on the stage of life.

D. "Envies."

This is behavior that is prompted by jealousy, and which is usually accompanied by an attempt to belittle the good that is seen in another person's life. Basically it may mean that we don't want what another person has, but we don't want them to have it either.

E. "All evil speakings."

Here we have the word "all" again. Matthew Henry said that "one sin, not laid aside, will hinder our spiritual profit."

Fausset in the JFB commentary says this about these words:

The vices here are those which offend against the BROTHERLY LOVE inculcated above. Each succeeding one springs out of that which immediately precedes, so as to form a genealogy of sins against love.

"Evil speakings" are those attacks on another person's character.

So when we look at all of these we see how they can grieve the Spirit of God, and quench His work in us. And to keep such sins in our hearts always hinders our own growth in the Lord, and robs us of blessings which we would otherwise be receiving from the Lord. So any child of God who truly wants to grow in the Lord must deal with those sins in his life which are not pleasing to the Lord.

One way in which we are protected against such sins is by following what the Apostle Peter urged upon believers in verse 2.

II. A WHOLESOME DESIRE FOR THE WORD OF GOD (1 Pet. 2:2).

All of us are acquainted with the illustration that the Apostle Peter gave in verse 2 of this second chapter. The desire that we need for "the sincere milk of the Word" is likened to the way a newborn child desires milk. A healthy baby actually lives to eat, but in the early stages of life can take only the simplest of foods.

But we need to keep in mind that the believers to whom Peter was writing were not all newborn babes in Christ, but Peter was saying that a child of God should always have a desire for the Word just like a newborn desires milk, as one writer has said, "eagerly and frequently" (Grudem, Wayne, *1 Peter*, p. 94).

The word "desire" is a strong word meaning *to long for the Word of God, to have a strong appetite for the Word*. Likened to a newborn baby, it indicates that which a believer craves more than anything else.

God gives us such a desire when we are first saved, but we need to make sure that we not only continue to have such a desire for the Word, but that it increases. This is a desire which makes us want to read the Word. It is a desire which makes us go where we can learn more about the Word, and we cannot be satisfied with anything but the Word of God. We need to be very, very careful when our desire includes even good books about the Bible if they are going to take the place that we might otherwise give to the Word of God.

But be sure that you notice the word "sincere" – "the sincere milk of the Word." What did Peter mean by that word "sincere"? He meant *the pure Word of God*, not a mixture of the Word with anything else! The Bible will never lead us astray. It is not a mixture of truth and error from which

we have to find the truth. It is the very truth of God. And as such, it is living and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword. And if we are to be able to detect error, it is imperative that we know the Word of God.

— The Greek also has the word λογικὸν. This gives us the idea that the Word is spiritually nourishing to our souls. Robertson translated it "the spiritual milk that is without guile."

But in order for us to know the real purpose of a strong appetite for the Word, the Apostle Peter added, "that ye may grow thereby." This should always be our primary purpose in desiring the Word: we need to grow and to keep growing. We need to grow in our understanding of the Word, and we need to grow in the practical application of the Word to our own souls and to the way we live from day to day. This is the way we become holy. Becoming holy is not a single experience, but it is the result of the way the Word of God is used in our lives from day to day. All of the food we need for healthy and continued growth is to be found in our Bibles.

Now the final verse of our text refers to that which keeps us coming back to the Word again and again, day after day, throughout our lives.

— **III. THAT WHICH BRINGS US BACK TO THE WORD (1 Pet. 2:3).**

It is that we have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

This verse can be taken two ways. First, it suggests that there are those who have found the Lord in the Word, and they have been feeding their souls upon Him. Or it can suggest that there were some who were not yet born again even though they professed to be Christians. And so in this latter case we would have a test proposed by which every believer should examine his own heart.

It seems that here the Apostle Peter was thinking of Psa. 34:8: "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

— The Bible is a book which speaks of Christ. He is the Key to all of Scripture. In some colleges you will find a Bible course entitled, "The Bible as Literature." But those who just see it as literature, have not "tasted that the Lord is gracious." It is a book of life, of eternal life. A book which brings us to God. A book which tells us how our sins are forgiven. A book in which we see Christ as the final and complete revelation of God the Fa-

ther. And oh, how gracious He is. There is none like Him. He speaks to us through the Word. His kindness and mercy toward sinners is everywhere evident in the pages of Scripture, especially His goodness to those who come to Him through Christ. So whether we take "the Lord" to refer to the Father, or to the Son, the result is the same, isn't it?

Concl: That old hymn, "Jesus, Thou Joy of loving hearts," tells the story of the goodness of Christ and of God. Let me read a part of it to you.

Jesus, Thou Joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again.

Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood;
Thou savest those that on Thee call;
To them that seek Thee Thou art good,
To them that find Thee All in all.

We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still;
We drink of Thee, the Fountain Head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.

Have you "tasted that the Lord is gracious"? Do you know Christ as your Savior? Is He the One Who draws you back to the Word? Then you know what the Apostle Peter was speaking about. And it is Christ Who keeps bringing you back day by day to this precious Word so that you can learn more of Him.

If you do not know Him, let me remind you that this same precious book which tells us about Christ and about God and about ourselves and the need that we have for a Savior. The Apostle Paul who preached the same Lord Jesus Christ that the Apostle Peter did, wrote these words in his epistle to the Roman believers:

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:
for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall
be saved (Rom. 10:12-13).

That is God's promise. May you claim that promise today by calling upon Him in your own heart that you might be saved.

CHRIST, THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE

1 Peter 2:4-8

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 28:9-22.

Intro: There are several OT passages that the Apostle Peter brought into the verses which we are considering today in 1 Peter 2:4-8. The first is in the Scripture reading we have had, and it is what Peter was referring to in 1 Pet. 2:6. Let me re-read to you what Mr. Mathison read in Isa. 28:16 a moment ago:

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

The second is in Psa. 118:22. I will read that verse to you, reading verses 23 and 24 also:

22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

23 This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

24 This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it (Psa. 118:22-24).

You will find verse 22 in this passage in the latter part of 1 Pet. 2:7.

The third is in Isa. 8:14, and it is in verse 8 of 1 Peter 2 where our Lord is called "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. Isa. 8:14 tells us this, reading verse 15 with it::

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken (Isa. 8:14-15).

So the verses we have in 1 Peter today are deeply rooted in the OT. What was seen in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ while He was here on earth, was a fulfillment, at least in part, of those OT predictions. And the passages in Isaiah in particular were mentioned in connection with the judgments of God upon disobedient and rebellious Israel.

But now let us see what Peter had to say about them.

We have noticed from the beginning of this first epistle of Peter that Peter was addressing those "strangers" who had been "scattered" as believers.

They were not strangers to him, but strangers in the world, strangers to the people of the world because they belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ, and because, as the children of God they were living lives which were in the greatest contrast with the people of the world. And Peter was encouraging them to be even more separated from the world in their daily conduct.

In the last verse we considered last week, verse 3 of chapter 2, Peter spoke to them as those who had "tasted that the Lord is gracious." That is, they were a people who had experienced the transforming power of the grace of God in their lives. And then, we Peter continued on in the verses we are looking at today, he spoke, first of all, about:

- 1) Christ in verse 4, then of his readers as
- 2) The people of God in verse 5. Then he moved on to
- 3) The Scriptures in verse 6. Then to a very precious truth about
- 4) The people of God in the first statement of verse 7. And the rest of verse 7 and all of verse 8 are given to discussing
- 5) The people in the world who do not believe in the Lord. And so we will consider these verses in this order which I have mentioned.

First, then,

I. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (1 Pet. 2:4).

All through that area mentioned in chapter 1, verse 1 - "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" - were people who had come to Christ. They were among those who had "tasted that the Lord is gracious." They were, according to Peter's language in 1:17, the people who had called on the Lord for salvation, and who were continuing to call upon Him in worship as well as for His blessing and help day by day. And they had come to Him, not as a dead Christ, but as "a living stone."

Wayne Grudem, in his commentary on 1 Peter, suggested that for Peter to speak of the Lord as "a living stone" would immediately show His superiority to the OT temple, as well as the temple where the Jews came to worship God in the days in which Peter was writing. And this was an expression which would show the power of the Lord and the unchanging character of the Lord. But since stones are not alive, this would show the unique character of the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps a stone's relationship to the earth was a reference to the humanity of the Lord, but the "living" quality would be meant to picture His Deity. Just think about that expression, and you will see in what a glorious way the Apostle Peter was led by the Holy Spirit to portray our Savior.

But in spite of all of the glorious things that can be said about our Lord, He was "disallowed indeed of men." Men disapproved of Him, and rejected of men. And, of course, behind those words is the fact that ultimately they crucified Him. "Indeed" could be translated, *on the one hand*, and was used to prepare us for the different way, totally different, that the Father looked upon Him. Men despised everything about our Lord, but to God He was "chosen" to do the very work that He did, and He was "precious" to the Father. He was very dear to the Father. The Father spoke of Him as His *beloved* Son. He was the only begotten of the Father, which means that the Father had none other like the Lord Jesus. It is impossible for us to say how "precious" the Son was to the Father. This is where words fail us. And it only reveals the deep depravity of the human heart that He was and continues to be even today, "disallowed of men."

But then Peter went on to speak about all of us who know the Lord.

II. THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN CHRIST (1 Pet. 1:5).

Amazingly the Apostle Peter used the same words to describe us that he used of the Lord, only in the plural: "Ye also, as living stones." This shows that there is a real similarity between the Lord Jesus Christ and all of those who believe in Him. It is a similarity produced by the grace of God. In ourselves we could not be more different from the Lord, but by the work of redemption which God has done in our hearts, we bear the likeness of Christ, and we will bear that likeness more and more until we become like Him. Before we were weak; now in Him we are strong. And there is a stability of character and life that is apparent in the lives of all of the people of God which increases the longer we know Him. This is how God views us individually.

But together we are being "built up a spiritual house." And since we are "living stones," we grow as stones in the building, and the building also grows as new stones are continually being added to it.

The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians referred to this same figure of speech which the Apostle Peter used here. Listen to Paul's words found in Eph. 2:19-22:

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto

an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

So this "spiritual house," the body of Christ, is the place where God manifests His presence in the most powerful way, on earth. These are truths of the most glorious nature. But this is not all.

Since in the house of God there was always a priesthood, we find that we are not only the house of God, but we are all members of "an holy priesthood." And what do priests do? One of their primary functions is that they offer sacrifices. But the sacrifices we offer are "spiritual sacrifices." We do not offer bulls and sheep to the Lord. That all came to an end when the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God offered Himself on the Cross to save us from our sins. But we do have "spiritual sacrifices" to offer to God, and they are only "acceptable to God" because we offer them through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me mention some of our sacrifices:

- 1) Our bodies (Rom. 12:1-20). This means our whole being is presented to the Lord.
- 2) Our praise (Heb. 13:15). And this is to be offered to the Lord continually.
- 3) Our good works (Heb. 13:16).
- 4) Our money (Heb. 13:16). Cf. also Phil. 4:18:

But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

A whole message could be devoted to our sacrifices which we offer to God as His "holy priesthood." But let us be sure to notice that the only way that any sacrifice can be acceptable to God coming from us is as we offer them through "Jesus Christ." It is only in Christ that anything that we do can possibly be acceptable, well pleasing, to God. And let us be sure that we are offering these sacrifices to the Lord.

One figure of speech to describe what we are to God, would not be sufficient, and so Peter here used three. We are living stones, a spiritual house, and a holy priesthood.

Now let us move on to verse 6 where the Apostle Peter cited a passage from the OT Scriptures.

III. THE SCRIPTURES (1 Pet. 2:6).

What Peter was speaking about here was not his own idea, nor was it an afterthought with God, but it had been predicted over 700 years before by the prophet Isaiah (as we have already seen in our Scripture reading). As the "living Stone," our Lord is "the Chief Cornerstone" in this "spiritual house" which is made up of all who are trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation.

Our Lord is the main stone in the building, "the Chief Cornerstone." No other stone in the building compares with Him in importance. And this agrees with the words I gave you a few minutes ago from the Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. In case you missed two very important words, let me read Eph. 2:22 to you again. Paul said regarding the building of the church, the body of Christ,

In whom (that is, in Christ) ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:22).

In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians he carried the reference to Christ even a step farther when he said,

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-11).

So there would be no salvation, and there would be no church, if it were not for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reference to Isa.28:16 was Peter's way of saying that God is always faithful to His Word. The Word of God stands forever true. And for the encouragement of our faith, Peter added from Isaiah's prophecy that those who trust in the Lord will not be "confounded." We will not be ashamed because we have put our hope in something that will never be.

The OT version of Isa. 28:16 concludes with "shall not make haste." The difference is because Peter was quoting from the Septuagint. But Fausset in the JFB commentary explains it this way:

[Shall not make haste] (yachish)-- shall not flee in hasty alarm; but the Septuagint have 'shall not be ashamed; ' so <Rom. 9:33> and <1 Pet. 2:6>, "be confounded," substantially the same idea. He who rests on Him shall not have the shame of disappointment, nor flee in sudden panic (see <Isa. 30:15; 32:17>). Contrast

Jehu's precipitate zeal, not based on real belief <2 Kin. 9:20; 10:27-31>, and therefore like a blaze in straw-- after great show, soon going out.

— At this point the Apostle Peter made another statement with reference to all believers which gives added emphasis to the close relationship, actually the union, between Christ and His church.

IV. ALL BELIEVERS (1 Pet. 2:7a).

I am referring now to those first words of verse 7: "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious."

Putting all of this together, to God Christ is a living Stone, and we, too, are living stones. And to God, Christ is precious, and those of us who believe in Christ feel the same way about Him: He is precious to us. And in relation to our salvation, Christ is precious to us because there is no one who can save us except Christ. And He not only saves us, but He keeps us saved. The world may hate and despise Him, but we love Him. He is the dearest of all to us. No one can possibly take His place in our hearts.

— And this is one way that you and I can test whether or not we are saved. How do we feel about Christ? Do we love Him? Could we even stand the thought that we might lose Him? Peter said, and said most truthfully, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious."

But now, finally, we come to a most solemn conclusion to this text, and it has to those who are

V. THE DISOBEDIENT (1 Pet. 2:7b-8).

Do you remember what we learned from chapter 1, verse 22, about purifying our souls by obeying the truth? We obey the truth when we do what we are told to do in order to be saved, and that is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so those who are "disobedient" (see verse 7) are those who do not believe in Christ. They are not trusting in the Lord Jesus for their salvation.

— Peter wanted them to know that the stone which "the builders" in Israel have "disallowed," rejected, disapproved, in spite of their opposition, "the same is made the head of the corner." The rejection of men, even the national rejection of the nation Israel, has not kept God from making our

Lord "the head of the corner." And instead of becoming "precious" to the "disobedient," He has become "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" because they have stumbled "at the Word." And here the Apostle Peter, as I mentioned earlier, was quoting again from the OT - actually twice! The latter part of verse 7 is from Psa. 118:22, and the first part of verse 8 is from Isa. 8:14.

We have this same combination in Rom. 9:30-33 where we read,

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone;

33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Many people stumble over Christ. They can't believe that His death would have anything to do with their acceptance with God. They can't believe that their condition is so hopeless that it would take the death of Christ on the Cross to save them. They stumble over Christ because they cannot believe that faith in Christ is the only way of salvation. People argue all of the time that people in other religions who are sincere and who try to do their best, will be accepted with God. They stumble over Christ. And they stumble over the Word of God.

Sometimes people who stumble initially have a change of heart, and later believe in Christ. But those who never receive the Savior, are those, as the Apostle Peter said here, who were "appointed" to eternal death. People demonstrate by their disallowance of Christ that they are both appointed to death and totally deserving of death. God made Christ the chief cornerstone of salvation over all of the opposition of men, and God has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens against the Gospel. Some are chosen for salvation, and the others are appointed to death.

Concl: This is also truth that causes people to stumble, but let me point out to you that this is the teaching of Scripture. To stumble at the Word of God, is to stumble at the sovereignty of God in salvation. And to

stumble at the sovereignty of God in salvation is to stumble at Christ.

Let me conclude by reading to you from Romans 9 where it is clear that the Apostle Paul believed what Peter has expressed here at the end of the eighth verse of our text. Paul's words are found in Romans 9:14-24. And let us all remember that these words, as difficult as they usually are for us to accept, are just as much a part of the Word of God as John 3:16.

(Read Rom. 9:14-24.)

Remember that God is sovereign in salvation. He purposed to make His Son the Chief Cornerstone in salvation. Men objected, and killed the Prince of life. But God raised Him from the dead, and has made Him the Chief Cornerstone. In the same way God has an elect people who will surely be saved. Many of us have rebelled against the Gospel when it was first presented to us, but God has overcome our resistance, has granted us repentance, and has given us the gift of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And so to God be all the glory for our salvation.

At the same time we are commissioned to preach the Gospel to every creature, that "whosoever believeth on Him [Christ] shall not perish, but have everlasting life." We may have trouble reconciling the two, but both are Biblical. Let us trust God that He is working out His purposes in the salvation of every person whose sins the Lord Jesus put away.

GOD'S VERY SPECIAL PEOPLE

1 Peter 2:9-10

Intro: In order to have a proper understanding of verses 9 and 10, it is necessary to go back at least to verse 7, and then read down to verse 9. We need to pick up the contrast which Peter was making, and which is indicated by the word "but" at the beginning of verse 9.

(Read verses 7 and 8.)

The Lord Jesus Christ is the subject of these two verses. According to verse 6 He is "precious" to God (which we all realized even before we came to this chapter), and the first statement of verse 7 indicates that our Lord is "precious" to all of us who have believed in Him for our salvation. But the remainder of verse 7 and all of verse 8 indicate that not everyone feels the same way about the Lord Jesus that we do. He is rejected by the masses of unbelievers. They stumble over Him. He is an offence to them. And all of this means that they do not want to have anything to do with Him. They feel no need for Him. And Peter concluded verse 8, as you can see, by adding the statement, "whereunto also they were appointed."

It is very hard for most people to accept a statement like this. I have found that most of the expositors that I have read do everything to explain it away. But there it stands! And as difficult as it may be for us to accept it, it is a part of the Word of God.

We have a very similar statement in Jude 4 where Jude has written,
 For there were certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God unto lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 4).

The Apostle Paul taught the same truth in Romans 9. He taught that those of us who are saved, were ordained, or chosen by God, to be saved, but also that God has mercy on those upon whom He will have mercy, and those whom He does not intend to save, He hardens. Then Paul raised a question which he doubtless had heard many times. Let me read to you from Romans 9 beginning with verse 19:

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault?
 For who hath resisted his will?

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?
 Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou

made me thus?

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? (Rom. 9:19-24).

Even if we did not have statements like this in Scripture, the doctrine of election would teach to us that since some are chosen to be saved, then it means that those who are not chosen will not be saved.

These are doctrines that have been neglected for a long time by the church, and so they seem like heresy to us when we first hear them. But they are designed to teach us that God is sovereign in working out His salvation for sinners, that He knows what He is doing; in fact, He has ordained what He is doing.

Now if we had a situation in the world where multitudes of people were trying to be saved, but God would not save them, then we might question such passages as this. But we don't have a situation like that. People are not seeking the Lord. People are not buying Bibles to find out how they can be saved. Instead we find widespread rejection of the Gospel, and those of us who are saved gladly give God all of the glory for saving us. He has sought us. He has broken down the barriers we raised up, has changed our stubborn wills, and granted us faith to believe in Christ. We have been falsely taught that our wills are free, and that we are the captains of our souls. But the doctrine of free will is a myth. Our wills are not free, but are in bondage to our sinful natures. Paul said in this same ninth chapter of Romans from which I have read to you, these words:

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (Rom. 9:15-16).

And we all should remember those very familiar words in John 1:11-13:

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13).

What could be clearer than that? If you have not heard these truths before, I plead with you not to turn away from them. I think that most of you know me well enough to know that I would not teach anything that is not in the Bible. I would be afraid to. But when it is in the Bible, we must accept it, and then trust the Lord to give us the understanding that we need. I can assure you that believing the doctrine of election will give you a greater understanding of God, and a greater assurance that God knows what He is doing, and that He is fulfilling His will in every detail. Man can exercise His will in many things, but not for His own salvation. When any person wills to be saved it is because God has worked in his or her heart to make them willing, and because God also gives us the gift of faith. Remember Eph. 2:8-9.

But this is where we are in 1 Peter when we come to the end of verse 8. And we know this to be true. In our country there are many more who do not want to have anything to do with Christ, than there are people who love Him, and trust Him, and find Him precious to their souls.

But now we come to our text. And it was a miracle of God's grace that Paul could write what we have in these two verses. *In contrast with those who reject Christ, who find Him offensive, and who stumble over Him, there is another group, and I can say, a very large group, who can be described in the words that we have in verses 9 and 10. And we can say to the glory of the Lord that this describes most of us, perhaps all of us, who are here today. (Read 1 Peter 2:9, 10.)*

In verse 9 Peter began by giving us:

I. FOUR DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD (1 Pet. 2:9a).

Let us notice what they are, and, hopefully, what they mean.

A. "A chosen generation" (v. 9a).

Peter was not using this term the way we use it when we speak of "this generation." or *a generation of time*. One meaning of the word has to do with the time that a parent is succeeded by his child. It has been about thirty-five years. In the early days of human history when people lived up to nine hundred years, of course a generation was much longer. But Peter

was not using the word in this kind of a generation.

If you remember from your reading of the book of Genesis, you have expressions like this: the generations of Adam, or the generations of Noah, or the generations of Shem, or the generations of Isaac, or the generations of Jacob, and so on. And what always follows is the record of their descendants, their family. *This is the way in which Peter was using the word "generation." We are members of "a chosen generation."*

Now since we have been chosen by God, this is the same as saying that we are God's chosen family. When I was born, and when you were born, our parents had no choice over what they got. They had to take us as we were. But in God's family it is different. God has chosen all of us to be in His family. He chose us before the foundation of the world because He wanted us! We are in His family. And we are not adopted children, as I have been telling our Tuesday Class; we are children of God by birth, by the new birth. That is what Peter was speaking about in chapter 1 of this epistle, verse 23. (Read.) God has chosen each one of us to be His children, in His family. *How amazing that it, and yet what wonderful truth!*

The second description that Peter gave in verse 9 is that we are:

B. "A royal priesthood (v. 9).

And Peter had been speaking of this earlier right here in chapter 2. (Read verse 5). There it was "an holy priesthood"; here it is "a royal priesthood."

There was a priestly family in the OT. It was the family of Aaron, and they were assisted by the other members of their tribe of Levi. But now all of us are priests. Each of us has immediate access to God, and as we learned from verse 5 of this chapter we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. We don't offer animals or birds, but we offer praise, we offer good works, we offer our gifts, but, most of all, we are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices.

But what is the idea that we are "royal priesthood"?

Well, it means that we are priests of royalty, of a King. That term is used of God as the Sovereign of the whole universe, and it is used of our Lord Jesus Christ who one day will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

In carrying on his duties, a priest had the position of an intercessor. As

amazing as it sounds, we share in the royal priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ! How astounding it is that we should be given such an exalted position when we are just sinners saved by the grace of God. But Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, said that we are "a royal priesthood," and that is exactly what we are.

But we have here a third description.

C. "An holy nation" (v. 9).

I think that we all realize that a nation is a group of people who speak the same language, usually have the same religion, who live by the same laws and customs, and who occupy a certain prescribed territory. This is the way a nation is described in our dictionaries. And every part of it has special significance for us as the people of God.

Let me read Phil. 3:20-21 as it is in the NKJV:

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

As Peter had been telling those to whom he was writing that they were foreigners here on earth, it was because they had a heavenly citizenship. We have a different language from earthlings, don't we? Oh, we all speak English, but since we have been saved and made citizens of heaven, our speech has been cleaned up. And we all have the same religion, the one true religion. We all worship the Triune God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And our way of life is set forth in the most wonderful book that has ever been written. It is the Bible, the Word of God, infallible, unchanging, eternal, and living.

And the one word that is to describe all of us is the word "holy." We seek to live separated unto God, doing that which is pleasing to Him, avoiding at all times that which is displeasing to Him, and we are daily becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

So you see a little of what is involved in our being "an holy nation."

The fourth and last description that Peter gives to us is:

D. "A peculiar people" (v. 9).

When I study my Bible I like to have my dictionary close by so I can look up some of the words in the King James that may have changed their meaning in the past 300 plus years. I looked up the word "peculiar," and you probably would never guess what was given as the first meaning of the word. It was this: "Belonging to an individual, privately owned, not common." *And this is exactly what the Greek word means which the Apostle Peter used in this verse.* We may be a peculiar people in that we are different, and appear to be strange to the people of the world, but when Peter said that we are "a peculiar people," he meant that we are "GOD'S VERY SPECIAL PEOPLE." **We belong to Him. We are privately owned.** And Peter had been writing about this, too, hadn't he? (Read chapter 1, verses 18 and 19.)

How could the Lord have possibly expressed His delight in us in any better way?

Most of you know that our son Dwight has a married daughter in California, and that she and her husband recently had a child born to them, whom they named Connor. Courtney was talking to us right after Connor was born, and she said with the greatest of love expressed in our voice, "The Lord has given us our baby!" You parents know the thrill that that is. Now we are waiting to hear the same good news from Jason and Andrea. And it doesn't make any difference how many children you have, it is always thrilling to have a new baby come into the family.

This expression, "a peculiar people," tells us how the Lord feels about us. A verse that expresses how the Lord feels about all of us is Isa. 43:1. Let me read it to you. It was written about Israel, but it applies to all of God's children.

But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine (Isa. 43:1).

Maybe you don't know exactly when you were saved, but the Lord knows the date, and He will never forget it! Isn't it the most astounding thought that we can have, to think of how the Lord loves us, and delights in us? This is a truth that will support us in any time of trouble that we might go through, but it can be our greatest joy when everything seems to be going just like we want it to go.

But now let us turn our attention to the question: Why has the Lord done all of this for us? And remember that these definitions, or descriptions, apply to all of us who know the Lord. What has been God's purpose?

II. GOD'S PURPOSE IN SAVING US (1 Pet. 2:9m).

It is all "that we should show forth the praises of Him." Let me take it just that far for the moment. When Peter spoke of *the praises of the Lord*, He was speaking of all that the Lord is, and of all that He has done. It is sometimes described as *His excellencies*. The Lord did not do for us what He has done because we were worthy of it, nor because in some way we had earned it. It was all because of His love for us, a love that was not merited by us in any way.

And so we are to make His praises known throughout our lives, day after day, and night after night. And when people learn about what the Lord has done for us, the Lord may use that to make other people realize that He will do the same for them if they come to Him through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We never know how our praises of the Lord may be used.

But what did Peter go on to say that the Lord has done for us, for each of us, for all of us?

III. WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US (1 Pet. 2:9b-10).

There has much that Peter could say, but he has mentioned three things which I can only speak of briefly.

A. He has "called" us "out of darkness into His marvelous light"(v. 9b).

"Darkness" stand in Scripture for ignorance. And it stands for "sin." We didn't come out on our own; He "called us." And by His grace we heard His call, and He put in our hearts the desire to come to Him. And we came, and He saved us. And our lives have been different ever since. How marvelous is His light, and how wonderful it is to walk in the light of the Lord, in the light of His precious Word.

But God has done another thing for us.

B. We were not His people, but now we are His people (v. 10a).

We are His "peculiar people," people who belong to Him, people who are His special treasure, people who are the most special to Him. Oh, let this

truth really fill your heart and delight your soul.

But there is one more point.

C. We "had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (v. 10b).

Be sure to notice that all that has to do with the praises of the Lord is what God has done for us, and not what we have done for Him. It is not even anything that we deserved.

Remember that "mercy" and *misery* go together. Our sins cause us misery, but God extends to us His mercy to deliver us from our misery. Mercy is that disposition in God to forgive us and to deliver us from the judgment which we so much deserve. But in righteousness He could not bestow mercy except through the death of Christ for our sins. The Apostle Paul explained it in this way:

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-7).

But mercy is not just something that has to do with the way we are saved. We need the mercies of God every day we live. And the Bible assures us that they "are new every morning" (Lam. 3:23). And God's mercies are connected with His faithfulness. The last verse of Psalm 23 assures us that the mercy of God will pursue us and find us all the days of our lives. You all remember the verse,

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever (Psa. 23:6).

What a blessed people we are!

Concl: Let us not be silent about the praises of the Lord, but may our tongues always be ready to speak a word in season. We can never tell how the Lord may use our praise to bring the light of Christ to someone who is still lost in the darkness of sin, and facing eternity without Christ.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

1 Peter 2:11-12

Intro: If you will reflect with me for a moment over the first part of this epistle which we have been considering, I think that you will see that up to this point the Apostle Peter had been emphasizing our relationship to God, at this point he begins to emphasize our relationship with people – both unsaved and saved. The exception to this contrast in the first part of the epistle (up through 2:10) was what Peter had to say in 1:22 to believers about loving "each other with a pure heart fervently." But otherwise, Peter had been stressing matters that had to do with their relationship with God.

As an illustration of this difference we have in the first part which we have just covered, a statement which is very similar to what we have in the two verses I have selected as my text for today. Cf. 1:14-16 with 2:11-12. (Read both passages.) I think you can see that Peter's words in 1:14-16 have to do with being what we need to be in our relationship with God. And his emphasis can be summarized in the statement, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." If we are going to be pleasing to God, we must seek to become like Him. But when we come to our text for today, the same emphasis on not fashioning ourselves according to the ways of the world is made, but it has reference to the way godly living can and does affect the people of the world. So this brings out a different emphasis from 2:11 onward, as compared with the emphasis Peter had made up through 2:10.

The contrast I am pointing out does not mean that Peter leaves the Lord out of the latter part of his epistle, but as a general difference, I think that even a brief examination of the text of Peter's epistle, will show how these two parts of the epistle differ.

To illustrate this difference further, notice that beginning with verse 13 of chapter 2, Peter spoke of our relationship to governments and governmental leaders. Then he spoke of what servants should do beginning with verse 18, and going to the end of the chapter.

Chapter 3 verse 1 introduces Peter's comments to wives. This is followed in verse 7 with one verse to husbands.

In verse 8 of chapter 3 Peter began a section, a long section, which was addressed to believers irrespective of their personal status in society in which Peter intermingled matters that had to do with people and matters

that had to do with their relationship to God. This really goes to the end of chapter 4.

Beginning with chapter 5 and going down through verse 4 of that chapter we find Peter's words to the elders.

Then in 5:5 he addressed himself to the younger believers, encouraging them, as he had before to other groups, to be submissive and humble. And with this he concluded the main messages of this epistle. Verses 12 through 14 give us the conclusion.

So the divisions of Peter's letter are quite obvious. The order would certainly indicate that our relationship with God is primarily important, but an obedient life does not overlook the human relationships which we all have.

As we look, then, at verses 11 and 12 of chapter 2, making whatever comparisons we can with chapter 1, verses 13 through 16, I would call your attention to:

I. THE TONE OF PETER'S EXHORTATIONS (1 Pet. 2:11a).

In our text for today, Peter said, "Dearly beloved." In 1:13 he said, "As obedient children." Both are terms of endearment. He was not speaking down to them when in chapter 1 he called them children. Instead, he was addressing them *as children of God*. In addition, he was recognizing that there were seeking in their lives to be obedient to their heavenly Father. And so, in one way, he was encouraging them to continue on in their pursuit of holiness because that was the purpose for which the Father had redeemed them.

The same is true when we get to chapter 2, verse 11. Paul was not scolding them, but he was encouraging them to continue to beware of what "fleshly lusts" could do to their souls. And we can be sure that in both instances Peter was living the way he was encouraging them to live. True salvation means a real break with the old life, and a major transformation into an entirely new way of living.

Peter himself had been through a lot. He had experienced his failures. He knew what disastrous effects self-confidence could produce in the life of a child of God because he had failed the Lord at a most crucial time in the Lord's life on earth.

Yesterday at our men's prayer meeting I read to the men from our morning reading for that day. The passage was a part of Mark 14, and the story of Peter's denial of the Lord. But you may remember that hours before that denial, the Lord had taken Peter and James and John with Him into the inner part of the Garden of Gethsemane, and had asked them to "watch with Him." This meant that He wanted them to *watch in prayer*. Peter had no way of knowing exactly what was ahead, but the Lord had told him earlier that he would deny the Lord three times before the rooster crowed twice. Peter strongly objected by saying that he would never deny the Lord. The Lord even explained to him that while his spirit might be willing to be faithful to the Lord, *his flesh was weak!* And at that time Peter did not know how weak his flesh was. Consequently he was sleeping when he should have been praying.

With this background, how significant it is that Peter said in chapter 4, verse 7, of this epistle:

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

It was Peter's failure that would produce in him more of a sympathetic and humble attitude toward other believers. I am sure that conditions were not completely right in the lives of those to whom Peter was writing, but he recognized what they were seeking to do, and spoke humbly to them remembering how far he had had to come in his relationship with the Lord.

This is an important lesson for all of us to remember in our dealings with each other. Solomon warned all of us in his Proverbs not to repeat the failures of others. We are always more of a blessing to people when we encourage them for the ways they are seeking to please the Lord, than we will if we denounce them with criticisms. And so those words which we find at the beginning of verse 11 are very, very important for all of us to notice: "Dearly beloved." Peter had a deep love in his heart for the Lord's people, and he did not hesitate to express his love for them.

But there is more that can be said along this line.

He also was urging them to live in a way that was pleasing to God by recognizing with them that they were "strangers and pilgrims" in this world.

Peter had begun this epistle on this note, and here, if anything, he intensified the position of alienation they had in this world. And this is true of all of us. When the Lord saves us, He not only changes our hearts, but He makes some great changes in the way we live. And we soon realize that

this makes a difference to the people in the world. We sense that there are barriers between us and them which did not exist before. We learn that the world is not a friendly place for the Lord's people, a place where we find encouragement to live in a way that pleases the Lord. Peter had learned this, and he was very sympathetic to the people of God because he knew what difficulties they were facing in their lives.

So the words that Peter used here would be the kind of words which would cause the Lord's people to want to hear what he had to say to them. Even apostles had to win a hearing for their message.

Well, what did he have to say to them?

II. THE APOSTLE PETER'S EXHORTATION (1 Pet. 2:11b-12a).

Peter was not just making a suggestion, but he was telling them specifically what they needed to do, and why.

This was his exhortation: "Abstain from fleshly lusts."

Now this recognizes that even though they were believers in Christ, they had been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and had been born again, *it was still possible for them to sin*. The old bondage to sin which had been such a curse in their lives before they were saved, had been broken, but nevertheless they still had their old sin nature, and so they had to be on their guard against sin in all of its forms.

By *abstaining*, Peter meant that they were to hold themselves at a distance from "fleshly lusts which war against the soul." Lenski suggests the word "aloof." They were to keep their distance from the practice of any and all of those desires which came from within their own sinful hearts. The temptations might be outside in the world, but the desires came from within.

What was Peter talking about? To answer that question, let me ask you to turn to a passage written by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the churches of Galatia – Gal. 5, beginning with verse 16. This is how Paul described the lusts of the flesh, or fleshly lusts:

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that

ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:16-21).

Let me call your attention to words which the Lord Jesus Christ spoke along this line. You will find them in Mark 7:21-23:

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Now if we are to "abstain" from these, it means that we must not only not commit them, but we need to stay away from all situations which would become a temptation to us. We need to distance ourselves from every form of sin. Why?

Because sin within us, and temptations in the world around us, are constantly carrying on a campaign against our souls. We are constantly engaged in a SPIRITUAL WARFARE whether we want to be, or not. But, as the Apostle Paul brought out in that passage in Galatians which we read a moment ago, the Holy Spirit is present in the life of every child of God to strengthen us against the lusts of the flesh. It is not a battle which we have to fight by ourselves. In fact, if we try to stand against the flesh by ourselves, we will fail. But if we trust in the Holy Spirit, strengthened by the Word of God, living as God wants us to live, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. That is truth we can depend upon.

And, as Peter said in that first statement in verse 12, this is the way to have our conversation, our conduct, "honest among the Gentiles." Now this does not mean that unregenerate, godless Gentiles will approve of our lives, but they at least will be forced to admit that our conduct is consistent with the faith in Christ which we profess.

This is a very interesting point that the Apostle Peter was making in the

light of what is being taught by many people today who profess to be Christians. We are taught that if we are going to win people to Christ, we need to compromise a little with the way they live so they won't feel that we are so strange, or so different from what they are. So we find a great deal of worldliness among professing Christians today, and even in many of our churches there is definite influence that has come from the world outside. Dr. Mitchell used to say that the church has become worldly and the world has become "churchy" so that it is hard to tell the difference between the church and the world. Perhaps today the world is not as "churchy" as it used to be, but the church has certainly become more worldly.

Now when you read a passage like this you have to admit that the Bible does not teach the way of life that is so popular among professing Christians today. But what did Peter say would be the effect of the kind of a life which he was exhorting the believers in his day to live? Let us notice what he said in the latter part of verse 12.

III. THE PROMISED RESULTS (1 Pet. 2:12b).

You certainly can't say that Peter was unconcerned about reaching people with the Gospel. Read of his ministry in the book of Acts, and you will see that he was a man greatly used by God in reaching people with the Gospel. He saw many people saved during his ministry. What prospect does he hold out to us that, if we live to please the Lord instead of living to please people, that such living will be used by the Lord to turn people to Christ and salvation?

Read what Peter said here beginning with the words, "that, whereas . . ." (Read the remainder of the verse.)

One of the main reasons we are left here in this world after we are saved, is that we might tell others about Christ. So we want to be sure that we are doing the Lord's work in the Lord's way. If our ways are different from the Lord's ways, we are not going to have the Lord's blessing. Some may be saved because God is going to see His purposes fulfilled, but, if we want to see God's richest blessing upon us, we must do His work His way. And we know that not everyone is going to be saved. There never has been a generation since creation where everyone has been saved, and there never will be such a generation. But what did Peter say here?

First he said that even though we seek to please God in our lives, the peo-

ple of the world are still going to charge us as being "evildoers" just because we don't live the way they want us to live.

BUT, at the same time, if we are doing what we should be doing, living as God wants us to live, the way we are told to live in the Scriptures, they are going to notice how we live. Peter said, that "they may be your good works, which they shall behold." People don't have the answer for a life that has been transformed by the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. They see the difference, and they need to see the difference.

What will be the ultimate result for many? They will "glorify God in the day of visitation." What does this mean?

Well, "the day of visitation" is used of two different days in Scripture. And the context will reveal the difference. With some, "the day of visitation" is the day when God visits His judgment upon them for their sins, and because they refuse to repent of their sins. But with others, "the day of visitation" is the day that God in mercy and grace visits them with the gift of salvation. And this is the meaning here.

It is not by compromise that our lives will be a testimony to the people of the world, but it is by abstaining from fleshly lusts, and by walking in the Spirit, living a life of obedience to the Word of God, a life that is pleasing to the Lord. We never know who is watching us, but we can be sure that there are people who are doing just that. They may have even been critical of us, but the day may come when they will thank God for the way He used us to make they realize what it really means to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior.

This is what Peter was saying; this is what he was teaching. We had better do the Lord's work in the Lord's way, and not follow those people who think that they have a better way. The best way is the Lord's way because the way of obedience to the Lord is the way that points people to the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Concl: We are all engaged in a SPIRITUAL WARFARE, a warfare in which our old nature within us and world and the Devil outside of us, are seeking to draw us back into sin and the ways of the world.. The victory is ours, not by compromising with a godless world, or with the sins of the flesh, but the victory is our as we faithfully seek to please God in the way we live, and as we trust Him to use us by our lives to point others to Christ.

CHRISTIANS UNDER ROMAN RULE

1 Peter 2:13-17

— **Intro:** There are two major passages in the New Testament which have to do with a Christian's relationship to his government. And they were written at two different periods in the history of Israel. The first is in Romans 13, the first seven verses; the second, in 1 Peter 2, verses 13 through 17. It has been estimated that the two epistles were probably written about six years apart (the Roman epistle written first), but the circumstances at the time each epistle was written were very different.

(Read Rom. 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17.)

We also have Paul's exhortation to Timothy regarding prayer for the leaders of government in 1 Timothy 2:1-4:

- 1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;
- 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.
- 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;
- 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

And we need to add to this list of verses, Titus 3:1-2:

- 1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,
- 2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

We know from the Gospels that the opposition which Christ and His followers experienced came, not from Rome, but from their own countrymen, the Jews. And when the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome, he did not write of the government of Rome as an enemy, but as a friend. So it seems at that time, at least, that believers were experiencing little difficulty from Rome, *i.e.*, from the Gentiles. But when Peter wrote his epistle, the situation had changed in that short period of less than ten years. Note in 1 Peter 2:7 what Peter said to those who first received this epistle. (Read.) But one interesting point about both pages is that Peter said just what Paul had said, even though their words were slightly different. Here is what two writers said about the Romans passage, and their words apply equally to the 1 Peter passage:

There is a complete absence of any reference to particular circum-

stances: the language is throughout general: there is a studied avoidance of any special terms; direct commands such as might arise from particular circumstances are not given: but general principles applicable to any period or place are laid down (Sanday and Headlam, the ICC commentary on Romans, p. 369).

So these facts would lead us to believe that what the Apostles wrote in these two passages are to be applied by all believers in all ages and in all countries. These express the will of God for all of us in relation to our governments.

Now with these facts in mind, and having looked at all of these passages, let us turn our attention to our text in 1 Peter 2:13. And you will note that the Apostle Peter began what he was saying on this point with a single word.

I. THE COMMAND TO SUBMIT (1 Pet. 2:13a).

This is the Greek verb ὑποτάσσω. This verb is formed by taking the verb τάσσω and putting the preposition ὑπό in front of it. The verb τάσσω means *to put in place*, meaning *to place in a certain order*, or *to assign a certain place to something*. And the preposition ὑπό means *under*. So the two words together mean *to place under*.

The word was a Greek military term and it meant "to arrange troop divisions in a military fashion under the command of a leader." In non-military use it was "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden" (copied from Thayer's definition of this verb in Strong's Greek/Hebrew Dictionary in BibleSoft).

We know that it would be impossible to have an army or any other branch of the military without the submission of the troops to the officers who are in command over them. In such a case, submission is not an option, but it is demanded, and the branches of the service have the authority to see that there is this submission, this obedience, to those who are in command.

The same is true of governments. They are vested with a God-given authority to enforce obedience from its citizens. No nation can function without this kind of submission. So in our text the Apostle Peter, and in the other passages, the Apostle Paul, were saying that we as believers need to do voluntarily what the government has the power to enforce.

This same need for submission, or obedience, runs all through life, and we

see it throughout the Word of God.

When God led the children of Israel out of Egypt, He gave them a Law through Moses. What was the purpose of the Law? It was to tell the people of Israel what God wanted them to do, and what He didn't want them to do. And along with those laws He told them of blessings they would receive if they obeyed Him, and judgments which would come upon them if they disobeyed Him.

This is necessary in order for a family to have any peace and harmony. In Ephesians and Colossians Paul told the children to obey their parents. So from our earliest years it is the responsibility of parents to teach their children to obey them. This is where children are supposed to learn to be obedient to their teachers in school, and to the police officers who have the authority in our cities to see that we obey the laws we live under.

Now let me show you again in 1 Peter and some other passages in other books of the Bible where this word ὑποτάσσω is used.

Here in 1 Peter, following our text, we have it in:

- 1) 1 Pet. 2:18 for servants, or it would apply to employees in our day.
- 2) 1 Pet. 3:1 for wives. And it is repeated in 3:5.
- 3) It is even used of the submission of angels to our Lord in heaven following His resurrection and ascension. See 3:22.
- 4) And then it is used of the submission of young people to their elders in 1 Pet. 5:5.

It was this same word that Paul used in Rom. 13:1 and 5. And the same is true of Titus 3:1.

Paul said in Eph. 5:21 that in the church we need to practice being submissive one to another in the fear of God.

And this idea of submission to authority carries over even into eternity.

Let me read to you from 1 Cor. 15, verses 25-28:

1 Cor 15:25-28

25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son

also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

In all of these passages it is the same word that is used. The idea of submission to authority runs all through life, and it is one of the greatest secrets of true happiness. But our sinful hearts tell us that happiness is found in being able to do what we want to do. Do you remember as a child how you looked forward to the time when you wouldn't have somebody always telling you what to do? Rebellion against authority is prevalent everywhere, and that is one big reason why our world is in the condition that it is today.

Our Lord is our great and only Example of perfect obedience. He was always submissive to His Father's will, and He lived in absolute obedience to the laws of the land in His own time on earth. I have spent extra time on this today because it is such an important subject. We are all sinners by nature because Adam and Eve were not submissive to the will of God in the beginning of human history.

But now let us go back to our text, and ask the question:

II. TO WHAT AND TO WHOM ARE WE TO BE SUBMISSIVE?

We are to be submissive to all of the laws of the land, and we are to respect the leaders of government. We may suffer persecution because we are Christians, but we must never suffer because we are law breakers. Cf. 1 Pet. 4:14-16. We may have leaders who do not respect our laws, but that does not excuse us from being obedient. In fact, we as Christians are to live by much higher standards than the laws of any nation on earth, and that is what Peter and Paul were both exhorting all of us as the people of God to be faithful. This was what Peter was told by the Lord to tell the people of God in his day, and the same has applied from that day until this, and will continue to apply to all believers to the end of time.

But now let me give you the sweetness of a passage like this, and Peter put a lot of sweetness into what he was saying here. It might seem that he was being unrealistic in the light of the kind of government they lived under, and so he put some spiritual sweetness into what otherwise could have tasted very bitter. And the sweetness can be seen in what he had to say about:

III. WHY WE ARE TO BE OBEDIENT TO THE LEADERS OF

OUR GOVERNMENT.

You will find this sweetness that I have been talking about in verses 13 and 15 and 16. There are three very precious points that the Apostle Peter brought out in these three verses.

A. In verse 13 don't overlook the words "for the Lord's sake."

We are coming up to tax time, and I have never met a single person who enjoys paying taxes. Peter did not mention taxes here, but Paul did in Romans 13. Think about this as you prepare your tax report, and pay a lot more than you think you ought to pay. The Apostle certainly was not saying that everything that governments do, is right. Governments can often be very, very wrong. But it helps us to submit ourselves to our leaders and the laws of the land if we remember that, when we are being obedient, we are doing it "for the Lord's sake." That is why you should pay your taxes, not because you know you will get into trouble with Uncle Sam if you don't. That is a good thing to remember. But pay your taxes this year "for the Lord's sake." Is there anything that you wouldn't do for Him?

When you see that sign that says you are not to drive any faster than 35, and a lot of people are going by you 45 and 50, what a difference it makes to remember that you are staying under the limit "for the Lord's sake."

Take any of the laws that may be an irritation to you, and remember this every time you think about those laws. You are obeying "for the Lord's sake." Doesn't that take the resentment out of your heart?

But there is a second sweet word that the Apostle Peter has given us.]

B. Submission to our government is "the will of God."

Notice what Peter wrote in verse 15.

This ought to be a major consideration for every single one of us. Think of what it would mean to live in a country where there were no laws, and no law enforcement officers. Or think of what an obstacle it would be to learning if we were not required to go to school. God is the One Who established governments, and their authority is a God-given authority. They may be corrupt in many ways, and we have the right to vote to correct the things that are wrong, but whatever the circumstances might be, for good

or ill, the powers that be are ordained of God, and to resist the powers is actually to resist God.

You see, the people of the world are inclined to look upon those of us who are Christians as being a strange lot because we are concerned about pleasing God, but it is by our submission to authority that we "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." On the other hand, when we do what is wrong, and engage in anything that is contrary to the laws of the land, we not only bring reproach on our own names, but we bring reproach on the name of the Lord. That is why we need to be so careful that we are doing the will of God, and that is the highest objective and the highest motivation that we can possibly have.

But there is one more element of divine sweetness in this passage, and you will find it in verse 16.

C. We are not only citizens of our city and our country, but we are "the servants of God."

We have a paradox in this sixteenth verse, don't we? Peter said that we are "free," but then he went on to say that we are *the bondservants of God*. "Free bondservants" – doesn't that sound like a contradiction? It does until you understand what the Lord has done for us.

In John 8:32 we have our Lord's words Who said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." But then He went on to say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant," the bondservant of sin. That is in John 8:34. And then He added, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." "Free indeed" means *really free!*

People who don't know the Lord think they are the ones who are free, and yet the truth is that they, too, are bondslaves, not bondslaves of God, but bondslaves of sin! We are the ones who are free – not free to sin, but free from sin, free from sin's bondage, free from the enslaving tyranny of sin! And having been freed from our sin, we have a choice every day as to whether or not we are going to obey our government, or not obey. And it brings the greatest glory to God when having a choice to obey or to disobey, we, because we are the Lord's free bondservants, choose by His grace to be obedient.

We don't use our freedom in Christ as a reason for disobeying the laws of our government, but it is because we are free that we show that we are *the*

bondservants of our God by our obedience to the laws of our city, our county, our state, and our country.

There are problems to be sure, but we need to start where the apostles have started, and make sure that we understand what they are saying. And in these matters, as in all other matters that have to do with our obedience, only by God's grace can we ever do what pleases Him. "For it is God which worketh in you," Paul said, "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

I have one more verse before I close, and it is verse 17. What do we have here?

IV. OUR GOD-GIVEN OBLIGATIONS WITH REGARD TO PEOPLE (1 Pet. 2:17).

A. Honor all men."

The Greek actually has, "Honor all." But the implication is as the KJV has rendered it, that we are to show respect for and under all conditions be courteous toward everybody. And since Peter included the people of God under the next point, in this one he had to be thinking about people who do not know the Lord. And perhaps since he had just been speaking of kings and their governors, he may have been thinking that we need to obey our leaders in government even when they do not know the Lord. But all people need to feel the effect of our desire to please the Lord.

B. "Love the brotherhood."

Cf. 1 John 3:14. There is a special affection that we are to have for all who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

C. "Fear God."

We are fearful that we may not please Him. This is the greatest point that the Apostle Peter was making. Under all circumstances and in all of our relationships, it must be our main concern that we do what pleases God.

D. "Honor the king."

Peter used the same verb here that he did with "all men" at the beginning of this verse. The king is just a man, but we are to respect the position that

he has.

Concl: Why did the Apostle Peter begin with kings and governors when he spoke of various ways in which we need to be submissive toward people? It must be because our obedience here probably reflects the reality of our obedience in the other relationships of our lives. This is undoubtedly one of the hardest of all submissions, and yet it is a vital part of our total submission to God. It is especially difficult because of the way things are going in our own country right now. But let us remember that the Lord is the One Who sets up leaders, and He is the One Who removes them. We can't ever fully understand His purposes, but we need to remember that He is all-powerful and infinitely wise, and we can safely and peacefully leave the affairs of government in His hands. Let us pray for our leaders, but trust God to carry out His will in just the way that will bring the greatest glory to His Name and the greatest blessing to us as we make it our business to make sure that we are pleasing Him.

CHRIST, A SERVANT'S EXAMPLE

1 Peter 2:18-25

Intro: The NT has much to say about masters and servants. We find them in many of the parables which our Lord told. But they enter also into much of the teaching of the epistles of the NT. Even in the OT there were references to servants, and how they were to be treated. The Mosaic Law even made provision for their freedom. So it is apparent that masters and slaves were a part of society in most of the countries referred to in Scripture. It was common for one nation in conquering another nation to make servants out of the nation that had been conquered. And often the situation which servants faced was very, very difficult. It often meant severe suffering for the servants, and, in many instances, it meant death. And yet, on the other hand, servants were often treated with great kindness, and became like members of their master's family.

And these situations are what we think of when in the epistles of Paul, or here in Peter's epistle, we find the apostles addressing themselves to "servants." But I want to suggest a wider application of the passage before us today. If you will stop to think about those who are servants, you can see that in one sense or another all of us are servants.

Probably the closest way in which a passage like this can find its application today is when a person, whether a man or a woman, works for another person. In other words, this passage would apply to employees who work for an employer. In our society where person freedom seems to be the hue and cry on every side, we sometimes forget that the employer is the master, the one who is in charge, and the employee is the one who is responsible to do what his employer has hired him to do.

But there is another sense in which the employer himself is a servant. He is serving the public. He seeks to have a product, or products, which the public will buy, and so he is providing a service for people in general. A farmer might be considered to be self-employed, but if he cannot sell the crops which he grows, he can't continue long to farm on a scale that goes beyond the needs of his own family.

Public school teachers, in fact, all public employees are public servants. A doctor is serving his patients. And pastors are servants also. In this very epistle we are currently studying the Apostle Peter said this about elders, and pastors, being elders, are included. Look at 1 Peter 5:2-4:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the over-

sight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Notice: "Neither as being lords over God's heritage."

And remember the words of the Apostle Paul as he wrote to the church in Corinth:

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake (2 Cor. 4:5).

But the crowning example of a servant is given to us in our text for today, and that example is our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord even said as much about Himself. Cf. Mark 10:45:

For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

That which led our Lord to make that statement was the request that James and John made of Him, that they be given the seats on His right hand and His left hand in His glory. The other disciples were very unhappy with James and John when they heard what they had asked the Lord to do for them. This is how the Lord answered them all:

42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all (Mark 10:42-44).

So, in one way or another, we all are servants, and the principles which Peter declared in this passage, have a message for each one of us today.

I believe that you will see that these eight verses, from verse 18 to verse 25 here in 1 Peter 2, are divided into three parts: verse 18 gives us the command for servants; verses 19 and 20 give us the reason for the command; and verses 21 through 25 tell us about the example set by our Lord Jesus Christ. (Repeat.)

Now let us look first, at

I. THE COMMAND FOR SERVANTS (1 Peter 2:18).

The word which Peter used here for "servants" is not the word meaning a *bondservant*, but it is the Greek word for a *household servant*. Joseph working for Potiphar, would be an example of this kind of a servant. It speaks of one we would call a *domestic*, one who does the duties that are required in a family. Often these servants had their living quarters in the home of their masters.

Peter used the word for them that I discussed with you the last time I spoke on 1 Peter before our Bible Conference. It is the word ὑποτάσσω, the word which the Apostle Peter used several times in this epistle for various groups among the believers to whom he was writing. Although it was a word used for soldiers in an army, yet it was also used by the Greeks to describe, I hope you remember, "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden" (from Thayer's Lexicon).

What Peter meant by this was that the servants were to do what their masters wanted them to do, to do it promptly, accurately, and not only willingly, but happily. We could go to other passages where the writers of Scripture have addressed themselves to servants, but I won't take the time for that this morning.

And Peter indicated here that this was to be the servants responsibility regardless of how his master may have treated him, or her. It would have naturally been a pleasure to work for a master who was "good and gentle," but the servant who had a "froward" master was to receive the same kind of service. And that would not have been as happy a situation. "Froward" can mean several things. It can mean *wicked*. It can mean *perverse*. It can mean *unfair*. It can mean *harsh and hard to get along with*.

So regardless of what kind of a master a servant might have, he was always to render to him the same kind of faithful, honest, thorough, cheerful, obedience as if he were "good and gentle."

Being a servant was never easy, but it would be especially difficult if the master were difficult and unfair and unreasonable.

Now let us make the application to whatever situation we may be in where we are rendering a service to someone else. The circumstances we face, and the people we deal with, do not determine what our service should be,

or what our attitude should be. We get our instructions from the Word of God. *And this leads me to my second point.*

II. THE REASON THAT THE APOSTLE PETER GAVE FOR SUCH A COMMAND FOR SERVANTS (1 Pet. 2:19-20).

The word "thankworthy" is the Greek word for *grace*. It is interesting to me, and I am sure that it will be to you, that one of the translations that Thayer gave to this word was that it speaks of "the spiritual condition of one governed by the power of divine grace." Don't you like that? How different our behavior would be in difficult circumstances if we would only remember that God's grace is always sufficient for us whatever our circumstances might be. So if a servant has a difficult master, it provides him with a unique opportunity to demonstrate in his behavior the grace of God.

But this word "thankworthy" also carries with it the idea that it is *worthy of thanks*, or *worthy of a reward*. It does not necessarily mean that the master will change and give his servant a special reward, but it does mean that God Who sees what is going on, and who knows not only the outward performance of the servant, but the condition of the servant's heart, will without doubt reward the servant for his obedience and for his attitude in his obedience.

But why would a believing servant want to please a hard-to-please master? Verse 19 tells us. It is because this servant has a "conscience toward God." What does this mean? It means that this servant seeks to please his master because he knows that this is what is pleasing to God. This is what God wants him to do, and so he sweetly, promptly, and thoroughly seeks to please his master. What a difference it would make in the work place if all of us who know the Lord would respond so well under difficult circumstances.

Notice the same emphasis in verse 20.

If you and I do the wrong thing, and get punished for it, that is not thankworthy even though we "take it patiently." But if we get into trouble even when we do the right thing, and "take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." "Acceptable" is the Greek word for *grace* again. Here it means that which is pleasing to God. The only way anyone can sincerely behave as the Apostle Peter was exhorting servants to behave under difficult circumstances was by the grace of God. This brings the blessing of God, and

God rewards such behavior. And He does it both here and hereafter!

So why was it that Peter said what he said to servants in verse 18? It is because that is the will of God for all of His people who are in positions where they are serving other people – whether those people are believers or not, it make no difference.

Now you can imagine the arguments that Peter could have heard from the believers to whom he was writing. There is always someone who says that such obedience is impossible when you have a tough boss, or when people are hard to deal with. However, when we do what the Lord wants us to do, trusting Him for the grace to do it, and to do it in a cheerful spirit, we seek how right God is, and how wrong we are to consider any other kind of behavior.

But all objections are silenced when Peter did what he did in verses 21 through 25 because in these verses he showed that

III. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS THE SERVANT'S EXAMPLE (1 Peter 2:21-25).

How amazing it is to think of our Lord Jesus Christ as making Himself our Servant! We can say on the basis of Peter's words here in these verses that the Lord Jesus is not only the servant's Example, but He is the servant's Servant! However lowly our place may be, the Lord Jesus placed Himself below us in order to serve us in meeting needs which we did not even know that we had.

There are many lessons for us to learn in the humiliation of our Lord not only in becoming a Man, but in what He suffered for us when He went to the Cross. It is in the Cross that we learn one of the greatest secrets of a life that is pleasing to God, and a life that brings us happiness that can not be experienced in any other way. Liberal theologians would make the Lord only an Example for us to follow. He has to become our Savior first, but then He is our Example. So let us not overlook this great truth.

In what ways is He our Example? Look at verse 22 for the starting place. "Who did no sin." Not only was our Lord sinless throughout His life, but as He faced the most difficult situation at the end of His life that anyone has ever face, it was still true that He "did no sin."

Nor was there any guile in His mouth? What is "guile"? "Guile" is *deceit*.

His enemies were full of guile, full of deceit, but our Lord told the truth right to the very last breath that He breathed. He did not use trickery on them just because that is what they were doing with Him.

When you read verse 23, think of the Cross. Think of all of the accusations that were hurled at Him as He was dying on the Cross. He could have spoken the word, and destroyed that whole God-less crowd, and He could have done it in perfect righteousness, but He didn't. He did not threaten them with retaliation. Instead, what did He do? He "committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." He exercised the grace of God. He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). He also said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). If you and I want to see the sufficiency of the grace of God, look at our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. He was being totally submissive to the will of His Father. He died on the Cross primarily because He knew that was why the Father had sent Him into the world. Not even the death of the Cross could turn Him aside.

In verse 24 we see that while our Lord was serving the Father's will, He was also serving us, voluntarily bearing "our sins in His own body on the tree." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man will lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). But when the Lord died for us, we were not His friends, but His enemies. Listen again to those wonderful words written by the Apostle Paul under the direction of the Holy Spirit in Romans 5:

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (Rom. 5:6-11).

Regardless of how difficult a servant's situation might be, and regardless of how unreasonable and unworthy his master might be, nothing could

have been worse than we were our best when the Lord Jesus undertook to serve us as our Savior, not because we were worthy, but because He knew that was the Father's will for Him. And He loved us and died to deliver us from our sins, that "we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness," and He did it in such a loving and gracious and self-sacrificing way that many of us in our ignorance used to feel that we deserved it. We were like "sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." And why did we return? Because He brought us back!

Concl: Have you learned something new about the Lord Jesus Christ today? I will have to say I have in preparing this message. I am not surprised to read in the Scriptures that Christ is the Servant of Jehovah God, but I am startled to see in this passage today that the Lord Jesus became my Servant, to deliver me from my sins, and to enable me to be able to live so as to please Him.

When we get into difficult situations because of what people do to us, or say about us, let us remember that whatever they might do or say, it is nothing compared to what we have done to the Lord by our sins, making it necessary for Him to suffer like He did to deliver us from our sins, and to make us His very own.

Oh, what a marvelous example we have in our Lord Jesus Christ! How we should love Him and serve Him as His servants, serving willingly, and joyfully, and obediently, and promptly, and thoroughly – and all of this from our hearts.

If anyone here today is without Christ, if you have never trusted the Lord Jesus as your Savior, I beseech you on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be reconciled to God by trusting in Christ and the work that He did on the Cross, serving sinners, that they might be forgiven of their sins, and be able henceforth to live lives that are pleasing to God. If any of you are concerned about your relationship to God, I will be happy to speak to you at the close of the service today.