

1Peter 1:1-25

Obedience and Sprinkling of the Blood of Christ

Elect...unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ – v. 2

Pretty deep theology for a fisherman! It seems that when some commentators compare Peter with Paul they designate Peter as being intelligent but they designate Paul as being the scholar. I suppose that makes sense. Paul was trained in the things of God by the distinguished scholar of his day, Gamaliel, while Peter was probably trained by his Father in how to run the family fishing business.

The thing that Peter and Paul had in common, however, was that they were both trained in the school of Christ. Peter was with Christ during his earthly ministry. He heard Christ teach, he saw Christ perform miracles, he saw Christ in his glory on the mount of transfiguration. He was the first one to reach the empty tomb after Christ rose from the dead and he beheld Christ ascend into heaven following that 40 day period of instruction in things pertaining to the kingdom of God that were taught by the resurrected Christ.

Paul met with Christ too on the Damascus road and then was called apart by Christ for a period of three years (Gal. 1) when he would have been instructed by the glorified Savior. I had never thought of that before but if you compare those three years that Paul spent in Arabia with the duration of Christ's earthly ministry then you could say that Paul and Peter took a 3 year course under Christ himself.

So their backgrounds were different but their teacher was the same. The thing I find striking, however, about these opening verses in Peter's first epistle is that the opening salutation launches you into the rich and precious truths of the gospel. That's why I say pretty deep theology for a fisherman.

Notice how he addresses the Christians in the first two verses: They are called *strangers*. The word in other places is translated by the word *pilgrim*. Other versions translate the word *exiles* or *aliens*. And don't we see at once, then, that a Christian is an alien in this world. This world is not his home. I'm afraid there's a tendency in the lives of many Christians to treat this world as if it were their home. We are obviously in the world but we are not to be of the world.

And then beginning in v. 2 Peter addresses the recipients of his epistle as *Elect – Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*. And now is where Peter launches out into the deep, so to speak. In the course of this single verse in which his only intention is write an opening salutation he shows how God in the three persons of the trinity is involved in the salvation process. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father; Next there is reference to the sanctification through the Spirit; and then there follows reference to the sprinkling of the blood of Christ.

Elected by God the Father; Sanctified through the Holy Spirit; Redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. His reference to the blood of Christ, however, is a reference to the believer's connection to that blood. *Sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ* makes reference to the

application of the blood of Christ, or spiritually speaking to the appropriation of that blood by faith. This is what makes this text a fitting statement for our time around the communion table this morning. In our remembrance of the broken body and shed blood of Christ we utilize this occasion to pledge our faith in that blood and to appropriate that blood anew and afresh to our souls.

What I'd like to do, therefore, this morning, is to call your attention to this phrase in the verse. By isolating only this part of the verse we could read it like this:

Elect...unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

I have 3 observations I want to make about this text this morning in preparation for our remembrance of Christ. Let me call your attention first to:

I. The Connection Between Obedience and Sprinkling of the Blood of Christ

Note again how the text reads: *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.* Election leads to two things and those two things work closely together. Election is unto obedience and election is unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

It's fitting that obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ should be in such close proximity because Christ's obedience was closely linked to the shedding of his blood. We have seen this in our earlier studies in Philippians. Speaking of Christ Paul writes in Php 2:8 that he *being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

It's important to know that as our covenant head and our substitute Christ rendered obedience to his Father. It was in obedience to his Father that he left heaven's glory to begin with. It was in obedience to his Father that he condescended so low as to become a man. The works that he performed while on earth were works that his Father gave him to do. So we read in Joh 5:36 these words of Christ: *But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.*

The same thing pertains to the words that Christ spoke. He spoke his Father's words in obedience to his Father. While praying to his Father in Jn. 17 we read in Joh 17:8 *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received [them], and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.*

These verses show us very clearly that there was obviously a prior time, then, when Christ and his Father and the Holy Spirit planned in advance every detail of salvation. In other words there was a covenant between the Father and the Son in which covenant the Father gave to Christ the works he would perform and the very words he would speak. In that same covenant the Father gave to his Son a people. This is what Peter's word *elect*

makes reference to. *I pray for them*, Christ says in Jn. 17:9 *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine*. Behold Christ, then, in the gospels rendering that perfect obedience on behalf of those he represented. He's referred to twice in the New Testament as the second Adam.

Adam, I'm sure you know, was to render obedience to God in the garden of Eden. And Adam had every advantage for rendering that obedience. He knew God first hand. He was created in a perfect environment where everything was declared by God himself to be very good. But Adam failed by failing to disobey God. And you and I fell in him and fell with him.

Christ, on the other hand, had every disadvantage. He came into a world that was not very good. He came into a world cursed with sin. He grew up in an environment of apostasy. He was constantly tempted by the devil to abandon the way of obedience. The Pharisees sought on numerous occasions to provoke him. The slowness of his own disciples was a trial to his patience but in the midst of many challenges he continued the path of obedience to his Father.

And even when that obedience called for excruciating suffering Christ still rendered that obedience perfectly. He was obedient unto death, that text in Philippians tells us. So when his back was whipped the Roman centurion could not whip the obedience out of Christ. And when nails were driven into his hands and feet he would not cease rendering obedience. Even while being suspended between heaven and earth on a cross he would continue to render perfect obedience to his Father.

We got into something of a discussion last Wednesday at prayer meeting of the sinlessness of Christ. He did no sin (1Pet 2:22); He knew no sin (2Cor. 5:21); and in him there was no sin (1Jn. 3:5) – which means that all the up to and throughout the course of the shedding of his blood he rendered perfect obedience to his Father.

There's a text in 1 Samuel that for a time use to puzzle me. It's the words that Samuel speaks to Saul after Samuel had to confront Saul for his incomplete obedience. 1Sa 15:22 *And Samuel said, Hath the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey [is] better than sacrifice, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams.*

I use to view that text in the light of the gospel and would say to myself – *how can obedience be better than sacrifice? My hope is in the sacrifice of Christ. I'm so glad I have a Savior whose sacrifice atones for all my disobedience and for all my failings even while striving for obedience. It seems to me that sacrifice is better than obedience. Certainly the sacrifice of Christ is better than my pathetic obedience!*

The solution to what is only a dilemma on the surface is that Christ's sacrifice was in accordance with the obedience he rendered. His sacrifice you could say was his crowning act of obedience. He was obedient you see not only in his life but in his death. He was obedient to his Father in the very shedding of his blood. Most gladly, therefore, do we commemorate his obedience unto blood in our time around his table.

But let's note from the text in 1Pet. 1:2 that when reference is made to obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, Peter is making reference to the obedience of the Christian and the phrase *the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ* makes reference to the application of the blood of Christ by the believer. The believer is elected by God, but he's elected to this very thing – obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

When Peter uses the phrase, you see, *the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ* he's alluding to the Old Testament practice of the priest when the priest made those animal sacrifices. We read in Ex 24:6 *And Moses took half of the blood, and put [it] in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.* Two verses later we read Ex 24:8 *And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled [it] on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.*

The author of Hebrews speaks of Moses action in Heb 9:19ff *For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. 21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. 22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*

Do you see how the blood was sprinkled or the blood was applied to everything? It was applied to the altar, it was applied to the book, it was applied to the people, and it was applied to all the vessels that were used in the tabernacle and it was applied to the tabernacle itself.

We are not, of course, living in Old Testament times. We're not living in a time of animal sacrifices. What, then, is Peter talking about when he talks about being elect unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ? He's describing for us now something that is spiritual. It is in this new dispensation a spiritual process of applying or sprinkling the blood of Jesus Christ.

Indeed – there's a very real sense in which we'll be engaged in that very process around the Lord's table. We will be engaged in the practice of applying or sprinkling the blood of Christ. In this dispensation we are all priests. Peter says this very thing in the next chapter of his first epistle 1Pe 2:9 *But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

We each have the priestly function to perform of sprinkling or applying the blood of Jesus Christ to our lives. Now remember what I said earlier – there is a close connection between obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. That close connection is brought out this way – we will apply the blood of Jesus Christ to our disobedience. We will plead the blood of Jesus Christ over our sins. We will confess our sins and plead the blood of Christ over our sins that's what it means to sprinkle the blood of Christ. B

But we will also apply the blood of Jesus Christ even to our obedience. We acknowledge that even the best and most fervent obedience we render to God does not and cannot measure up to the perfect standard of God's law. *I find then a law*, Paul writes in Rom. 7:21 *that, when I would do good, evil is present with me*. Do you get the thrust of that verse? Evil is present with you even when you would do good. Our sin natures still taint all that we do even the good things that we do so that we dare not offer to God anything in such a way that would suggest that it could stand the scrutiny of God on its own merit.

I find it interesting that when you trace the word *sprinkle* through the Old Testament the thing that you find most often sprinkled by the blood of those animal sacrifices was the altar itself. The altar, you know, was the place of offering. And so we can draw the application from the altar that our altar is our offering to God. We offer him our praises and our worship; we offer him our tithes and our gifts; we offer him our time and our efforts; indeed we are to offer him our very lives since he has redeemed our lives by the blood of his Son.

But just as the altar had to be sprinkled with the blood of those animal sacrifices in Old Testament times so do we do well to sprinkle our offerings with the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. So I plead the blood of Christ over my praises and worship and I plead the blood of Jesus Christ over my tithes and gifts; and I plead the blood of Jesus Christ over everything I endeavor to do for Christ over the words I endeavor to speak for Christ and over the obedience I strive to render to Christ.

There is a very close connection, then, between obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. I would go so far as to say that the two are so indissolubly linked that you can't render true gospel obedience without the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. We do well, therefore, this morning around the Lord's table to plead the blood of Christ over our sins and shortcomings and to plead it over our worship and service and obedience.

And in so doing God will accept our worship and God will accept our gifts and God will accept our strivings and our efforts to obey and serve him. With the blood of Christ applied, you see, our sins are atoned for and our works gain a merit outside of us – they gain the perfect merit of Christ himself.

That's my first observation, then – that there's a close connection between obedience and the blood of Jesus Christ. Would you note with me next:

II. Obedience and the Sprinkling of the Blood of Christ is the Mark of a Christian

Our text is found in the opening salutation of Peter's epistle. You could say, therefore, that these first two verses describe the kind of people that Peter is addressing. Who is he writing to? He's writing to those that are strangers or exiles to this world. *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*.

He's writing to those who make up the elect. *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.* The heart searching question that disturbs some that name the name of Christ is the question – how do I know the elect? If salvation is all of God (and it is) and salvation is in accordance with his sovereign choice of a people then how can I tell whether or not I'm one of the elect?

It's not really such a great and deep thing to discern. It's really very simple and can be answered by looking at the way the elect are described in the verse. You'll notice that this election is *through the sanctification of the Spirit.* Sanctification speaks of being set apart. Those that were elected were set apart and so are they in the process of being set apart from the world. The way to discern your election, therefore, is to ask yourself where your heart is toward this world.

Are you at home in this world? – do you live for this world? – can you see beyond this world? – or are your affections so attached to this world that it's all you can see? A Christian becomes a stranger to this world. Peter is addressing those that became strangers or aliens to this world.

And then notice that the elect are described as those that render obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. This is what they were elected to. This means that they strive for obedience because they love God and they love Christ and they view obedience to God's law as an expression of their love. *If ye love me,* Christ said in Jn. 14:15 *keep my commandments.*

And then of course the mark of the elect is that they believe in the blood of Jesus Christ and they appropriate the blood of Jesus Christ. The world, you know, is repulsed by the blood of Christ. The world scoffs at and repudiates and finds grotesque a religion that is built on a foundation of a beaten and bleeding Savior nailed to a tree. It's inhumane, it's uncivilized, it makes you look like some sort of crude barbarian to place an emphasis on something that is so cruel and grotesque. There's really no difference between Christianity and barbaric cannibalism in the minds of the world.

You might recall from John's gospel that when Christ made the focus of his religion the spiritual eating of his flesh and the spiritual drinking of his blood, such a focus caused many of his followers to turn away in disgust. He went from having a large a growing ministry to having a reduced and shrinking ministry.

And so the searching question becomes this – do you believe in the blood of Christ? Do you appropriate the blood of Christ? Can you with the hymn writer affirm – *This is all my hope and peace, nothing but the blood of Jesus; This is all my righteousness; nothing but the blood of Jesus; Oh precious is the flow, That makes me white as snow; No other fount I know, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

The mark of a man who is elected of God is that he believes in and thanks God for the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. You say, by partaking of communion, that you glory in the blood of Christ's atoning death. You see your need for it and you most gladly spiritually feed on the body and blood of Christ.

Let me say a brief word in closing about:

III. The Effect of Applying the Blood of Jesus Christ

To those that are strangers to this world who strive for obedience but don't rely on that obedience for acceptance but instead apply the blood of Christ over their disobedience as well as their striving for obedience.

To such as these Peter says in his opening salutation – *Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied*. Grace to those whose hope is in the blood of Jesus Christ. God's favor and God's acceptance and God's pardon be upon them; God's presence be with them.

Grace can be their portion because grace reigns through righteousness, according to Paul in Jesus Christ. Peace can be their portion because they've been cleansed. A peace that passes all understanding can rule their hearts because they understand how God can be just and the justifier of those that are in Christ.

And don't you love this word – *grace and peace be multiplied*. Grace and peace be given to you many times over. I think you would agree that in our spiritual warfare the devil would have you believe the very opposite of what Rom. 5:20. That verse tells us that *where sin abounded grace did much more abound*. The devil would have you believe that in spite of grace sin has much more abounded.

So many of our struggles for assurance and peace come down to a decision we make as to which is greater grace or sin. When we walk by sight we sure can see a lot of sin. We see it all around us. We see it in the world, we see it in churches, we see it in other Christians and we see it in ourselves. With so much sin within and without how could we possibly affirm that grace is greater than sin?

The answer is found, of course, in looking to Christ by faith. When you by faith see beyond the elements of the Lord's table to the things that are signified by the elements – Christ's broken body and Christ's shed blood, then you can affirm that where sin abounded grace did much more abound.

We believe in abounding grace but we believe in the infinite value and virtue of the atoning blood of Christ. So let us look to him today. Let us see from head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down. And as we gaze at him and affectionately meditate on his sufferings let us affirm his greatness – the greatness of his person and the greatness of his atoning death. And let us appropriate the value and virtue of the blood of his atonement to our own lives.

In so doing grace and peace will be multiplied to you. They will be given to you beyond measure because Christ himself is beyond measure. May his grace and peace be multiplied to you, then, as you pledge your faith in him and as you appropriate his blood to your lives around his table this morning.