

# 1 P E T E R

## A VERSE BY VERSE STUDY THROUGH PETER'S EPISTLE

### **SESSION OBJECTIVE: 1 PETER 1:2**

To understand how the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit work together to accomplish salvation and sanctification.

### **Team Work Makes the Dream Work**

There are some people who are especially gifted with the ability to turn a phrase, and John C. Maxwell is certainly one of them. Known for his insights into productivity, leadership, and teamwork, Maxwell has authored 71 books, and as of 2012, has sold over 20 million books worldwide. One of the famous phrases he developed was the widely known and used, "Teamwork makes the dream work." I admit, I use it all the time in a tongue in cheek sort of manner. I had no idea it was Maxwell's, but as it turns out, it's the name of one of his books. The idea behind the well-crafted phrase is that big plans only come to fruition with a great team. When everyone does their part, there is a higher and healthier level of productivity that follows. Perhaps this is best exemplified in the body of Christ. When everyone is using their gifting, great things happen (1 Cor. 12:21-31).

In verse 2 of 1 Peter chapter 1, we have another powerful example of teamwork. The Heavenly Father working in tandem with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to bring about not only salvation, but sanctification in the life of the, "elect exiles" that we talked about last week (1 Pet. 1:1). Our experience of coming to faith in Jesus seems very simple and straightforward, but it's important that we understand how our benevolent and gracious God works behind the scenes to bring about the miracle of salvation. What is the Father's role? What is the Son's role? What is the Holy Spirit's role? How do we fit into it all? This week we will take a much closer look.

## The Heavenly Father

The first figure we find in verse 2 is the Heavenly Father. To understand the role of the Heavenly Father properly, we have to understand the triune nature of God (to the best of our ability). God is one God eternally existing in three distinct persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each of these persons of God have distinct roles as well. The Heavenly Father is the invisible God that Jesus brings visibility to (Col. 1:15). He is the One who gives the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). In this passage, He is the One who has foreknown those elect exiles mentioned in the verse prior. Below is a brief discussion on what foreknowledge indicates, and what it does not indicate.

### **FOREKNOWLEDGE**

The elect exiles are such, “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” The word foreknowledge is a word that is often vastly misunderstood. Some folks have interpreted this to mean that God simply looked into the future to see who would choose Him, and *those* are the ones He chose. There is no question that foreknowledge indicates a, “future knowing,” but the idea that God chooses those He foreknows will choose Him is not correct. The word for foreknowledge in the Greek is *πρόγνωσις* (*prognōsis*), the word from which we get our English word prognosis. A prognosis is a predicted path that a disease or ailment will take. It requires a sense of foreknowledge. However, in the Greek, it means something much deeper than this, and we must consider how these ideas are conveyed in the Old Testament first.

In the Old Testament and specifically in the covenant with God’s people, for God to “know” His people conveyed a sense of intimacy and love bestowed on His people. In Amos 3:2, God says, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” The Hebrew word for, “know,” is *דָּעָה* (*dā‘āh*). Knowing in the Scripture often indicates much more than simply being aware of information. It is a relational term. In fact, it is the term used for sexual intercourse as well. For example, Genesis 4:1 says, “Now Adam knew Eve his wife.” The term “knew” is the exact same term from Amos 3:2. It’s a depth of intimacy.

So for God to foreknow someone does not mean simply to know information, but to predetermine His loving relationship with them. There is a sense of *foreordination*, or God ordaining someone prior to their existence. This is conveyed in Acts 2:23, where it says, “this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.” In other words, Jesus was delivered and crucified by lawless men because God *foreordained* it to be so, according to His *foreknowledge*. The elect of God are the elect because before we were capable of choosing God, God foreknew us, and foreordained us unto His purposes.

## The Holy Spirit

Not only are believers foreknown by God the Father, but these same elect exiles are sanctified by the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. The term sanctification refers to the progressive spiritual growth in the lives of believers. Sanctification is the will of God for every believer in Christ (1 Thess. 4:3). The process of being, “transformed by the renewing of the mind” (Rom. 12:2). The word can also be used to mean the act of God in setting believers apart from the world. In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul writes, “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.” These believers have been called and sanctified as set apart ones from the rest of the world. The same connotation is found in this Peter passage.

In other words, when we heard the Gospel and believed, it's because the Father not only foreknew us, but the Spirit, "delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." The important thing to take away from this verse is that the act of salvation is not just made possible by Jesus. When we think of salvation, we think of Jesus on the cross, and that is correct but not complete. It is not merely the Son of God acting, but God the Father and God the Holy Spirit acting in concert together for our benefit.

## The Elect

After seeing what the Father and the Spirit are doing, we learn the result in our lives: "for obedience to Jesus Christ." The work of God in our lives should result in obedience to God. How did Jesus say you will know that you love Him? By keeping His commandments (Jn. 14:15). Love is never without action. Faith is never without works (James. 2:14-17). A changed life by God should result in changed actions as well. Salvation is not just turning over a new leaf or decided to be a better version of yourself; it's dying and being reborn (2 Cor. 5:17). It's being crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). And dying means dying to your way and being reborn to His way. It's easy to say you love Jesus, but do your actions follow? That's the real litmus test.

## Jesus Christ

God the Father and God the Holy Spirit did not just work together for our obedience, but for Christ's obedience as well. The grammar is too complicated to get into in this format, but the thrust of this passage is that God's foreknowledge and the Spirit's sanctifying work were meant not only to bring about our obedience to obey Christ, but Christ's obedience to die. Christ's sacrifice was an act of obedience to the Father and the Spirit (Matt. 26:39; Phil. 2:8). What was Christ obedient in doing, specifically? Shedding blood for the forgiveness of sin. Below is a brief outline of the different aspects of, "sprinkling blood."

### **CLEANSING THE LEPER**

One reference that comes to mind is the cleansing of a leper in Leviticus 14:6-7. The idea of sin is pictured as a disease, like leprosy, and in Leviticus there are instructions for how to cleanse someone who is infected with it. In this passage, there is a reference to the blood, but also the hyssop branch, which of course is found again in the New Testament in John's Gospel during the crucifixion, and also in Hebrews 9:19 in reference to the sacrifice of Jesus.

### **ORDAINING THE PRIESTHOOD**

Another reference to sprinkling blood in the Old Testament is found in Exodus 29:21, where the priesthood is ordained by being sprinkled with blood from the altar. Of course, in the covenant of grace instituted by Christ, every believer becomes a part of the, "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9).

### **THE NEW COVENANT**

Of course, the primary image that sprinkling blood conjures from the Old Testament is the initiation of the Mosaic Covenant, where Moses takes half of the blood from the sacrifices and pours it out from the basins, and then takes the other half and sprinkles the people as they commit to uphold the covenant commands. In Matthew's recounting of the Last Supper, Jesus alludes to this when He takes the cup, gives thanks, and says, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my *blood of the covenant*, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

The imagery of Jesus' blood being sprinkled is powerful because it presents so many pictures of what His blood accomplishes for us. It cleanses us of our sin. It ordains us as priests to God. It ratifies the covenant that we have entered with Christ as His people. And it is all possible because He was obedient to go to the cross, and He was doing all of this in conjunction with His Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read 1 Peter 1:2. Who is verse 2 still talking about from verse 1?

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2. Read 1 Peter 1:2. What does the word, "foreknowledge" mean? (Hint: See above notes)

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### Day Two

1. Read 1 Peter 1:2. Who did the Father have in mind in His divine foreknowledge?

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2. Read 1 Peter 1:2. What does the word sanctification mean?

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### Day Three

1. Who is responsible for bringing about salvation? (Hint: See above notes)

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2. Read 1 Peter 1:2. What does obedience to Christ reflect? (Hint: See above notes)

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### Day Four

1. What three things does the, "sprinkling of His blood," represent?

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2. In your own words, what is the point of verse 2?

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## Week 2 Discussion: Obedience Matters

For a Christian, obedience to God is not just a mark of spiritual maturity, it's a mark of salvation. Jesus makes it very clear, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (Jn. 14:15). It won't be perfect, you won't always get it right (hello, grace!), but obedience to God is the result of salvation purchased by Christ, foreknown by the Father, and perfected by the Spirit. Talk as a group about how the Scripture's view of obedience both encourages and challenges you.

1. Icebreaker: Would you consider yourself an obedient follower of Jesus? Why or why not?
2. What particular commands are easier for you to obey?
3. What particular commands are more difficult for you to obey?
4. What commands are you critical of others for breaking? Why do you think we have a tendency to judge others for breaking specific commands?
5. Do you believe you are more obedient than the average Christian? Why or why not?
6. Why is obedience tied to love in John 14? Do you believe that is true only for our love for Jesus, or for our love for anyone? Why or why not?

## Takeaways:

1. Salvation is the work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
2. Salvation should translate into obedience to Christ and His commands.

### ***PRAYER REQUESTS:***