

The Call To Holiness: Part 2

Obedience & Sprinkled Blood

1 Peter 1:2

Preface: Call To Holiness

By way of reminder I would like to state that there is quite general agreement that the First Epistle of Peter is an exhortation to Christians to live a life of trust and obedience. Peter's goal seems to be to get the people of God to behave like the people of God. It is his goal to get us to live a certain way. In short, Peter is conveying to us that God is calling us to live a holy life.

The Approach

In our approach to chapter one I am attempting to do two things: One, which I did last week, is the examination what Peter is specifically calling us to in verses thirteen through seventeen.

Secondly, I am giving a short series of sermons to examine Peter's approach to this subject. In his first twelve verses Peter approaches the call to holiness. As a pastor, as Christians, we are always wondering what we have to say in order to bless others and inspire them to godly living. Peter provides an example for us.

Systematic Theology

If you have taken the time to read the first twelve verse of chapter one you find contained with these verses what appears to be a table of contents for a systematic theology. Among the topics in the first twelve verses are: election, sanctification, the law, the gospel, regeneration, the resurrection, eschatology, adoption, perseverance of the saints and more. It is after Peter has taught all of this that he is confident of the optimum response of his readers. Once again our response should be to live a certain way.

I. The Call To Holiness

Specifically

Again I bring our attention to verses thirteen through seventeen of chapter 1 where Peter clearly enjoins Christians to live a holy life. He writes,

“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, “Be

holy, for I am holy.”¹⁷ And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear” (1 Peter 1:13-17).

Last week I dealt with each of these attributes specifically. Suffice it to say, Peter has called Christians to holy living. The behavior of Christians should be distinct from the world in their desire to obey and live for God.

II. Peter’s Approach

Therefore

The question I have been asking is, “What did Peter write in his verse twelve verses that made him feel confident enough to start verse thirteen by stating ‘therefore’”? It is as if he were saying, “What I have said up to now should be sufficient for you to begin leading this holy life to which you were called.”

Last Week -- Apostleship & Election

Last week we examined Peter’s apostleship then his first subject -- election. For reasons too numerous to mention (although I mentioned some last week) for Christians to begin to properly live a holy life they must understand they are included in Christ’s salvation by the choice, plan, purpose and power of God alone. If anything less is taught and understood it less than the gospel, takes glory away from God and does much damage to the church. This brings us up to date.

III. Sanctification Of The Spirit

Peter finishes the second verse by writing **“in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.** It is Peter’s desire that we continue to receive, in an exponential sense, the grace and peace of God. But there are two more things are found in verse two. The Holy Spirit of God exercises His energies of sanctification (making holy or separate -- specifically from profane things) toward the elect in such a way that it produces these two things: Obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

IV. Obedience

Obedience is part in the sanctifying work of the Spirit. The elect have been chosen by the Father and sanctified through His Holy Spirit. They evidence that work of the Spirit through a demonstration. The demonstration is the fruit that is always born when God has spiritually begotten a child. That fruit is obedience. To what extent the obedience must be present, no man can say. But it must be present. Charles Hodge states,

“If God’s agency in sanctification does not arouse and direct ours; if it does not create the desire for holiness, and strenuous efforts to attain it, we may be sure that we are not its subjects.”¹

But since Peter was so aware of how incomplete our obedience is, and will ever be so long as we dawn this corruptible flesh, he immediately moves to our greatest and only source of eternal comfort -- the sprinkled blood of Jesus Christ.

V. Sprinkled Blood

Taco Bell

The sprinkled blood of Jesus must bring our thoughts to the cross. It is the shed blood of Christ that satisfied the Father’s divine justice. The love of God is not like the love of you high school friend who worked at Taco Bell and gave you burritos for free but somehow forgot to pay for them himself. As nice as you thought that was. His unmerited favor toward you simply amounted to theft.

Gracious And Just

Man has sinned and God’s grace and mercy is not, and nothing like, Him simply turning a deaf ear to it all and pretending it didn’t happen. God did not sweep the sins of humanity under the carpet. For God to do this would be a blatant violation of His own character. God is just. God is not a thief who gives things away without paying for them. He is not the head of an unjust judicial system who sets criminals free simply because they happen to be His friends -- even His children. The sentence for the sins of humanity is death. God the Father graciously paid that price by sending His own Son to become part of humanity and representing that humanity in perfection then shedding His blood upon a cross and paying our debt. In this respect God is both gracious and just.

Why Sprinkled Blood

But why does talk about the sprinkled blood? Why not the shed blood or spilled blood? The shedding of blood in the Old Testament was a visual reminder to God and to His people of the necessity for sacrificial justice. There were only three cases where the blood was actually sprinkled on people. And although all three of these cases, in one way or another, typified what Jesus would do, they are somewhat distinct.

In the covenant initiation ceremony at Mt. Sinai.

“Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. ⁶ And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he

¹ Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Charles Hodge, Princeton Theological Seminary. pp. 174.

sprinkled on the altar.⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.”⁸ And Moses took the blood, sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words” (Exodus 24:5-8).

The author of Hebrews alludes to this ceremony in chapter nine.

“For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,²⁰ saying, “This *is* the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.”²¹ Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.²² And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:19-22).

“So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider” (Isaiah 52:15).

Like Baptism

The idea behind this ceremony was for the people to be initiated into God’s covenant and become His people. They would walk away from that ceremony with the mark of Christ on them. This sprinkling denoted the beginning of their Christian life. In many respects this is typical of the sprinkling that takes place during baptism. Baptism is the mark of God. It is a sign of a person’s inclusion in the church. It is only done once and contains within it, in one way or another, a message of all the blessings poured out upon the children of God.

But since Peter puts this subsequent to sanctification and not prior to sanctification (If we properly understand the order of events in our salvation being regeneration-faith-salvation [sprinkled blood] then sanctification) this may not be the most obvious meaning of Peter.

Priests

Another time that sprinkling is used in the Old Testament was at the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests.

“And you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle *it* on Aaron and on his garments, on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he and his

garments shall be hallowed, and his sons and his sons' garments with him" (Exodus 29:21).

Of course Peter already considered his readers to be priests by virtue of their membership in the New Covenant.

Purification Of Lepers

There is one last instance of sprinkled blood that we see in the Old Testament. Purification ceremony for a leper.

"Then the priest shall examine it; and indeed *if* the swelling of the sore *is* reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, as the appearance of leprosy on the skin of the body, he is a leprous man. He *is* unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his sore *is* on his head. ⁴⁵ "Now the leper on whom the sore *is*, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!' ⁴⁶ "He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He *is* unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling *shall be* outside the camp" (Leviticus 13:43-46).

Moses then gives the proper ceremony related to the leper becoming clean.

"As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird *that was* killed over the running water. ⁷ "And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field" (Leviticus 14:6-7).

Unclean To Clean

It was after this ceremony that the leper would once again be included in the camp. The picture this particular ceremony painted was that of a person who had been baptized and was considered to be part of the camp or the covenant community of God or church. Although the disease of leprosy is not immoral it typified (gave a demonstration of) a kind of infectious impurity that was capable of defiling the people of God. Paul, admonishing the Corinthian church not to be "unequally yoked", quotes the law saying, **"Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17).** The leper was considered unclean and had to announce it whenever he drew near.

David

This type of sprinkling denotes the cleansing from any type of defilement that would disrupt fellowship with God and his people. David, who was a man after God's own heart and seemed to enjoy a sweet unimpaired relationship worship and fellowship with God calls upon this very action in Psalm 51. Well into his Christian life David writes,

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸ Make me hear joy and gladness, *That* the bones You have broken may rejoice. ⁹ Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹ Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me *by Your generous Spirit*” (Psalm 51:7-12).

Mercies Are New

What are Christians to make of this Psalm? We sing these words yet do we grasp their meaning? David, who trusted in God at his mother's breast (Psalm 22:9) -- who had great faith in God even as a child seems to be asking God to do things that God has already done? Cleanse me? Wash me? blot out my iniquities? Has God not done all these things? But I think it does an injustice to God and it is tragic for Christians to rejoice in the day we called upon the Lord and were saved but neglect to ever call upon the Lord and enjoy His mercies which are new every morning.

Jesus Maintains Us

It is true that justification is a single past act that does not require repetition. But it is also true that Jesus maintains our salvation. He ever intercedes (prays) to hold us in the faith and He makes propitiation (rescues us from wrath) before the Father.

Continual Sprinkling

God intended these “elect pilgrims” and He intends that we live a life of obedience to Christ. But they were and we are frequently defiled by sin. Peter is reminding us that our future includes the continual sprinkling of the blood of Christ, continual restoration of fellowship with God and His people through the blood of Christ and a continual reminder to God and to us that our sins are forgiven. Wayne Grudem states,

“For obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood thus means that God's plan for them is not obedience marred by unforgiven sin but obedience whose failing are cleansed by the blood of Christ; it means ‘for continual daily obedience and forgiveness.’”

As we see so often in scripture, we see here the beauty of the law and the gospel. The law which both blesses and brings to despair and the gospel which brings only blessings.

Conclusion

As Peter seeks to motivate us to holy living he calls to our attention first and foremost the divine effectual election and calling of God. He has chosen us as His peculiar people. His Spirit sanctifies us to obey Christ and continually applies the sprinkled blood of Christ when we fall short which will be the case until He brings us home. It is these types of things that Peter, moved by the Holy Spirit, trusts will inspire us to holy living. It is my prayer that all who hear these words Peter will recognize them as divine. And through them we would be spurred to obedience and continual trust in the sprinkled blood of Christ.