

Greetings in the blessed Name of our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We have been discussing that beautiful epistle of First Peter. The epistle itself emphasizes the fact that the saints of Christ suffer in their pilgrimage on this earth. Repeatedly this idea of their pilgrimage and their suffering is pointed out. Yet these suffering saints, these pilgrims, are elect of God, that is, chosen eternally by God, verse 2. These have been purged of their sins through the blood of Jesus and are assured of an inheritance in heaven. Therefore, though these suffering saints must face many trials of their faith, yet they have assurance of glory in heaven. And this salvation which is theirs is that of which the prophets of old spake, and even the angels desire to look into.

Today, in verses 13 through 25 of I Peter 1, we discuss the Christian walk of elect strangers. Take your Bibles and follow along as we discuss this passage.

Peter points out here that those who receive an incorruptible inheritance (vs. 4), or a salvation prophecied of by men of God of old, these will also necessarily reveal in their godly walk, that they belong to Christ. Such is the idea of the word "wherefore" in verse 13. Because the preceeding is all true, then there is to be evident a proper walk of Christians. This ought to concern each who calls himself Christian. A Christian is not one merely who goes by that name, but one who shows in what he says and does that he belongs to God.

In verses 13 and 14, Peter mentions specific duties of elect strangers. These are to gird up the loins of their minds. In Peter's day, men wore long, flowing robes. In travel or when working, one would tie a form of a belt around the waist (or loins) to allow greater freedom of movement. So also the priests in the Old Testament had to gird up their robes when about to offer sacrifice on the altar before God. We are here called to do this with our minds. This is, of course, addressed to elect strangers, that is, to born again children of God. They only can obey this command. The mind here is that which thinks and wills--and which directs all of the activities of the person. A girt up mind is one which is adequately prepared to think and act rightly. To gird up the mind is to put aside all that which is evil and sinful, such as gossip, lying, all manner of sinful lusts. These all interfere with proper spiritual thinking. Then, that mind which

is girt up will actively seek the spiritual and heavenly. It is in a spiritual state in which the person is ready to walk in obedience to God's Word.

In harmony with the above is the command to sobriety. This refers not to a warning against drunkenness--though we are warned about that too in Scripture. Rather, the reference is to a spiritual drunkenness in which one, as it were, staggers from one error to another. A sober Christian is one who knows and confesses the truths of the Word of God--and holds to these no matter what consequences he faces.

Such an one is commanded also to "hope to the end", or literally, have the perfect hope. Hope is here directed toward the grace which is to be seen at the revelation or the return of Christ on the clouds of heaven in the last day. The grace of God is already revealed to the Christian, for he is saved through the work of Christ's Spirit. But in the last day, Jesus comes again. Then He will glorify His people when He makes them perfect and brings them into the new heavens and the new earth. That is our perfect hope. The Christian is to hold to this hope with tenacity. No one, not even the devil, can change what God has planned for His elect strangers. This is our full hope. There is not room for any other kind of hope. And this hope is all that we really need.

Thus are we obedient children. Disobedient children are those who mould themselves, or imitate, their former lusts in ignorance. These model themselves after the world. But elect strangers are not so to do. As children who are obedient, they listen to their Father in heaven. They want to obey His command. They seek His house. They cling to His Word.

What a beautiful calling for elect strangers in the world! These are different than the wicked about them. And these can thank God for the difference--which is worked in them by God's grace.

The standard for the proper walk of Christians is God Himself. Peter quotes from the Old Testament when he says: "Be ye holy, for I am holy." (Lev. 11:44 and others). God commands holiness on the basis of His own holiness. Holiness involve the idea of separation. One is separated from this wicked world and separated unto God. Now, even as God is separated or dedicated wholly to Himself, so must we also be. Because God eternally serves Himself, we are called to serve Him perfectly. That is our calling.

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Then too we are "holy in all manner of conversation". This suggests that in the whole of one's life, in word and in deed, in seeking of entertainment, in choice of friends--in all of this we are dedicated to the service of God.

Now you will note that in verses 17 through 21 Peter points out that there is a basis for our godly walk. In verse 17 he reminds us of our relationship to the Father, and in verses 18 and 19 of our relationship to Jesus Christ.

Our godly walk is observed and judged by the Father, the Triune God. We pray to Him--and properly so. And we speak to Him as "Father". We enjoy before Him the position of sons--with also the rights which sons have. They may dwell in Father's house. They expect the care and protection of Father. So does God also provide for those sons who are redeemed through Jesus' blood. But this Father whom we address, is at the same time the holy and righteous God. He does not ignore sin. And He judges without respect to person. That means, He does not judge the rich man leniently and the poor man harshly. He does not judge the king with one standard, and the common man with another. His judgment is never based upon what a man might be on this earth. Rather, He judges strictly according to justice. None can fool God.

Therefore, while we are sojourning here on this earth, we "fear". No, we are not afraid of our God and Father. Only the wicked rebels ought to be afraid of Him. But we as children of God "fear" least we offend in any way or form. Elect strangers, these children of God, never try to get away with whatever they think they can. These do not attempt to approach as close to the wicked world as they can. Rather, these are ever afraid that they might offend God in some way in what they do or say. We are sojourning here. Soon the child of God will be in Father's house in heaven. While away from our home in heaven, we must never want to do those things which will be offensive to Father.

But there is more. We are reminded in verses 18 and 19 that we have been redeemed with the precious blood of the Lamb--that is, by Jesus Christ Himself.

God required a ransom for His people. These can not simply walk into heaven without a payment made for their sins. We hear often about ransoms in our day. Kidnapping is done in order to obtain a ransom. A captive person is released when a sum of money is paid.

All mankind is captive--to sin and death. That came about when our first father, Adam,

sinned in paradise. One can read of this in Genesis 3. By his disobedience he placed himself and all of his seed after him into a position of captivity. Through the ages man has added to his transgressions. There is a mountain of sin holding each one captive. To be freed, a ransom must be paid. This is to be paid not to satan nor to sin--but to God Who has been offended.

And there are many reasons why God should be offended. Verse 18 speaks of our "vain conversation". That is a walk which is "empty". There is no spiritual value to this walk. It seeks the wrong goal. It strives for that which is earthly and temporal. It is not directed to God's glory.

All of this we received by tradition from our fathers. They were the ones who were our examples. They were the ones who taught us. They were bound by sin and death--and they gave birth to children who followed in their footsteps.

For all of these sins, payment must be made. There can be no exceptions; no exemptions. There must be a ransom.

But, says Peter in verse 18, that ransom can not be made by corruptible things such as silver and gold. This is the kind of ransom which comes immediately to mind. Why not pay God off? Why not give Him of our wealth, of our effort? After all, gold and silver represent the best that man has to offer. He can present to God the work of his own hands. Man thinks that God must be well-pleased with such payment.

In fact, this has been man's attempt traditionally. Cain, in Gen. 4:3, offered to God the fruit of the fields. But God would not accept that sort of sacrifice. Man's work, man's effort, can not supply that which God requires.

God can not be satisfied with that kind of ransom for several reasons. First, all these things already belong to God. The cattle on a thousand hills are His.(Ps. 50:10). Anything that man might intend to offer to God, belongs to Him. But secondly, nothing of this nature could pay off a debt that involves the infinite, unmeasurable, wrath of God for man's sin. Nothing less than hell is demanded for those who are disobedient. And even in hell, man can not fully repay God. Man is presented as being in a hopeless position with respect to his own deliverance.

But thanks be to God--God provides His own ransom when He sent His only-begotten

Son, according to verse 19. There was shed the precious blood of Christ for the sins of these elect strangers whom Peter addresses. The blood of Christ represents the giving of His life. We read in Matt. 20:28, "The Son of man came...to give his life a ransom for many." This was pictured already in the Old Testament sacrifices. There, lambs would be offered to God without blemish or spot. These had to be perfect specimens when presented in sacrifice. These served as pictures of the Sacrifice of the Son of God in our flesh. Jesus is the Lamb without spot or blemish. He is God Himself--therefore perfect and without sin. As the Son of God without sin, He is in the position to offer His life on behalf of His people. So He died on the cross. He bore the wrath of God which His people deserved. He made the payment of His own precious life for the sins of His people.

And also because of this tremendous fact, we have been redeemed by Christ's precious blood, there must be a walk of godliness on the part of elect strangers. Ought we not to serve Him with thanksgiving all of our days--who so wondrously gave Himself for His own? We will assuredly spend the time of our so-journeying here in fear of God.

There is more concerning this Lamb of God Who gave His life for His people. In verses 20 and 21 the apostle Peter speaks of the wonder that He was even "foreordained before the foundation of the world". God not only knew eternally that Jesus would come to save His people, but God even determined this. Such is the "foreordination" or "foreknowledge" of God. We read of this also in Acts 2:23, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken...." Thus, before God created the world and the whole universe, it was God's intent that Jesus would come to save His people from their sins. The cross is not some sort of after-thought of God. It was not something that God had to do because some other course had failed. But this is His intent from eternity. Ought we not to be eternally thankful for that which God has done? Ought one then not willingly want to walk in service and praise to God's Name?

This Jesus, foreordained eternally, is manifest in these last times. This means that Jesus was shown. He was, in His coming, as the sun which bursts forth with all of its light from behind the cloud. In the Old Testament, Christ had been revealed in the type and shadow--in the sacrifices which were offered, in the feast days that were celebrated. But in His birth, is He made manifest; He shows Himself in all of His glory. "These

last times" represent that whole period between Christ's birth and His return on the clouds of glory. None then can claim that they do not know--for in God's Word the account of His coming and work is clearly presented.

This Jesus did what God had foreordained. He offered Himself to the death of the cross. On the third day He was raised again. That resurrection is proof, and presents testimony, to the fact that Jesus paid fully for the sins of His people. He could not come out of the grave unless sin was paid for. When God raised Jesus from the dead, God gives testimony that His justice has been satisfied. And God glorified His son Jesus when He exalted Him to His right hand.

By this Jesus, according to verse 21, we believe in God. It was not first my willingness to seek Jesus, not my desire to admit Him into my heart, but His work in me that made me seek Him. I believe in Him because He first worked in me. He is the cause of my faith. And He preserves me in that faith.

Thus also our faith and hope are in God. We will not be attracted by the evils of this age, but will rather find joy in that which is heavenly. We are to look away from all of the corruptions of this world. Thus the work of Christ ~~XXXXXXXX~~ becomes the basis and reason for my godly walk in this earth. That must always be the case.

Verses 22 and 23 present some specific admonitions to these elect strangers. These have purified their souls in the way of obeying the truth. Their souls here refer to the whole manifestation of a man: his will, thoughts, desires. That soul is purified. This can never be the work of man whereby he makes himself to be without sin. That never can happen. But we have presented here that constant struggle of the Christian to flee from sin and seek that which is holy. He purifies his soul in the way of that constant struggle of the child of God against all manner of sin. He has done that, and continues to do that, in obeying the truth of God's Word. That Word of God is, for him, the standard of all that is right. That Word, as applied by God's Spirit, must be his guide.

He who so walks, must then love the brethren with a pure heart fervently. This love is not that wishy-washy sort of thing often mentioned today. It is not simply attraction. It is not simply friendliness. But this love must be the tie which is based upon spiritual perfectness. We read of this in Colossians 3:14, "Put on love which is the bond of

perfectness." That tie must exist between brethren. It is not a question of whether the brother is always such a likeable creature. Not a question either of whether the brother has a pleasing personality. But one must seek fellowship and communion with brethren. There must then be the desire to help and encourage each other. There must be a time for warning concerning sin and evil. There must be words of comfort in times of sorrow. There must be assistance and direction in the narrow way of life. That kind of love must be shown brethren. It is a "fervent" love--that is, a love which is stretched out to its greatest limits. That love continues in spite of all obstacles. It is seen in times of crisis, in times of great trial. It continues. And so it must be within elect strangers of God. These have a changed and therefore a pure heart. It is a regenerated heart--out of which must flow this love for God and to one another.

In verse 23 we are reminded just how we have such a pure heart out of which must flow this love toward the brethren. We are "born again". This rebirth is not of "corruptible seed". It is not by virtue of our physical birth. It is not because we are born from godly parents. Rebirth is not caused by anything in our natural origin. It is not by corruptible seed. But there is the "incorruptible seed" which gives new birth. This is that seed which the Holy Spirit plants in our hearts. It is itself a wonder far greater than our natural conception and birth. The Spirit of God plants a new life into the hearts of elect strangers. This is, says Peter, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. He refers not to the preaching of the Word, but to the powerful Word of God which accomplishes its purpose. When God spake, He called instantaneously the things of His creation into being. So also He speaks in giving to His elect the new life of Christ. To be born again is not the result first of man's willingness. It is not his effort or cooperation with God. For all men are by nature dead in sins. But The Word of God causes the new life to be given. The eternal Word of God alone can accomplish such a wonder.

And when God works a new life in our hearts, then the fruit of that work must be seen. Love of brethren inevitably must be evident. We are to see that fruit also in our own lives and in our walk.

Now the apostle quotes from Isaiah 40:6-8. There Isaiah had comforted God's people. Though Isaiah had prophesied of the terrible captivity which Judah must enter, he also assured them of return from captivity. Then he gives them this word of assurance. That word testifies to the fact that man is nothing. All flesh is as grass. One sees what is true of grass. For a short time it flourishes--then it fades away and dies. So it is in the life of man. For a time it appears as though man is quite something. He has his physical strength. He discovers marvelous inventions. He begins to think that he can accomplish anything. But then he grows old and finally dies. All men so. So the strength of man fades away. There is nothing left. How can man then deliver himself from sin and death? How could Judah, in earlier ages, deliver itself from captivity? How can God's people be saved? Obviously, not through their own efforts.

But the basis of comfort is that "the Word of Jehovah endureth forever." Jehovah is the unchangeable God. He will carry out His promise. He has spoken from the very beginning of the deliverance He would provide through the "seed of the woman" who is Jesus Christ. His Word will never fail. Though His people are in captivity, though they are in bondage of sin and death, He provides His own deliverance. Then they shall be assuredly saved.

And it is this which must be preached to the church. The church does not need all kinds of lectures about the world generally or man's pet theories specifically. The child of God does not need lectures on politics nor on proposals for the general improvement of our current society. Not any of this. It needs the preaching of the promise of God given in His Word. The child of God must desire to belong to such a church where the Word of God is faithfully and regularly proclaimed. He must hear of Christ and Him crucified. He must hear of deliverance from sin and death through the shed blood of the Lamb of God. In that kind of proclamation he finds comfort and assurance.

What do you hear? What do you desire to hear when you go to church? Can you think of anything more beautiful, more glorious, than the proclamation of the cross? You are also as grass which fades away. But God provides deliverance and salvation. Then we will walk as pilgrims or strangers, elect of God, in the midst of this sinful world.