GROWING UP INTO SALVATION

As believers in Jesus Christ, our salvation is a gift from God. Peter refers to it as “an inheritance” and “a living hope.” Our salvation will not deteriorate over time. It cannot be defiled by sin. It will never fade away. And our salvation can never be taken away from us. It’s secure, protected by the power of God. The benefits of our salvation are incredible! Some of the benefits we get to enjoy now. Most of the benefits that are ours we will not receive until after this life ends. So we have a lot to look forward to. Our salvation is the result of God’s unfolding plan. It’s a plan that God put together before the foundation of the earth. God’s plan for the salvation of fallen mankind is so amazing that the prophets of old spent their entire lives searching and trying to fully understand it. It is something that even the angels in heaven long to look at.

Having been given our great salvation motivates us to action. We have a whole new mindset. We have a different perspective on life. We have different priorities. We have a renewed love for Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. After all He’s the One who ransomed, redeemed us with His precious blood. He took our place on the cross. He paid the penalty for our sin. We also love our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in a way that the world cannot fully understand. The gospel message that we heard preached to us and that we received and believed by faith changed our lives. We’re not the same people that we were before we got saved. That’s the heart of 1 Peter Chapter 1. And I made the comment last week that Chapter 1 by itself would be enough to encourage those scattered and persecuted saints that Peter is writing to. But Peter doesn’t end his words there. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Peter goes on in the rest of his letter to give practical instructions as to how we are to live our daily lives as God’s elect, as saved people.

READ 1 Peter 2:1-3

The word translated in the ESV as “so” is the same Greek word that later in 1 Peter chapter 4 the ESV translates as “therefore.” So, therefore, because “you love one another earnestly from a pure heart” (1:22) and because of the message of the good news that was preached to you and that changed your life (1:23-25)… Because of all that, “put away…” (the tense used in the Greek makes this a command), PUT AWAY all sin, all the practices of an unholy, unsaved person. Peter names 5 specific sins which we’ll talk about. The picture here is of one who strips away a dirty garment. Get rid of those things, those ungodly behaviors that tear at the fabric of the body of Christ.

Malice – wickedness, all kinds of evil

Deceit – dishonesty (example of fishhook)

Hypocrisy – spiritual phoniness (an actor wearing a mask)

Envy – wanting what others have, resenting their prosperity

Slander – gossip, defamation of one’s character, talking behind their back.

Peter says to get rid of all these things. They have no place in the body of Christ.

“Like newborn infants, long…” (again this is a command)… “LONG for the pure spiritual milk.” The pure spiritual milk that we are to long for is, by context from Chapter 1, the word of God. The word of God in 1:23 is *“logos,”* God’s spoken word, His revealed will. The word of the Lord in 1:25 is *“rhema,”* the spoken or written word, a message, a statement, a command from God. So whether you are talking about the word of God generally, the Scripture, the whole Bible, *“logos”* or the word of the Lord, a specific scripture or message from the Lord, “*rhema,”* both are found in the Bible. What should be our attitude toward the Bible generally or to any number of individual verses specifically? We are to long for it. We are to desire it. It’s not just sort of wanting to study it or if I have time I’ll read it. No, we should long for it the same way that a newborn infant cries out for their mother’s milk. We should crave it. It should be a top priority in our lives.

You’ll notice I put a picture of a deer and quoted Psalm 42:1. READ it. The deer needs that water for its own survival. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, that word “pants” in Psalm 42:1 is the same word translated as the word “long” in 1 Peter 2:2 *“epipotheo.”* Getting into the word of God should be a top priority of ours. Why? Because we know that we have to have it in order to survive. A Christian who is not in the Word of God regularly, daily, will become malnourished spiritually, weak, anemic, anorexic.

So Peter tells us to put away sin and to long for the Word of God. I love what Psalm 119:11 says – it puts all of this together for us: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (KJV).

Then Peter adds, “if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” Well, the fact is that as Christians, having experienced salvation personally, we HAVE tasted that the Lord is good, haven’t we? “O taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). Think back over the years of your life. Can you remember times when the Lord was good to you?

So, since God is good and His Word is good, we, as His redeemed followers, should want to grow up into salvation (verse 2), in other words, become spiritually mature Christians, to become more and more like Jesus. Salvation, then is not just a one-time event, but it is a life-long process. It involves growing. As Paul puts it, “being transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom 12:2); “being transformed into [the likeness of Christ]” (2 Cor 3:18); “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). Salvation is an ongoing, daily transformation process.

READ 1 Peter 2:4-8

The “him” here is Jesus Christ. We came to Christ. Peter describes Jesus in a very unique way. He calls Him a “living stone.” Why a stone? Well, several times in the O.T. the Messiah was referred to as a stone (Gen 49:24 “Stone of Israel,” Ps 118:22 “the stone which the builders rejected,” “the chief cornerstone,” Isa 8:14 “a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over,” Isa 28:16 “a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone”). So in the verses we just read, Peter draws on these O.T. references. Why does Peter say that Jesus is a living stone? Well, because the stone is alive. Jesus arose from the dead. He’s a living stone. Peter goes on to say that Jesus was rejected by men. “He came to His own and His own people (the nation of Israel) did not receive Him” (John 1:11). But God the Father chose the Son “before the foundation of the world” (1:20). Jesus is also referred to as precious. That word means “costly” or “highly valued.” Remember, we were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ” (1:19). Isaiah refers to the Messiah as a costly cornerstone. Jesus is chosen and precious to God, yet He was rejected by the very people He came to save.

So Jesus is the living stone but then Peter says that we believers are “like living stones.” We are closely identified with Christ. We even call ourselves “Christians.” The word Christian actually means, “little Christ.”

Peter then uses the analogy, a simile “as a spiritual house” to describe our relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus is the cornerstone and we are stones who are a part of the same house. This is a significant theological point. It isn’t that we just worship Jesus or that we obey Him or honor Him or pray to Him. All that is true. But here we are told through this analogy that we are united with Him. We are part of the same spiritual house. In Ephesians 2:20 Paul says it like this: “Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” Clearly the idea here is our union with Christ. And the building isn’t just a house, it’s a holy temple.

Peter talks about how we believers are a holy priesthood [see handout] who are to offer spiritual sacrifices. In the O.T. sacrifices took place in the temple and were administered by a priest. But the O.T. sacrifices have been done away with because of what Christ accomplished on the cross (Heb 7:26-28, 9:12). But in the N.T. we are “the temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6:16). Our bodies are “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19). And in these temples we are to offer spiritual sacrifices. As a priesthood of believers we have direct access to God and we are to “present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). We offer ourselves completely to the Lord. In light of all that God has done for us we offer ourselves to Him.

This is pretty deep theology. It’s difficult to fully grasp. [turn to slide with verses 7-8 on it] Isn’t it interesting that the same stone that is the precious cornerstone and that we Christians are united with is a rock of offense to those who do not believe in Jesus Christ. They stumble over Him. Look, there is no middle ground when it comes to Jesus Christ. Either a person will believes and trusts Him and build their life on Him or they reject Him and stumble over Him. Jesus one day was teaching in the temple and after quoting Psalm 118:22 about the stone which the builders rejected, of course speaking of Himself, He added this: “Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him” (Luke 20:18). Judgment awaits those who reject Jesus Christ.

READ 1 Peter 2:9-10

Peter purposely uses the same description for believers in Christ that God used to describe His chosen people Israel in the O.T. “Chosen race” (Deut 7:6-8); “royal priesthood” (Exo 19:6); “a holy nation” (Exo 19:6, Deut 7:6); “a people for His own possession” (Exo 19:5, Isa 43:21, Mal 3:17). So we N.T. Christians are blessed with some of the same privileges as the O.T. people of God. There are certain parallels that can be drawn between O.T. Israel and the N.T. church. But there are some obvious differences between the two. What Peter wants us to see is that both Israel and the church have a special relationship with God because God chose us Himself. We are both recipients of God’s grace. And as verse 10 points out we have received mercy.

In closing I want to draw your attention to the last part of verse 9 – “that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” That is what we are to do. The word translated as “proclaim” is found only here and nowhere else in the Bible. It literally means “to tell out.” It means to tell something not otherwise known. It is our responsibility as the ransomed, redeemed, saved, elect, those who name the name of Jesus Christ, to go and tell the lost world how great God is, what Jesus has done for us and how He changed our lives.

We’re not just waiting around to die and then claim our inheritance. No, we have been given a mission. We have a purpose for which God has saved us. We are to be beacons of light in a world darkened by sin and telling others about our great God and Savior.

**“A HOLY PRIESTHOOD”** (1 PETER 2:5)

From the MacArthur Study Bible

Old Testament priests and New Testament believers share a number of characteristics:

1. Priesthood is an elect privilege (Exodus 28:1, John 15:16);
2. Priests are cleansed of sins (Leviticus 8:6-35, Titus 2:14);
3. Priests are clothed for service (1 Peter 5:5, Exodus 28:42, Leviticus 8:7ff, Psalm 132:9, 16);
4. Priests are anointed for service (Leviticus 8:12, 30, 1 John 2:20, 27);
5. Priests are prepared for service (Leviticus 8:33, Leviticus 9:4, 23, Galatians 1:16, 1 Timothy 3:6);
6. Priests are ordained to obedience (1 Peter 2:4, Leviticus 10:1ff);
7. Priests are to honor the word of God (1 Peter 2:2, Malachi 2:7);
8. Priests are to walk with God (Malachi 2:6, Galatians 5:16, 25);
9. Priests are to impact sinners (Malachi 2:6, Galatians 6:1);
10. Priests are messengers of God (Malachi 2:7, Matthew 28:19-20);

The main privilege of priests is access to God to offer spiritual sacrifices.