

Peter's Epistles # 9

Salvation through Faith, and the Blood of Christ

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by Dr. Robert D. Luginbill

Revised Translation 1st Peter 1:1-2:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who, though outcasts dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, were yet selected in the foreknowledge of God the Father, by means of the Holy Spirit's consecration, for the obedience in and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you!

Review: Last time we were discussing Peter's threefold explanation of our status as "selected outcasts". In the world's eyes we may be nothing and have nothing, but in spite of this we have been specially chosen (or *elected*) by God to be members of His family on account of our faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, each member of the Trinity had a hand in our *election* (that is, our selection into the family of God):

- the Father *planned* our selection (through *foreknowledge*: that is, knowing in advance our willingness to believe in His Son)
- the Holy Spirit *executed* our selection (through *sanctification*: that is, separating us in principle from all that is profane in the world, and dedicating us, or consecrating us to serve God)
- the Son *paid for* our selection (through *redemption*: that is, buying us out of slavery to sin through the precious price of His death for us on the cross)

Exegesis: This brings us in our treatment of the text to the last phrase in verse 2, the participle with its doubled object translated above as "selected ... for the obedience in and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. The English word "for" (governing both "obedience" and "sprinkling") represents the Greek preposition *eis*, which serves here to focus the purpose of our *election* upon the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter is telling us here that our entrance into the family of God is based upon the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, because Jesus Christ is both the *object* of our faith (that is, the one in whom we believe; that is why we are "selected ... for the obedience in the blood of Jesus Christ": so that we might believe in Him) and also the *purchaser* of our salvation (that is, the one who made it possible for us to be saved; that is why we are "selected ... for the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ": so that when we do believe in Him, we are redeemed from the bondage of sin). The words "for obedience", therefore, refer to our *faith* in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross in our behalf, while the words "for

sprinkling" refer to our *redemption*, the "washing away" of our sin when we accept Him as our Savior.

Before the beginning of time God the Father *planned* our selection out of Satan's kingdom of darkness and into His kingdom of light (Col.1:13), and the Holy Spirit *executed* the change during our life when we believed in Jesus. But the Lord Jesus Christ actually *paid the price* for our salvation at the critical moment in history when He went to the cross on our behalf (Heb.9:26b).

Salvation: "Salvation", after all, means a deliverance. The idea is that we have been rescued by God from a terrible fate, and brought through into a place of safety. What exactly, then, have we been saved *from*? *From* the judgment of God after death, and the terrible lake of fire (Heb.9:27; Rev.20:11-15). What have we been saved *for*? *For* the resurrection and the everlasting happiness of heaven (2Cor.5:1-10).

It is important to remember always that this deliverance was not free. Someone had to pay for it. From our first forefather, Adam, we all inherited a sinful makeup or constitution (Rom.5:12-14) which Paul calls "the sin which dwells in me" (Rom.7:20). As a result, we all commit sin (Rom.3:23). Now since God is perfectly and immutably holy (that is, completely separate from evil of any kind) and immutably righteous (that is, unwilling to condone evil of any kind: Ps.7:9-11), we human beings have quite a problem. How can we possibly expect to appease a perfect God, or expect to live with Him forever considering our sinful state (Heb.10:30-31)? Any "good" we might hope to do apart from Him would necessarily be tainted with our essential sinfulness (Rom.4:2; Eph.2:8-9; 2Tim.1:9; Tit.3:5; cf. Deut.9:5-6; Is.64:6). And as if this were not enough of a problem, we face the universally appreciated dilemma as well: "it is appointed unto men to die" (Heb. 9:27). Even if we could somehow make amends to God, without His intervention we are doomed to die.

In short, there is nothing that sinful man can possibly do to save himself. It is the recognition of this essential and crucial fact that separates true Christianity from other so-called "religions." Many people in this world (including some Christians) are trying to work their way into heaven. But God is only impressed by the work of Christ. In His great wisdom and grace, God found a way to forgive sin justly. His perfect character would not allow sin to be overlooked, so He found a substitute who was willing to bear the punishment for all human sin: His Son, Jesus Christ.

Therefore it is only by faith (a simple act of our heart and will, and completely without merit) in Jesus Christ that we accept Him and His death on our behalf and are consequently accepted by God the Father. So the phrase in verse 2, "selected ... for obedience in the blood of Jesus Christ", refers to this *acceptance* on our part of the work of Christ on the cross where He bore our sins (Is.53:1-12); and the phrase "selected ... for the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ", refers to the *forgiveness* of our sins which forgiveness we receive when we believe. The obedience God requires of all men is, first and foremost, that they believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, and accept the sacrifice He made for them. The sprinkling (forgiveness of sins through

redemption) is indivisibly connected in this verse to faith. Without faith in Christ, there is no forgiveness of sins, but with faith in Christ, forgiveness of sins follows immediately.

We will have occasion in the future to examine the doctrines of *redemption* (Christ's work on the cross as directed toward sin: He bought us out of slavery to sin), *reconciliation* (Christ's work on the cross as directed toward man: he transformed us from enemies of God into His friends), and *propitiation* (Christ's work on the cross as directed towards God the Father: Christ's sacrifice of Himself was acceptable to God, and paid for all of mankind's sins for all time). A word is in order here, however, about the "picture" involved in the word sprinkling used by Peter in verse 2.

Sprinkling of the Blood: The symbol of sprinkled blood is taken from the Old Testament, specifically from the rituals God instituted among the Israelites to teach them about Himself. When Moses had finished reading the "book of the covenant" (that is, the Mosaic law as outlined in summary in Ex.20-23), he had sacrifices of "peace offerings" made, and had all the blood from them collected. Then Moses sprinkled this blood upon all the people, saying "behold, the blood of the covenant". The blood represented a violent death (as it does in all the Old Testament sacrifices), and the phrase "blood of the covenant" meant that by the death of someone else, the Israelites had entered into a special agreement with God. This fact was visibly and dramatically portrayed to them by Moses when he literally sprinkled blood from the animal sacrifices upon all the people. This may seem a gross and shocking thing to us, but it was meant to be just so. Christ's sacrifice on the cross cost Him more than we can ever know. We did nothing to help Him, we are merely "spattered" with His blood, so to speak. We get the benefit of His sacrificial death when we believe in Him, accepting His work on our behalf.

The Blood of Christ: The "blood of Christ", on the other hand, is a symbol only, not literal blood. Moses used literal blood to represent the suffering and sacrifice of the coming Messiah, but the Lord Jesus Christ provided salvation for you and me by going to the cross and by dying for our sins. When He had finished this work, He exhaled and expired (Lk.23:46). He did not, in fact, bleed to death (Jn.19:33-35). So it is important for us to focus our attention upon the sacrifice and suffering of Christ as He was judged in our place for our sins, and not on the Old Testament symbol which foreshadowed that suffering and sacrifice. So when the Bible says that we are saved "by the blood of Christ", it refers to His awesome sacrifice on our behalf, His death on the cross in our place, and not to His literal, physical blood (as John explains in chapter 19 of his gospel).

Summary: Peter's first sentence is a three-fold explanation of our selection (*election*) into God's family:

- the Father arranges for our salvation (*foreknowledge*)
- the Spirit takes care of the actual mechanics of it (*sanctification*)
- the Son is the one who paid for it (*redemption*) and in whom we believe for salvation (faith in Christ).

This three-fold sketch of the first phase of God's plan for our lives (salvation), is also applicable to phase two of the Plan of God for all believers (the believer in time; see lesson #3 for a discussion of the phases of the Plan of God):

- the Father's plan provides for our support in time
- the work of Jesus Christ continues to cleanse our sins as we confess them
- the Holy Spirit aids in our spiritual growth

We shall discuss all this at length in our next lesson.