

Studies in I Peter (28)

The Privilege of Salvation -- A Member of the Church

Introduction

- A. For the Christian one of the most stabilizing and comforting truths that he can know is the description of salvation. The only truths more important would be a knowledge of Who God is, and the redeeming work of Christ.
- B. To strengthen the believers in Asia Minor, as they were undergoing trials, Peter wrote these two Epistles emphasizing these three truths.
- C. In the last sermon we considered the source of our privileges and realized they all found their origin in Jesus Christ. They are His gifts to us.

To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed (rejected) indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. Ye also, as lively (living) stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. I Peter 2:4,5

I. The Believer's Transformation -- "Living Stones."

The word for stone is "lithos" which refers to a stone prepared to be used in the construction of a building. In V4 we were reminded that Jesus Christ is the "living stone." Through His redemptive work the believer has been given spiritual life and thereby prepared to be a member of the Church.

What a great contrast. We who were once alienated from God, under the sentence of condemnation, hopelessly enslaved to sin and Satan, living without meaning or purpose -- but now in Christ we are born anew - transformed - alive to God!

It is important to accept what God states about us. As we look within, and consider our daily life it is not easy to believe that we have been spiritually transformed and prepared for divine service. We must choose to believe God and learn to cooperate with Him.

II. The Believer's Position -- "Spiritual House."

The Church is here described as a "house" to emphasize the place of fellowship, love, intimacy, and acceptance. In Ephesians 3:17 the same root word is used to indicate how the Lord Jesus seeks to "dwell" (be at home) in the believer.

The Church is a "spiritual" house. The thought here is on the basic character of both the Church and the believer so as to emphasize what is valuable. The word "spiritual" describes not only our original creation but also our re-creation in the new birth. Our spirituality is based on our relationship with Jesus Christ -- not on our self-righteousness.

When the Christian has areas in his life where he is living out of the will of God -- his very life-style and work is self-destructive. This is the reason for much of our restlessness, our covetousness, our confusion, and our bitterness.

III. The Believer's Office -- "Holy Priesthood."

A priest is one who has the authority, ability, and responsibility to represent God to men, and men to God. While the human picture of this office is the Old Testament priest -- the supreme example is that of the Lord Jesus.

It is an amazing truth to understand our office. The Lord Jesus not only died for our salvation but made it possible for us to share in His ministry. As we serve as His priest -- He works through us. This "divine-human" cooperative is a marvelous example of the infinite grace of God.

We must learn to fulfill our office of the priesthood.

- A. It means changing some of our priorities and goals.
- B. It means learning to live in the will of God.
- C. It means putting more emphasis on faith and love.
- D. It means having a vision and compassion for the lost.
- E. It means being more concerned for fellow believers.
- F. It means an acceptance of the truth that our priesthood is "holy" and is therefore more important than anything else we can do.

IV. The Believer's Work -- "To offer up spiritual sacrifices."

Our priesthood is not something we do only on Sunday! Because there is no "secular" and "sacred" work for the Christian -- we must learn to exercise our priesthood in every area of life. Peter has already spoken of living in obedience in all of life (1:15). We can please God in all we do.

The Bible gives us samples of "spiritual sacrifices."

- A. The surrender of our body to God for service, Rom. 12:1,2.
- B. Material possessions used for God's glory, Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:16.
- C. All praise and thanksgiving, Heb. 13:15.
- D. All our decisions regarding dedication, Phil. 2:17; Eph. 5:1,2.
- E. All deeds involving kindness, Heb. 13:16.

From this "sample" we immediately see how all practice of truth can be a "spiritual sacrifice" to God. The believer must surrender himself, as well as his day -- to God. Then when we seek to live in the will of God - for His glory -- our life can take on new meaning.

V. The Believer's Assurance -- "Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

The Bible describes the believer as being "in Christ." We are seen by God as related to the Savior and endowed with all the cleansing and sanctifying benefits of His redemptive work. This means we are not only "accepted in the Beloved (Jesus Christ)" (Ephesians 1:6) -- but our work is acceptable.

Our Father wants us to know how important we are to Him and how meaningful our daily life can be. We must learn to live this way.

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