

Feed My Sheep: 1 & 2 Peter Be Who You Are

Lesson #9 for May 27, 2017

Scriptures: 2 Peter 1:1-15; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 5:3-5; 6:11; Hebrews 10:38; 1 Corinthians 15:12-57.

1. With this lesson we begin our study of 2 Peter. Few places in Scripture have more ideas crammed into a few verses than the first chapter of 2 Peter. In this chapter Peter talked about: 1) Righteousness by faith, 2) What God can do in our lives, 3) How we can become partakers of the divine nature, and 4) How to avoid the corruption and lust of the world.
2. In 2 Peter 1:5-7, there is the famous “Peter’s ladder.” Finally, Peter talked about the assurance of salvation and the promise of eternal life and even included a few words about the nature of man and the state of the dead.
3. Peter started by calling himself a “slave of Jesus Christ.” He was certainly not the first one to make such a statement. Others who did include: Moses (Deuteronomy 34:5; Psalm 105:26; Malachi 4:4), Joshua (Joshua 24:29), David (2 Samuel 3:18; Psalm 70:70), Paul (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1), James the brother of Christ (James 1:1), Jude (Jude 1), and others. What does that mean? (See Barclay in the reference cited below.)
 - (i) To call the Christian the *doulos* [slave] of God means that he is inalienably possessed by God. In the ancient world a master possessed his slaves in the same sense as he possessed his tools. A servant can change his master; but a slave cannot. The Christian inalienably belongs to God.
 - (ii) To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he is unqualifiedly at the disposal of God. In the ancient world the master could do what he liked with his slave; he had even the power of life and death over him. The Christian has no rights of his own, for all his rights are surrendered to God.
 - (iii) To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he owes an unquestioning obedience to God. A master’s command was a slave’s only law in ancient times. In any situation the Christian has but one question to ask: “Lord, what will you have me do?” The command of God is his only law.
 - (iv) To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he must be constantly in the service of God. In the ancient world the slave had literally no time of his own, no holidays, no leisure. All his time belonged to his master. The Christian cannot, either deliberately or unconsciously, compartmentalize life into the time and activities which belong to God, and the time and activities in which he does what he likes. The Christian is necessarily the man every moment of whose time is spent in the service of God.—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Letters of James and Peter*,* 293. Philadelphia: Westminster. John Knox Press. [Content in brackets is added.]
4. Peter went on to say that those to whom he was addressing this letter had received “a faith as precious as ours.” This faith will provide “everything we need to live a truly religious life through our knowledge of the one who called us to share in his own glory and goodness.” (2 Peter 1:3, *GNB*) These comments suggest that Peter, once again, was saying that Gentile Christians had been welcomed into a relationship with Jesus Christ equal to that formerly offered to Jews. The word *precious* above means “of equal value.” Peter went on

to say that divine power has been given to us “through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3, *NKJV*) to become like Jesus Christ. What does that mean? Only God can do it.

5. In order to love Jesus, we must get to know Him. How do you understand 2 Peter 1:1-4? Humans were given the privilege of becoming perfect and mature in their relationship with God while living in the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, through sin we have been degraded and defaced. But, by being born again, we have the opportunity to be restored into the divine image. This will happen through a cooperative effort between ourselves and the Holy Spirit. We need to take the time to allow the Holy Spirit to work.

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. **When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 668.3. [Bold type is added.]

6. What difference has your Christian faith made in your life?
7. Second Peter 1:5-7 reveals “Peter’s ladder.” Compare Romans 5:3-5; James 1:3-4; and Galatians 5:22-23.
8. What similar theme appears in these texts?
9. These are the lists of virtues in each of these passages. Peter’s list is called a ladder.
- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 2 Peter 1:5-7: | Faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, Christian affection, love. |
| Romans 5:3-5: | Troubles, endurance, God’s approval, hope. |
| James 1:3-4: | Faith, endurance, perfection. |
| Galatians 5:22-23: | ²² ... Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ humility, and self-control. |
10. Making lists of virtues was commonly done in ancient times. In this case, Peter put together his list of what he thought were most important. He organized it in the form of a ladder. Each of the rungs in Peter’s ladder was carefully chosen:

Faith: In this context, faith is nothing less than a saving belief in Jesus (see *Gal. 3:11, Heb. 10:38*).

Virtue: Virtue (Greek *arête*), a good quality of any kind, was heralded even among pagan philosophers. Yes, faith is crucial, but it must lead to a changed life, one in which virtue is expressed.

Knowledge: Peter surely isn’t talking of knowledge in general but rather the knowledge that comes from a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Temperance/Self-control: Mature Christians are able to control their impulses, particularly those impulses that lead to excesses.

Patience/Steadfastness: Steadfastness is endurance, especially in the face of trials and persecution.

Godliness: In the pagan world, the word translated here as “godliness” means ethical behavior that results from a belief in a god. Within the New Testament it also carries the concept of ethical behavior that results from belief in the one true God (*1 Tim. 2:2*).

Brotherly kindness: Christians are like a family, and godliness will lead to a community in which people are kind to one another.

Love: Peter brings the list to a climax with love. He sounds like Paul, too: “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (*1 Cor. 13:13, NKJV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, May 22. [Bold type is added.]

11. After saying that the virtues and the relationship that we can have with Jesus Christ is a gift, Peter said we must “make every effort” to attain these virtues. (*2 Peter 1:5, NET*) How do you understand this cooperation between ourselves and the Holy Spirit?

Philippians 2:12-13 (GNB*): ¹²... Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation, ¹³because God is always at work in you to make you willing and able to obey his own purpose. [Who is doing the work?]

2 Peter 1:10-11 (GNB*): ¹⁰ So then, my brothers and sisters, try even harder to make God’s call and his choice of you a permanent experience; if you do so, you will never abandon your faith. ¹¹In this way you will be given the full right to enter the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

12. Read 2 Peter 1:8-11. If we have truly experienced living according to Peter’s directions in the first seven verses of this short letter, then Peter called upon us to be what we really can be. Do we really know Jesus Christ? Do we really want to live as He did? How are we doing at developing faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly/Christian affection, and love? Unfortunately, Peter’s letter reminds us that there are many Christians who have failed to accomplish this new reality in their lives. But, he was certain that there is no excuse for their behavior.

13. So, what is the relationship that Peter was suggesting between faith and works?

We hear a great deal about faith, but we need to hear a great deal more about works. Many are deceiving their own souls by living an easy-going, accommodating, crossless religion.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times** June 16, 1890, par. 6; *1SM** 382.2; *Faith and Works** 50.1; *NL** 38.1.

14. So, how do we learn what Christ was like? Could we put ourselves back into the Gospels, trying to imagine what we would have done in each situation? What did the disciples think when Jesus mentioned the cross? Can we think of modern situations which, in one way or another, parallel the stories of Jesus or the disciples?

15. Read 2 Peter 1:13-14. What did Peter mean when he said, “I must put off my tent”? Modern versions say, “I must put off this mortal body.” How did Peter remind us? The Gospel of Mark is Peter’s Gospel. (*1 Peter 5:13; 2 Peter 1:15*)

In 1956, Oscar Cullmann wrote a short study called “Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament.” He argued that the concept of the resurrection is quite incompatible with the concept of the immortal soul. Furthermore, he said that the New Testament lies squarely on the side of the resurrection of the dead.

“No other publication of mine,” he later wrote, “has provoked such enthusiasm or such violent hostility.”

http://www.truthaccordingtoscripture.com/documents/death/immortality-resurrection/cullmann_immort-res.pdf —*Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, May 24. [Spirit and body when combined make a soul.]

16. For comparison, read 1 Corinthians 15:12-57. Of course, Paul made it very clear that if Christ did not rise from the grave, then our faith is useless. But, since we know that He did rise, we have the promise, a guarantee, in fact, that we can rise. Death is nothing more than a dreamless sleep to be followed by a glorious awakening for those who belong to Jesus Christ. There is nothing in the New Testament to suggest that some essence wafts its way off, leaving a body behind and dwelling somewhere in another world. Which is more important: 1) The death of Jesus? Or, 2) The resurrection of Jesus? That is a bad question since both are crucial!
17. So, what kind of bodies will we receive in the resurrection? (1 Corinthians 15:35-50) When Jesus rose from the grave and ascended to His Father, He came back a short time later to His disciples who recognized Him as a real Person. Thus, we can be assured that although we will have perfect and immortal bodies, they will be real. (John 20:24-29)
18. Second Peter 1:12-15 explains to us why Peter was writing this letter. It was his last will and testament to his Christian associates; he knew that soon he would die. And he wanted to leave a parting message for other Christians who were also suffering as he was.
19. Peter knew that he would soon face his final trial; but, he was not afraid. Jesus Himself had hinted at that death many years earlier. (See John 21:18-19.)

In the providence of God, Peter was permitted to close his ministry in Rome, where his imprisonment was ordered by the emperor Nero about the time of Paul's final arrest. Thus the two veteran apostles, who for many years had been widely separated in their labors, were to bear their last witness for Christ in the world's metropolis, and upon its soil to shed their blood as the seed of a vast harvest of saints and martyrs.

Since his reinstatement after his denial of Christ, Peter had unflinchingly braved danger and had shown a noble courage in preaching a crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour. As he lay in his cell he called to mind the words that Christ had spoken to him: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.” John 21:18. Thus Jesus had made known to the disciple the very manner of his death, and even foretold the stretching of his hands upon the cross.

Peter, as a Jew and a foreigner, was condemned to be scourged and crucified. In prospect of this fearful death, the apostle remembered his great sin in denying Jesus in the hour of His trial. Once so unready to acknowledge the [538] cross, he now counted it a joy to yield up his life for the gospel, feeling only that, for him who had denied his Lord, to die in the same manner as his Master died was too great an honor. Peter had sincerely repented of that sin and had been forgiven by Christ, as is shown by the high commission given him to feed the sheep and lambs of the flock. But he could never forgive himself. Not even the thought of the agonies of the last terrible scene

could lessen the bitterness of his sorrow and repentance. As a last favor he entreated his executioners that he might be nailed to the cross with his head downward. The request was granted, and in this manner died the great apostle Peter.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 537.1-538.0.

20. Should we be terribly frightened at the prospect of death? Or, should we have the hope that the disciples displayed as they faced death?
21. Re-read 2 Peter 1:3-4 and John 6:63. What means does God provide us for leaving behind the corruption that is in the world through lust and attaining to God's divine power unto immortality and eternal life? By having access to the Scriptures, we can become partakers of the divine nature. Faith is a relationship with God.
22. When Peter called for us to try even harder to make God's call and His choice of us a permanent experience, what was he suggesting? Was this his way of saying that human works can somehow help us earn salvation? Notice that he went on to suggest that our efforts are only a means for establishing our faith. What does that mean? (Romans 10:17)
23. Do we fully comprehend what it means to be partakers of the divine nature? How do we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust and evil desire?

In our passage, Peter tells us how we can accomplish all these goals. We must have an effective and productive knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ—who called us to emulate His holiness (*compare with 1 Pet. 1:15, 16*). After describing the ladder of Christian virtues, Peter says, "For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*2 Pet. 1:8, NIV*). Through the divine power made available in the precious promises of His Word, God permits us to become partakers of the divine nature and to escape the corrupt natures we have inherited in this world. Thus, He fits us for eternity.—*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 120.

24. In talking about many of these same virtues, Paul suggested they are a fruit. (Galatians 5:22-23) One might get the idea from Peter's words that we work on these virtues one by one. But, we need to be very clear that these virtues are a gift from God. However, we need to exercise our choice by allowing the Holy Spirit to enter our lives through Bible study and prayer so He can make the necessary changes in us.
25. In a previous lesson, we talked about how Peter's first letter focused a great deal on Jesus Christ.

As Peter begins his second epistle, he continues his emphasis on the centrality of Jesus Christ that we saw in his first epistle. In the first 15 verses that we will be studying this week, there are six explicit references to Jesus Christ, usually either as Lord or as God, plus many other references to Him through the use of personal pronouns. In verse 1, through a Greek grammatical construction, Jesus is called both our God and Savior. In verses 2, 8, 11, and 14, Jesus is designated as our Lord. In all but verse 2, He is called Jesus Christ, or Jesus the Messiah. In verse 11, He is our Lord and Savior. Clearly, Peter has a very high Christology and wants to communicate this interpretation to his readers. He is proud to bear the name that Jesus gave him, Simon Peter ("the rock") and to be a servant and apostle of Jesus

Christ (2 Pet. 1:1).—*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 121.

26. As you review your own life, in what ways do you see that you are becoming more and more like Jesus? Does it seem like an impossible task? Are you working on it every day? Is the Bible—all of it—an important source of knowledge for you? Peter was certain that a knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is key to our successful growth as Christians.
27. We must ask ourselves: Am I progressing on the ladder that Peter talked about? Is my Christian experience growing daily? Remember that: “If our picture of God hasn’t grown and changed in the last year, we are worshiping an idol!” That is a scary thought!
28. Some Christians feel that God has called us to be absolutely perfect. Others feel that the perfection we are being called to is relative. What is the difference between these two views? Remember that Matthew 5:48 (KJV) says: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect.”
29. Edgar J. Goodspeed more correctly represented the Greek of this passage when he translated that verse: “So, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is.”

We may be as perfect in our sphere as God is in His sphere.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 4, 455.

God’s ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” *This command is a promise.* The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages** 311.2; *RC** 293.5. [Italic type is added.]

30. In what ways have you found your Bible study and prayer to be a bulwark against the corruption that is in the world? Do you find it hard to ignore the television or the Internet in order to spend time with Scripture?
31. There are some Christians who believe in what is known as the “once-saved always-saved” principle. We recognize that there is a careful balance between Christian assurance and some kind of self confidence in one’s own salvation. Notice these words from Ellen White:

Those who accept Christ, and in their first confidence say, I am saved, are in danger of trusting to themselves. They lose sight of their own weakness and their constant need of divine strength. They are unprepared for Satan’s devices, and under temptation many, like Peter, fall into the very depths of sin. We are admonished, “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” 1 Cor. 10:12. Our only safety is in constant distrust of self, and dependence on Christ—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons** 155.2; *FLB** 336.2; *Mar** 236.3; *NL** 42.2.

32. Are you ready to accept the challenges in the first chapter of 2 Peter?

© 2017, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. *Electronic version. Info@theox.org

Last Modified: April 22, 2017

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSSTG-Hart\1&2 Peter\SS-9-1&2 Peter-2017_05_27-fin+.wpd