

Day 185, 1 Peter 1

by David Servant

As believers, we are called to be holy and persevere under persecution, knowing that our faith will be tested and our reward will be great in heaven.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:7

Topics: "Persecution", "Sanctification"

Description

David Servant preaches on Peter's first epistle, written to persecuted believers scattered across modern Turkey, reminding them of their identity as 'aliens' in this world and chosen by God according to His foreknowledge. He emphasizes that God's choice of believers is based on His intimate knowledge of those who would repent and believe in Jesus, with the ultimate goal of sanctification and transformation by the Holy Spirit. Persecution faced by Christians serves to identify genuine faith and proves its authenticity, as believers are called to rejoice in suffering, knowing that their reward in heaven is great.

Transcript

Scholars often place the date of Peter's writing his first epistle between AD 60 and 64, the latter of which is the assumed time of his martyrdom. Peter wrote to persecuted believers who were scattered across modern Turkey, and he reminded them from the outset of his letter that they were "aliens," an apt description of all Christians. We're strangers to this world, a family whose citizenship is in heaven. Of course those who hate God hate us.

We're also "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God" (1:1-2). God foreknows everyone intimately, and thus He can choose people before they are born. But did He flip a coin to determine who would be saved and who would not be saved? Or did He have some reason for choosing some and not others? Obviously, in light of the entire revelation of Scripture, the answer is that God chose all whom He foreknew would repent and believe in Jesus. And clearly, as Peter states, God not only chose us, but planned that we would be sanctified, or set apart for holy use by the Holy Spirit, that we might "obey Jesus and be sprinkled with His blood" (1:2). God's original intention went beyond forgiveness to transformation. It is part of the package!

It is that transformation that attracts persecution from the world. Obviously, if Christians were no different than unbelievers, the world would have no reason to hate and persecute us. Thus, persecution serves a positive spiritual end; namely, it identifies believers. And when we persevere under persecution, it proves the genuineness of our faith. So Peter writes of "the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold

which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:7). We should rejoice when we are hated, just as Jesus instructed us:

Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets (Luke 6:22-23).

Jesus, however, also spoke of those who "fall away...when affliction or persecution arises because of the word." They "have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary" (Mark 4:17). And this is why we are so often admonished in Scripture to "continue in the faith" and "hold fast" to what we have (Acts 14:22; Col. 1:23; 1 Cor. 15:2; Heb. 3:6, 14, 4:14, 10:23; Rev. 2:25, 3:11).

These verses are often ignored by preachers who realize that people would rather hear scriptures that seem to guarantee eternal security for everyone who verbalizes faith in Christ. But those scriptures which guarantee God's faithfulness (some of which are found in today's reading) do not guarantee our faithfulness. There is a difference! And this is the reason Peter so strongly admonishes all of us who "address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work" to "conduct ourselves in fear during the time of our stay on earth" (1:17).

All of us must stand before the impartial Judge one day, and if that judgment was nothing more than a passing out of rewards as some claim, then there would be no reason to fear. In fact, if the worst consequence of that judgment was a little verbal reprimand, there would still be no reason to fear. Peter was concerned that his readers might, like the goats in Jesus' foretelling of the judgment of the sheep and goats, be shocked to find themselves condemned because they did not possess "the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

As free moral agents, we can choose to obey or disobey. So it makes perfect sense that Peter wrote to born-again believers, "Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior" (1:15). Who is holy? Those who want to be holy. It is that simple!

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