

Strange World Good God-3

1 Peter 1:23-25 & 2:1-12 (NIV)

Hey Newsong!

I want to take an opportunity to welcome all of our first time guests! We're in week three of our summer series "Strange World Good God"

And what we're doing is going verse by verse through the letter of 1 Peter...

Peter is writing this letter to the churches that were located in what is now modern day Turkey...And he's writing to encourage them because they are going through intense persecution and suffering because they love and follow Jesus...

Week 1:

Here's what Peter has taught us so far...

- **We're elected by God...We're chosen (vs 1-2)**

- We have a living hope (vs 3)
- it's a hope that can't be taken from us...it goes on into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade...it's kept in heaven for us (vs 4-5)

Week 2:

- Even though we go through trials, hardships and suffering in this life (vs 6-9)
- We have what the prophets predicted and what the angels long to understand (vs 10-12)
- We get our head in the game by thinking clearly...but we also have to think hopefully (vs 13)
- We have to play by God's RULES (vs 14)
- We've got to keep moving FORWARD (vs17)

1 Peter 1:23-25

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever." [a]

And this is the word that was preached to you.

We live in a culture which has taken some biblical words and used them in a way that redefines and cheapens them so that they no longer mean what the Bible means.

But then they seep back into the vocabulary of Christians with their devalued meaning.

Take the term “born again.” The media uses it to describe anyone who makes a comeback or gets a fresh start in life.

And so it’s not surprising when over 50 percent of Americans say that they’re “born again Christians.”

They mean that they had some sort of religious or emotional experience that resulted in a fresh start in life. It may have involved praying to Jesus or “inviting Him into their hearts.”

But in most cases, they have no idea what the Bible means by being born again.

Another word that has become devalued is “love.” We say, “I love coffee”; “I love New York” (I saw a bumper sticker that said, “If you love New York, please get on I-40

and drive east”); “I love baseball”; “I love my dog”; “I love my family”; “I love Jesus.” But what does it mean?

It’s like the little girl who was invited to dinner at her friend’s home. The vegetable was buttered broccoli. The mother asked if she liked it. She replied politely, “Oh, yes, I **love** it!”

But when the broccoli was passed she declined to take any. The hostess said, “I thought you said you loved buttered broccoli.” The girl replied sweetly, “Oh, yes ma’am, I **do**, but not enough to eat it!”

I bring up these two terms, “born again” and “love” because they are central to understanding Peter’s thought in 1 Peter 1:22-25.

If we allow our culture’s devalued definitions of these words to affect our thinking, we will miss what the apostle is saying.

We must keep in mind the biblical definitions of these words and consciously reject our culture's definitions of them.

Peter was writing to scattered groups who represented the first Christians in an otherwise thoroughly pagan world (1:1).

Through God's mercy they had been "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1:3).

These scattered groups of believers were made up of both Jews and Gentiles, a radical cultural mix in that day.

And they were being persecuted for their faith. As often happens in our families, suffering turns small irritations into conflict and triggers friction that otherwise might not exist.

Peter, after showing them that being a Christian requires a holy lifestyle, brings the rubber of holiness down to the

road of life and shows that the new birth demands not only a new life but also a new love in the family of God:

Christians must love because they have been born again through God's imperishable Word of truth.

As we saw last week on the subject of holiness, Peter stated the demand (1:15-16), but then went into a lengthy rationale as to why Christians must be holy, namely, because their heavenly Father is also their judge and they have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ (1:17-21).

He does a similar thing here with the subject of love. First, he states something that is true of his readers due to their conversion: They had purified their souls in obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren (1:22a).

Then he states the consequent demand: "Fervently love one another from the heart" (1:22b).

He follows this with a theological truth relative to their conversion, which he supports with a lengthy quote from **Isaiah 40:6-8**: They have been born again through God's imperishable Word (1:23-25).

What Peter is saying is that the kind of holiness he has been describing, holiness which stems from the new birth, must work itself out in love for fellow Christians.

For those that don't know that Love is an action, how do we know that is because God gave us the meaning and example of that when He sent His only Son Jesus. That was an action.

Don't let what the world says about love to be a feeling.

Peter was telling hey you need to love each other in your actions because guess what they were going to need during that time.

They needed to hold each other up. How many know that when we are going through something we need our church family to hold us up, to pray for us, and be there in any way they can.

Life is truly better together!!!!

To understand verse 22 properly, we must see that Peter is talking about something that takes place at conversion or the new birth.

If this were not so, Peter could not state, as he does, that this purity of soul in obedience to the truth was true of his readers.

To understand verse 22 properly, we must see that Peter is talking about something that takes place at conversion or the new birth.

The outward symbol of this obedience to the truth is baptism, which pictures the inward purification from sins that takes place when a person trusts in Christ.

When Peter talks about his readers purifying their souls in obedience to the truth, he is referring to their obedience in baptism.

We need to be clear on two things here. First, **baptism does not save anyone.**

Personal faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ saves a person from God's wrath and judgment.

But baptism is the way a person who has trusted Christ confesses Him publicly.

But the New Testament way of confessing Christ is to be baptized. But baptism does not save the person.

Baptism is the outward symbol of obedience to Christ that reflects the inward reality of saving faith.

So now let's look at:

1 Peter 2:1-3

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

In the context, it is clear that these relational sins (2:1) will hinder your motivation for the Word (2:2). To “put off” means to cast aside like you take off dirty clothes.

These sins are baggage from our past before we were born again. They surround us as we live in this sinful world.

They are standard operating procedures for many people in the world, especially when they get into a tough situation.

But Peter says that they are opposed to spiritual growth and they must be discarded like dirty clothes.

Genesis 19 tells the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot, Abraham's nephew, lived in Sodom with his family. His daughters were engaged to local men.

Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom, the area where financial and judicial transactions took place, when two angels came into town.

Lot invited them to stay with his family. After a rather exciting evening, the angels made sure Lot, his wife, and his two daughters left before God destroyed the city (Genesis 19:13).

As they fled, the angels warned them, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away” (Genesis 19:17).

Lot ran, his daughters close behind. “But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt” (Genesis 19:26).

She lagged behind. She turned and watched the flaming sulfur fall from the sky, consuming everything she valued. Then it consumed her.

The Hebrew for “looked back” means more than to glance over one’s shoulder. It means “to regard, to consider, to pay attention to.”

The Scriptures don’t say whether her death was a punishment for valuing her old life so much that she hesitated in obeying, or if it was a simple consequence of her reluctance to leave her life quickly.

Either she identified too much with the city—and joined it—or she neglected to fully obey God’s warning, and she died.

We’re fortunate to receive similar warnings. Ephesians 4:22-24 tells us to take off the old self that is ruled by sin and be renewed, putting on the new self that is in the likeness of God.

Similarly, 1 John 5:16 says that willful, deliberate sin can lead to death. Lot’s wife wasn’t able to accept that. What she chose to value in her heart led her to sin, which led to her death.

The Bible isn’t clear whether Lot’s wife was covered in the salt that rained down with the brimstone or if her remains were dusted with a coating of salt later.

But it is interesting that she is described as a “pillar.” The Hebrew for “pillar” refers to a garrison or a deputy, that is, something set to watch over something else.

The image of Lot's wife standing watch over the Dead Sea area—where to this day no life can exist—is a poignant reminder to us not to look back or turn back from the profession of faith we have made, but to follow Christ without hesitation and abide in His love (Luke 17:32).

1 Peter 2:4-12

4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house[a] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For in Scripture it says:

***“See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame.”[b]***

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

***“The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,”[c]***

**8 and, “A stone that causes people to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall.”[d]**

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Living Godly Lives in a Pagan Society

11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Have you been invited? Have you accepted the invitation?

I remember sending out invitations for our wedding, how difficult it was to cut people out. We had a budget and we couldn't afford to have everyone we loved there.

Isn't it wonderful to be invited. An Invitation reveals a lot of things:

- You are welcome;
- You are loved;
- You are important;
- You have access;
- You belong;
- You have rights;
- You are chosen;

The Gospel is the invitation that God has given to us, He has sent His only Son to earth to die in place of sinners, He was buried, and then He was raised from the dead, all according to what God has spoken through the prophets.

Now, Jesus has many times extended invitations to His people: Come to me... Follow me... I'm the door, if you enter... I am the way... He revealed himself to be the bread of life, and those who feed from Him will never go hungry... Those who drink from Him will never go thirsty.

There is a verse that says: "Many are called, but few are chosen."

This gives us a picture of some sort of divine selection.

Let me put this in a simple way: “While it is God’s will for all to be saved, not everyone submits to God’s will”. But once we have submitted to God, we become His chosen.

1. What are we chosen for?

a) To come to Him; v4

This coming is a constant coming. It does not refer to an initial Salvation “coming”, it is a constant drawing near into His presence. You may think this too much of a privilege, and it is true, we can come at any time, we are invited to come all the time.

b) to be living Stones in His Holy temple; v5

Many of the names given to Christ are a characteristic of God’s people.

i.e. – Son / sons; High Priest/priests, King/kings, Lamb/lambs, Living Stone/living stones.

These are stones cut into shape for building materials, not just boulders or fieldstone randomly gathered.

We must each ask, “Am I willing to be shaped and used as a living stone for God’s purposes?”

Too many Christians seem to want to be the whole temple or to take Christ’s place as the cornerstone.

And “are being built” meaning that God is doing the building.

The “house” that God builds is the church, and so Peter was seeing Jesus’ words fulfilled in the churches to whom he was writing to.

Believers are not left alone in the world; God lives among them in the spiritual home that he is building, only to be completed when Christ Jesus returns.

c) to offer sacrifices of worship; v5

Not only we are living stones, as we form the spiritual temple on which God lives in, we are also priests which serve God and offer Him spiritual sacrifices.

The Old Testament priests offered animal sacrifices in the temple; God's people offer sacrifices too, but these are "spiritual sacrifices."

What comprises these spiritual sacrifices? The answer is found in other New Testament letters:

- ***"I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1).***

We offer ourselves and our wills to God's control.

- ***"Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:2).***

We offer love, to God and to others.

- ***“[The gifts the believers had sent to Paul] are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God” (Philippians 4:18).***

We offer our money and possessions freely to help spread the gospel.

- ***“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name” (Hebrews 13:15).***

We center our lives around continual praise to God.

- ***“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Hebrews 13:16).***

We do good and share freely with others.

We see from Scripture that every part of our lives—our jobs, activities, recreation, attitudes, giving, outlook, goals—should be given as a spiritual sacrifice to God.

When we learn to please God and follow His directions and guidance, all we do delights Him.

The sacrifice of ourselves is acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

We are imperfect and sinful, yet we are made acceptable to God because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice of Himself on our behalf.

Only because of Christ have believers received this high and holy calling to be living stones and a holy priesthood in the spiritual house of God.

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL HOUSE WE ARE!

Peter portrays the church as a living, spiritual house, with Christ as the foundation and cornerstone and each believer as a valuable element.

Paul portrays the church as a body, with Christ as the head and each believer as a contributing member (see, for example, **Ephesians 4:15–16**).

Both pictures emphasize community. One stone is not a temple or even a wall; one body part is useless without the others.

In our individualistic society, we can easily forget our interdependence with other Christians.

When God calls you to a task, remember that He is also calling others to work with you.

Together your individual efforts will be multiplied. Look for those people and join with them to build a beautiful house for God.

How do we see ourselves being used by God to build us up?

Do you include yourself in? Or do you only see pastors, or even perhaps the leadership. Or those who are already working?

You have a part to play, you were chosen, you are a living stone in this building, a member in this body, with a valuable and useful potential in order to bring what edification.

Don't count yourself out?

2. We have become His special people.

But you are a chosen people, again chosen, special people. Set apart by God, invited to be in His presence.

This verse contrasts the privilege and destiny of believers with that of unbelievers.

The word mentions being chosen or called at least 131 times in the bible.

What makes us chosen, is because we have not rejected the cornerstone, the foundation on which we are built on.

Who is the cornerstone? Jesus Christ.

V7, Now to you who believe, this stone is precious.

THE ROCK AND CORNERSTONE

No doubt Peter often thought of Jesus' words to him right after he confessed that Jesus was "***the Christ, the Son of the living God***": And then Jesus goes on to tell Peter, "***You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it***" ***Mat 16:16 &18.***

What is the stone that really counts in the building of the church?

Peter answers: Christ Himself.

What are the characteristics of Christ, the cornerstone?

- He is completely trustworthy.
- He is precious to believers.
- Though rejected by some, he is the most important part of the church.

3. A holy nation and a special people.

- We have been set apart for God.
- Our sins have been purged.
- We can live in God's presence daily.

Every morning when Hannah wakes up to get ready for school she has a hard time, she's up-set and tired, she gives me every excuse why she shouldn't go to school and how boring it is.

I don't yell at her, well maybe I do sometimes but I do stop her and take her in my arms, I caress her, I hug her and I tell her how much I love her.

And at that moment everything changes and she is filled with peace and calm.

God gives us the same tender treatment. It is the equivalent of peace and affirmation: We are God's special people.

We face tomorrow's troubles assured that our heavenly Father goes before us and with us each step of the way. So you Don't have to worry.

So rest well today.

4. We have a specific purpose.

V9 To declare the praises of Him (God)...

We are chosen with a special purpose—to glorify and praise the one who has called them out of the darkness

of sin and of their hostile surroundings into the light of eternal life.

We are called to “declare” who God is and what he has done, specifically the act of salvation.

We proclaim Him by:

- Conducting our lives so that they manifest his character,
- And telling others of the salvation He accomplished for us and of His work in our individual lives.

Invite them to come to church! Give them a devotional book!

Share a verse or testimony of how God has blessed you or spoken to you.

Sometimes, sharing can be really hard?

How do we proclaim God’s praises in a hostile world? Or a workplace?

- Be creative, remember that our actions speak louder than words.
- Perhaps, you can not offer a Bible, an invitation to church, or a testimony, but they can know God through your consistent living.
- They can know God by showing them how precious God is to you. V12.

Today we are reminded of the wonderful and special invitation that God has given us through His son Jesus.

And what it means to be chosen by Him, and How is the outwork of our Salvation.

Now, You may feel special for being invited, but have you been chosen?

You may feel special that you were invited to a party, have you attended it?

Take part, come as you are, and let God transform your life.

Perhaps you are still undecided?

But where do you stand?

You are either in or out!

What is the Holy Spirit telling you?