

**Excerpts from Life-study of 1 Peter,
Message 2**

**THE OPERATION OF THE TRIUNE
GOD UPON THE ELECT FOR THEIR
PARTICIPATION IN HIS FULL
SALVATION**

Bible Verses

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the sojourners of the dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

1 Peter 1:2 Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

1 Peter 1:1 says, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the sojourners of the dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” The name Peter denotes his regenerated and

spiritual man, whereas the name Simon denotes his natural man by birth (John 1:42 ; Matt. 16:17-18). Originally, he was Simon, not Peter. The name Simon denotes the old man, the natural man, full of self. But when Peter came to the Lord Jesus, the Lord immediately gave him a new name. The Lord looked at him and said, “You are Simon, the son of John; you shall be called Cephas” (John 1:42). The Lord Jesus never does anything merely in name. His changing of Simon’s name had a reality behind it. By changing Simon’s name, the Lord Jesus indicated that He would change Simon into Peter, into a stone.

If we read the four Gospels and Peter’s Epistles, we may find it difficult to believe that Simon, a Galilean fisherman, could be such a writer. By the time he wrote his Epistles, Peter had been changed, transformed. One of the hymns in our hymnal begins with the words, “Earthen vessel I was made, / Christ in me the treasure laid” (Hymns,#548). The last stanza of this hymn says, “Transformation is my need.” Simon was an earthen vessel; Peter, however, was a transformed

person. He had been regenerated and had become altogether new. Therefore, in his two Epistles we cannot see his flesh, the self, or his natural life. Instead, what we see is the new man expressed in his writing. Christ is expressed in Peter's writing.

1 Peter 1:2 says, "Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied." The phrase according to the foreknowledge of God the Father modifies chosen. Here, the divine economy through the operation of the Trinity of the Godhead for the believers' participation in the Triune God is unveiled. God the Father's choosing, His selection, is the initiation; God the Spirit's sanctification carries out the selection of God the Father; and God the Son's redemption, signified by the sprinkling of His blood, is the completion. Through these steps the believers have been chosen, sanctified, and redeemed to enter into the enjoyment of the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—into whom they

have been baptized (Matt. 28:19) and whose virtues they are enjoying (2 Cor. 13:14).

In his writings Paul does not give us a clear view of God's entire salvation in the way that Peter does. As used in Peter's Epistles, the word salvation implies full salvation. In 1 Peter 2:2 he says, "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation." On the one hand, we have been saved; on the other hand, we still need to grow unto salvation. This means that there is a further salvation that we have not yet reached. In other words, we are short of some kind of salvation. We do not yet have it, and we need to grow unto it. We need to keep on growing until we reach, arrive at, full salvation. According to 1:5 , this is the salvation that is "ready to be revealed at the last time." When the Lord Jesus comes back, this salvation will be brought in.

We have been saved, and yet we are still suffering. But why do we suffer if we have already been saved? Others may cause us to suffer, and we may even cause suffering to ourselves. For

example, do you not suffer as a result of losing your temper? Are you happy when you lose your temper? Some may pray that the Lord will save them from their temper. They may say, “O Lord, save me from my temper. I don’t want to lose my temper anymore. Lord, You are Emmanuel, God with us. You are also Jesus, the One who delivers His people from their sins. I confess that losing my temper is sinful. Lord, You are my Savior. You can deliver me from this sin.” However, instead of saving you from your temper, He may allow you to lose it even more. For example, a brother may spend some time praying in the morning. But at breakfast his wife may give him a difficult time and criticize him. First, he tries to suppress his anger. He may ask the Lord to save him and to keep him from losing his temper. However, his wife continues to provoke him until he loses his temper. During the day, the brother suffers as a result of losing his temper with his wife. On the way home from work, the Lord Jesus may tell him to apologize to his wife, something that he finds very difficult to do. Should he refuse and tell the

Lord, “I will not apologize to her,” the Lord Jesus may say, “If you don’t do it, I am through with you.” This is an illustration of the fact that even those who are saved continue to suffer.

On the one hand, the Christian life is a life of enjoyment. But we would all agree that, on the other hand, it is also a life of suffering. This indicates that we need the Savior and that we need to grow unto salvation. The Lord does not save us from losing our temper. Rather, it is our growth unto salvation that will save us from this.

We have pointed out that in 1:1 and 2 we have the operation of the Triune God upon His elect for their participation in His full salvation. In these verses the divine economy through the operation of the three of the Godhead for the believers’ participation in the Triune God is revealed. We need to be deeply impressed with this and assimilate the reality of these terms.

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Note: This version is not intended to be printed as material for pursuit during the small group gathering. Instead, it is to be used as additional reference for brothers and sisters who want to prepare in advance for fellowship on the message. We include here notes from the commentaries of the brothers in the life-study radio program. The points from these commentaries can help enrich our understanding and, eventually, our fellowship with the saints on the selected portions of the life-study message. We still recommend that, if possible, the saints still listen to the [audio message](#) in addition to reading the [life-study](#)

[message](#) for personal pursuit and for preparation for small group gatherings. We also wish to point out that these notes have not been fully polished.

[CW:] The story of the Lord's calling of the Apostle Peter as it's recorded in the Gospel of John includes an intriguing and unusual component. He changes his name from Simon to Cephas, which literally means a stone. This is John chapter 1 verses 40 through 42. One of the two who heard this from John and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, We have found the Messiah, which translated means Christ. He led him to Jesus. Looking at him, Jesus said, You are Simon, the son of John. You shall be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter. Of course, nothing of God's genuine work is accomplished merely in name only. And so the changing of this poor Galilean fisherman's name from Simon to something so solid and permanent as Peter, a stone for God's building, is full of meaning. And it implies that God has much more in mind for Peter than simply saving him from his sins. For both Peter's transformation and the accomplishment of God's very eternal purpose is hinted at in this symbolic act. Bob Danker has joined us for our second program from the Life Study of First Peter. Good to have you, Bob.

[BD] It's good to be with you again, Chris, for this wonderful life study from First Peter. Yes, I agree. This changing of Peter's name, actually from Simon to Peter by the Lord Jesus, is an act full of meaning and symbolism, which points to something much, much deeper and is intrinsically related to the accomplishing of God's eternal purpose.

[CW:] As we began this life study yesterday, Bob, we spent quite a bit of time on the matter of the full salvation that's revealed in these two epistles of Peter. But I think it's good to take a minute here before we jump into the second message and examine just for a moment not just the fact that Peter wrote about full salvation, but Peter's very life is a kind of a demonstration of the full salvation, isn't it?

[BD:] It is, Chris. If we read the New Testament, of course, we see Peter mentioned prominently in the four Gospels and in the book of Acts. And we can see, we may say, one kind of Peter in the Gospels, another kind of Peter in the Acts, and then when we encounter Peter for the last time in his epistles, we see quite a lot of development in Peter's experience of salvation.

[CW:] Bob, Peter means a stone, and Peter wrote about stones in his epistles. Of course, there's the famous passage in the Gospel of Matthew where Peter is very significant relating to God's building. And then in the epistles, which we'll get to later on as we progress in this new life study, Peter identifies all of us as living stones for God's building, doesn't he?

[BD:] He does, Chris. And that shows that Peter realized that God's goal in his eternal purpose is to have an organic building, a building in the eternal life of God that is a composition of all the believers who are regenerated by the Spirit and transformed by the Spirit to become living stones. And then these transformed stones are built together to be one entity, which Peter calls a spiritual house, and eventually he calls it also a holy priesthood. So this is a reference to God's building, which is really God's goal.

[CW:] All right, let's join Witness Lee, Bob, with our first segment from today's life- study from the first epistle of Peter.

Part 1

[CW:] Bob, this really underscores what we were just talking about. We spent a little time again yesterday reviewing some of these phrases in Peter's epistles, and they're so high and so profound and so full of meaning.

It's hard to imagine they were coming forth from this unlearned, poor Galilean fisherman. It's just quite astounding, isn't it?

[BD:] It is, Chris. In the four Gospels, you can see that Peter was altogether natural, full of himself. When he should not have spoken, he spoke out of place. We can point to several instances of this. And when he should have spoken, he was silent, or he denied the Lord. You see, this was Peter in the four Gospels. But when we come to his epistles, we see nothing of this. We see nothing of Peter's natural man. We see nothing of his self, his flesh. We see a transformed person, a person who has been remade, reconstituted by the triune God to be a person who is able to write inspired, divine writings that have nothing of the old natural element in them. It's a tremendous thing. And I believe Peter is given to us in the entire New Testament as an example of what the Lord wants to do in each one of us. We all begin, when we first come to the Lord, as people who are full of the flesh, full of the self, full of the natural life. And we need to be saved from all these things, not only by being regenerated, reborn, but also by being transformed. And Peter is a wonderful pattern to us. When the Lord changed Peter's name, or Simon's name, to the name Peter, he indicated by doing that that he intended to transform this man, Simon, into a stone for the building of God.

[CW:] One of the things that Peter's own experience illustrates, as well as his writing confirms, is that he had the mercy to have his view of the sufferings that were brought about by all of these mistakes of the flesh and of the natural man that he made, that you refer to.

They brought about a significant amount of suffering. He suffered the most stinging rebuke, even directly, at the Lord's own word. And it's hard to imagine how you recover from that, but nonetheless, he was able to have his mind renewed and his view of these events, these circumstances, enlightened to realize this was how God was coming to him with his full salvation, to work out such a magnificent change, wasn't he?

[BD:] That's right, Chris. Peter realized that in order for us to be saved, fully saved, from the flesh, from the self, from the natural life, from the world, we do need a certain amount of suffering on their God's governmental hand. And in his epistles, he does refer to this, and this is so that we can experience the full salvation of God.

[CW:] Bob, let's look at a couple of these verses now. Right at the beginning of the book, I think it illustrates both the richness and the content in Peter's writing, but also we see a lot here that really opens this matter of what Peter is presenting to us. Chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the sojourners of the dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace be multiplied." And we're going to see in this coming portion that though the term "Trinity" or "Triune God" can't be found not only in Peter, but nowhere in the entire New Testament, surely the reality, the truth of the Triune God is very present right from the beginning of his book, isn't it?

[BD:] Yes, it is, Chris.

[CW:] All right, let's go to Witness Lee.

Part 2

[CW:] Now, Bob, once again, an intriguing thought here. The implication is that Peter's use of the word salvation has a connotation that even goes somewhat beyond what Paul presents us or was presented in the Gospels. Pick that up and develop it a little bit.

{BD:} Yes. Actually, when we hear the word salvation, we normally think of a person believing in the Lord Jesus according to the gospel of the New Testament and then being saved from hell or God's judgment, eternal perdition, and then going to heaven after he dies. But if you read the epistles of Peter, you can see that salvation is more than this. Peter speaks about a salvation that is progressive. It has an initiation, it has a continuation, and it has a consummation or a climax or an end. So the salvation that Peter refers to is the full salvation of God. Actually, according to the verses that you read, Chris, this salvation began in eternity past when we were chosen by God the Father. Then God the Son redeemed us about 2,000 years ago. Even before we were born, we were redeemed by the Son. But then the Spirit comes to contact us when we hear the preaching of the gospel to cause us to believe in the Lord and to receive his redemption. Then Peter refers to our being regenerated in chapter 1, verse 3. And then he says that God is guarding us by his power unto a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time. The last time being the time when the Lord Jesus returns. So there's a salvation that will be revealed at the second coming of Christ. And then as Witness Lee mentioned in chapter 2, verse 2, it says that we as newborn babes, those who have been born of God, should long for the milk of the word so that we may grow into salvation. This is a salvation that we receive by our growing. So we could say this is certainly a progressive salvation since growth is something that progresses from initial stage to the full-grown stage. So here we can see that Peter's salvation is much more than the normal concept of salvation. And it really behooves us to understand this salvation in a full way because we are the to be saved by such a complete and full salvation.

[CW:] So Bob, going back to the kind of definition you gave for the common or typical thought for salvation to begin with, that a person enters into a relationship with Christ, asks for the forgiveness of his sins based on the shed blood, etc., etc., accepts him as Lord and Savior. When we say salvation in the context we're seeing it here, the context of 1 Peter 2.2, growing into salvation. We're really not talking about a different salvation, but rather a further salvation, aren't we?

[BD:] That's right. A further stage of God's full salvation that begins when we initially believe in the Lord and continues and progresses by our growing in Christ and having Christ grow in us. Then it has its final climax at the second coming of the Lord. This is the full salvation of God in three stages. The first stage, our regeneration at the time we believed. The second stage, a rather long stage. The rest of our Christian life should be a stage of gradually being saved from many, many negative things that are within us and that are outside of us by our growing in the life of Christ. And then the final stage at the Lord's second coming.

[CW:] So Bob, what we're presenting, I think, is really another way to resolve the historically mammoth question of whether salvation is once and for all or whether it can be lost. Of course, we're saying yes, it is once for all, but it's not complete the moment we receive it. It is in terms of our ultimate destiny, but in terms of the process that awaits us as the salvation is worked out in its full reach and scope is what we're really talking about.

[BD:] That's right, Chris. Every believer, everyone who has believed in the Lord Jesus must pass through this second stage of the progressing stage, the stage of growth to participate in God's full salvation.

[CW:] I think this last segment will be a real enjoyment for our listeners because Witness Lee will give a very vivid illustration that we will all, I think, be able to relate to. Here's Witness Lee for our last portion.

Part 3

[CW:] Well, Bob, I do enjoy that illustration. Again, anybody who's married, or probably even those who aren't married, have a similar circumstance in which they can relate to this story. Here, this man is saved, on the one hand. He's a believer. He's saved eternally. He's going to be with the Lord. But he really needs to get saved from himself, doesn't he? And the way the Lord goes about it is not according to our natural thought.

[BD:] No, we always, if we are confronted with, let's say, our besetting sin, like losing our temper or something of this nature, we pray desperately that the Lord would save us. What a suffering it is to us to always have these kind of problems with our fallen nature. This is suffering. So we beg the Lord to relieve us of this suffering instantly, according to our concept. But it seems the Lord never answers these prayers. The reason? Because it is not by miraculous action of the Lord that we are saved from our temper and from other things that beset us. It is by our growing. And Peter makes this very clear, that we, as those who are born of God, we need to desire earnestly to feed on the milk of God's Word so that we may grow up into God's full salvation. It is our growth, not a miraculous act of the Lord, that saves us gradually, little by little, from all the negative things that beset us in our life. And it causes all kinds of suffering. So the Lord doesn't save us instantly so that we will realize our need to grow in life. And we will hunger for the milk of His Word and learn to feed on the Word of God so that we may grow in life unto God's salvation.

[CW:] Yeah, this phrase that he said, the Lord does not want to save us from our temper. It's the growth in life that saves us. This is just a complete 180-degree departure from how we are sort of intuitively or natively programmed in this manner, isn't it?

[BD:] I agree, Chris.

[CW:] Well, Bob, a wonderful fellowship today. Great start, these first two programs in this new Life Study. I'm looking forward as the Life-Studies of 1 and 2 Peter really unfold before us. And I hope you're able to join us for a number of these in the coming days.

[BD:] I hope so, too.

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