

Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expository Journey Through 1Peter 1Peter 2:11-25

20 How to Live as Aliens and Strangers, Part 2

May 20, 2018

1 Peter 2:11-25

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

16 *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God.

17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

19 For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

22 *WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;*

23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

To the Glory of God

Notice all of the “actions verbs” that are in this Passage”:

- ✓ **“Abstain”** (verse 11)
- ✓ **“Keep”** (verse 12)
- ✓ **“Submit”** (verse 13)
- ✓ **“Act”** (verse 16)
- ✓ **“Honor”, “Love”, “Fear”, & “Honor”** (verse 17)
- ✓ **“Be Submissive”** (verse 18)
- ✓ **“Suffer unjustly”** (verse 19)
- ✓ **“Do What is Right”** (verse 20)
- ✓ **“Follow”** (verse 21)

... these words are all “Apostolic Commands” of things that Peter says we are supposed to “do” *after* we have been saved by Grace through Faith alone. And notice that even the “scattered aliens”, the saints, who are, at that very moment, enduring *horrific* persecution, even they are held accountable to this lofty Standard of behavior. And that means that these Commands are *not* optional, they are *required* of every believer.

And I would suggest to you that what Peter tells us to “do” in this Passage is what will grant what he pleads with us about in verse 11:

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul

So, verses 12-25 is how Peter tells us to behave so that we will be able to **“abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul”**. So, all of the things that Peter tells us to “do” in verses 12-25 are not *extra*

things, but the very issues that will *empower* us so that we will not yield ourselves to the unholy desires and wicked lusts that wage war against our souls.

Now as I told you last time, up until this Passage, Peter has been basically focusing on Who God is, and all that God has done for us *in* Jesus Christ. So, Peter has been focused mainly on "Orthodoxy", what we are to "believe", what we are to "trust and hope in", and what we are to "confess". So, basically until now, Peter has been focused on what God has chosen to reveal about Himself and Salvation in sacred Scripture. But, now in this Passage, Peter is teaching how people, who *believe* rightly, should translate that correct "Orthodoxy" into "Orthopraxy", which is how a person, who believes rightly, should live in this broken and fallen world.

And Christianity has *always* been based on *both* aspects. Biblical Christianity has *always* been built on the premise that the belief and trust in Divine Truth *always* leads to a radical change of behavior. So, in the Church, over which Jesus is "Head", "right believing" always leads to "right living".

So, first of all, we must understand that it is not *hard*, it is *impossible* for a person to live-long term in submission to the Authority of Scripture in their daily lives without understanding two things:

1. *What* he is to believe
2. *Why* he is to believe it

So, in all of the New Testament Epistles, the first thing that the writer teaches is "Theology", or "Orthodoxy", what we are to believe. And once that ground work is laid, the writer will then go into "Orthopraxy", how we are to *respond* to what we believe in how we live our daily lives.

And that is why the 21 Epistles of the New Testament are what is called the "didactic Books" of the New Covenant. The word "didactic" comes from the Greek word that has to do with "teaching and living". So, the 21 Epistles are the "teaching Books" of the infinitely superior New Covenant. And they teach us *how* the radical and supernatural transformation of the human nature, through the miracle of the New Birth, *compels* us and *empowers* us to live in this fallen world.

Now *before* the 21 Epistles were given by God the Holy Spirit, the “didactic Books” of the people of God were the first five Books of Moses, commonly called “The Law of God”. It was there that the elect of God could go to find out what God required *of* them and what He expected *from* them, and just *how* they were to “walk this world in white”.

But, with the Advent of the Messiah, Jesus the *Christ*, or Jesus the *Anointed One*, the promised New Covenant was ushered in. And in addition to the four Gospel Records of the Life, Ministry, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, God the Holy Spirit “moved along” six different men who were used to write down infallible “Letters”- or “Memoirs”, that came to be called “Epistles”. Three different Apostles wrote 18 Epistles:

- ✓ The Apostle Paul was used to write 13 of them (**Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus, 1&2 Thessalonians, & Philemon**)
- ✓ The Apostle John wrote 3 (**1,2&3 John**)
- ✓ Peter wrote 2 (**1&2 Peter**)

... and other men, who themselves were *not* Apostles, but who were *commissioned* by them, wrote 3 other Epistles:

- ✓ The half-brother of Jesus, Jude wrote 1 (**Jude**)
- ✓ And unknown writer (perhaps Luke, Clement, or Apollos) wrote 1 (**Hebrews**)
- ✓ The half-brother of Jesus, James wrote 1 (**James**)

So, the New Testament begins with 4 different *Gospel Records*, the inspired narrative of Who Jesus is, and all that He said and did in His earthly Ministry. And these four “Stories of Salvation” were written by the very first *Evangelists*, the four men who were the very first to herald the “Gospel”, the “Good News” of Salvation by Grace through Faith in the finished Work of Christ alone.

And what Matthew (Levi), John Mark, and Dr. Luke wrote are called the “*Synoptic Gospels*”, in that they are basically telling the *same* Story from three different angles, written to three different audiences:

- ✓ **Matthew** (primarily Jews schooled in the Law)

- ✓ **Mark** (primarily Gentiles ignorant of the Law)
- ✓ **Luke** (primarily Gentiles schooled in the Law)

... and John's Gospel Record is called the "*Spiritual Gospel*", in that it basically deals with Christ's Deity.

It is thought that the Apostle Peter personally commissioned John Mark to write Peter's account of Jesus's earthly Ministry, while the Apostle Paul commissioned a highly educated Gentile medical doctor/historian/theologian/preacher, Dr. Luke, to pen down the Record that bears his name. Then Dr. Luke also wrote a diary of the first 30 years of Christianity, called:

The Acts of the Apostles

... and Luke's two-volume set were written to a Roman dignitary, Theophilus, and were *possibly* used during Paul's trial as his defense documents. Then, the Apostle John also wrote a *prophetic* Book describing the final triumph of Jesus called:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ to St. John the Divine

Now many people today think that the so-called "red-letter words" of the four Gospels are all we need. They make a very *bad* assumption that what Jesus said and did during His earthly Ministry is all that God wants us to know. But that is a terrible mistake. Because, during the same time frame that God the Spirit was "moving along" the four Evangelists to write down the four Gospel Records, He was also "moving" other writers to pen down other Books that give us even *more* information about Who Jesus is, and what His Words and Actions *meant*.

So, out of the 27 inspired Books of the New Covenant, 21 of them tell us what Jesus' Life, Death, and Resurrection *means*, and *how* Who Jesus is and what Jesus said and did ties in with the 39 Books of the Old Covenant.

So, it is in these 21 "Epistles" that we have the Teaching that tells us specific details on serious and eternal issues like:

- ✓ How lost people are justified before God

- ✓ How saved people should live in this world
- ✓ How the Church should function to please God

... and please allow me to illustrate how important this is. For example, you can read the four Gospel Records and **The Acts** and **The Revelation** till Jesus comes back, and you would still not fully grasp how lost people are saved, or how the Church should function, or how God's people should behave after they are saved. You would never know how Christians relate to Human Government, and you would have no idea what to do about Slavery, or the divide between Jews and Gentiles. And even if you memorized all four Gospel Records and the other two Books, it would still be hard for you to explain very serious Doctrines like "Original Sin" or "Sanctification", and you would have no idea what God was doing about Salvation *before* Jesus was born.

In fact, if all that God gave were the four Gospel Records, we would probably still sacrifice animals, we would still be living under the dietary restrictions of the Law, and we would feel compelled to worship in Jerusalem every year. But the Epistles are even more important than that. Because, in them, we can finally understand much of what the Old Testament writings mean.

Now I hope you know that I'm not bashing the four Gospel Records by what I'm saying here. I love the Gospels so much I just spent 9 years and 10 months preaching through every single Word of the **Gospel of Luke**. I'm simply trying to illustrate how *vital* the 21 New Testament Epistles are to us. So, let me make a statement that you need to ponder and meditate on:

Without the 21 New Testament Epistles, we simply would not have Christianity.

... because, in the Epistles, God revealed *how* we are justified before God, and *why*. And the Epistles also reveal what God *expects* and *requires* from those who have already put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, it is very important for us to understand that not only is the Revelation of the New Covenant itself *superior* to the Revelation of the Old Covenant, the *way* in which God's people obey the Commands of the New Covenant is *also* superior to the *way* in which God's people obeyed the Commands in the Old. And that is what I want us to remember as

we go through these Apostolic Commands in **1 Peter**, so that we won't seek to obey the *New Covenant* Commands with an *Old Covenant* mentality.

Many times, we get caught up in the day to day rigors and discipline of the Christian life, and we tend to forget *what* we're doing and *why* we're doing it. And this is *exactly* what the Apostle Paul meant when he rebuked the saints in the region of Galatia and said:

Galatians 3:1-4

1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified?

2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

4 Did you suffer so many things in vain — if indeed it was in vain?

Here, the Apostle is reminding them, and us, that we *serve* God the very *same* way we were saved in the first place: "by" God's amazing Grace and "through" the gift of Faith, and all "to" God's Glory. In other words, we are not *saved* "by" the Spirit so that we could then *obey* "by" the flesh. We were *not* saved by a miraculous and supernatural and sovereign Work of God the Holy Spirit so we could then revert back to an Old Covenant mentality and obey God after we are saved by human effort and through human discipline, and by using the very same tactics that the Jew used under the Old Covenant.

No, we "obey" and "follow" and "serve" "by" God's Grace and "through" the Gift of Faith and "to" the Glory of God. In other words, we obey God "by the Spirit" the *same* way we were saved, or God is not glorified. So, when Obedience becomes nothing but a burden, when following Jesus becomes nothing but a checklist to mark off, when God's Commandments, such as these that Peter is giving in this section, become dry and tiresome and filled with joyless effort, it is time that we stop and regroup and become "refreshed", so we can remember what this is all about. Look what Peter said about this in **The Acts 3:19-21**:

19 "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

**20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,
21 whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things
about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.**

Now notice that Peter is talking about two different Events in this Passage:

1. "Times of Refreshing" from the Presence of the Lord
2. The "Period of Restoration" of All Things

... and notice that the "Times of Refreshing" comes from the Presence of the Lord to those who "repent and return", while the Heaven must *receive* Jesus and keep Him *away* from the earth until the "Period of Restoration", that has been prophesied in the Old Testament, comes to pass. So, whereas the *second* Event is speaking about what is going on during the Church Age before Jesus comes back, the *first* Event is talking about a "Refreshing" that happens on a more individual basis. Or we could look at how the Apostle Paul talked about a "day-by-day renewal" from **2 Corinthians 4:15-18**, where he said:

15 For all things *are* for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

So, my question is this: How do people, who are getting their heads beat-in through persecution not "**lose heart**"? How may I become a person who, in the midst of sorrow and tragedy, become "**renewed day-by-day**"? How does "**suffering the loss of all things**" contribute to my spiritual development? Precisely *how* does a "**momentary light affliction**" produce in people "**an eternal weight of glory, far beyond all comparison**"? Because, if it doesn't, then the Bible is a lie.

So, how do I become like this? How do I “see” suffering and persecution as a “tool”, a “gift”, as a “Means of Grace” that God has mercifully sent to me to help me behold Jesus *better* and *more fully* than if I were *not* persecuted? What has to happen in me to cause me to trust that my “service”, my “obedience”, and my “submission” to the Commands of Scripture is not dry, cumbersome “work” that I do out of some sense of Obligation or Duty, but the pathway to everlasting Joy that is *entirely* unspeakable and *completely* full of Glory?

It is questions like these that I want us to ask and answer as we carefully examine all that the Apostle Peter teaches in the Passage before us.

Now, under the Old Covenant, God gave Commands and the people were expected to obey. Instantly. Perfectly. Fully. No excuses. And they were told that if they *did* obey God’s Commands, instantly and perfectly and fully, they could literally *earn* God’s Favor through their obedience. And so, the “name of the game” under the Law was how much effort and discipline and human ingenuity people could “work up” so they could be in submission to the Commands of God. God promised that He would bless and heal and save and prosper His people “if” they would obey. And God promised that He would curse and destroy them if they did not.

So, the reality is that the entire Old Covenant very quickly *disintegrated* into a horrific and brutal system of failure, and of finding fault and of assigning blame that doomed them spiritually and that saved no one.

And that is because the “First”, or the “Old”, Covenant was made between God and Man. And it was a disaster, *not* because there was anything wrong with God’s Law. No, the Apostle Paul said:

Romans 7:12

So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

So, Paul said that even though the Old Covenant was a *partial* Revelation of God, it was inspired. And that means it was Holy, Righteous, and Good. But this same Apostle also said that this Holy, Righteous, and Good Law of God was “weak”:

Romans 8:3&4

3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

In other words, the “weakness” of the Law was that it was attached to our *performance*, to our *obedience*, to our *righteousness*. And that means that all the First Covenant could do was condemn us. Why? Because, all of the glorious Promises that the Old Covenant made were contingent on us *obeying* them, *perfectly, faultlessly, continuously*, in thought, word, and deed, 24-hours every day and 7-days every week.

And that means that the greatest “Good” of the Old Covenant was *not* that anybody actually lived up to its Standards, but that it proved to us beyond the shadow of a doubt that we need a Savior. That we need Grace. That we need a new nature, or we are doomed. So, *the* single most important accomplishment of the Old Covenant was that it *proved* to us that we needed a *better* Covenant.

What Jesus brought to us, in the New Covenant, was *not* simply more Rules that we have to work hard to obey. We really don’t even have *different* rules from the Old Covenant, just a better realization of how *impossible* the Rules of the Old Covenant really are.

No! So, if all you get from our “journey” through **1 Peter** is that you’re going to have to work even *harder* to try to live up to all the Commands that Peter gives here, then you have completely missed the point of it all. That is an Old Covenant mentality; that is not just wrong, but evil. That mentality will not only frustrate you (precisely because you’re not going to obey God perfectly), but it will never cause Jesus to look glorious.

“So, are you saying, Brother Blair, that I don’t need to worry about all these Commandments that Peter gives in this Passage?” No, I’m not saying that at all. “Well, are you saying that obeying these Commandments are somehow optional?” No, even though many churches in our area teach that the lack of or even the total *absence* of any obedience has no effect whatsoever on Salvation, I’ll never teach that. And I’m not going to teach that because the Bible doesn’t teach it.

The Bible teaches that Obedience is the “end result” of Salvation. Look what the Apostle Paul wrote about this in **Ephesians 2:8a**:

For by grace you have been saved through faith...

... here the Apostle Paul is illustrating that sinful rebels are *not* saved by what they “do” (i.e., partaking of Communion, being baptized, attending Church, speaking in tongues, etc.), but by what they “believe”, what they “trust in”, and what they “confess”. Look at how he explained it from **Romans 10:9**:

That if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

But, Paul *also* taught that the “Faith”, by which we are saved “through”, is *not* inherent in the human by his human birth, but is a gracious gift from God. Look at **Ephesians 2:8b** where Paul said that the Faith *through which* we are saved is...

... not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

... which means that Salvation itself is...

... not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

But now look at what the “end result” of our “believing” and “confessing” is from **Romans 10:10**:

For [because] with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

So, yes! We are saved “by” God’s amazing Grace, and we are saved “through” the gift of “Saving Faith”, and *not* by our works. Yes, that is absolutely true! The Bible absolutely says that. But that is not *all* that the Bible says. It then goes on to say that the “end result” of our *believing* is what the Apostle Paul said was something called:

Righteousness

Now the word "Righteousness" here is an English translation of a Greek word (*dikaioσune*; Strongs #1343), that means: *integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting*¹. And the pathway to Righteousness is:

Obedience

Jesus always *pleased* His Father, because He always *obeyed* His Father. God the Son *never* disobeyed God the Father. Ever. And that should take our breath away. But what was the "end result" of Jesus always *obeying* God the Father? Jesus attained to the perfect Righteousness that the Old Covenant promised. And what will be the "end result" of *us* believing and trusting in Jesus and His finished Work in Salvation? The Bible says we will obey God, which is just another way of saying that we, too, will be "righteous".

Now, because our saved soul is entombed in an unconverted body of flesh that lives in a broken world (that is dominated by satan), our "Obedience", our "Righteousness" will not be without flaw. It will *never* be "perfect" Obedience or "sinless" Righteousness, but it will be Obedience and it will be Righteousness nonetheless. So, whereas our Obedience will *never* be "perfect", it *must* be "honest", or it isn't real.

Now because our Righteousness is not perfect, it will never rise to the level of *earning us* our Salvation. And that is *why* we need the spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ that is *imputed* to us by the agency of "faith alone". But even though that is true, our own, personal, intrinsic Righteousness that belongs to us, *must* and *should* get better after we are saved. And the only way that happens, the only way our Righteousness could improve over time, is that our Obedience improves. And I would suggest to you- that this is what Sanctification is all about.

Now it would be far better for us if God would simply take us into Heaven as soon as we are saved. We would never sin again and we would never fail God. Yet, God doesn't do that. Why? We are not "more saved" after we have gone through the sanctification process, so what's the big deal? If we can't lose our Salvation and we can't become more saved, then why does God leave us here after we are saved? Why subject us to failing Him? Why go through trials? Why be confronted with endless idols and temptations? What is so important to God that

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He allows already saved people to stay here and have to fight all the time? *Righteousness*.

Human beings obeying God even when it's hard, even when it costs them something, even when it costs them *everything*, displays the Worth and the Value of Jesus Christ more than anything else. Jesus must be some kind of Savior for all these Christians to fight so hard to bring their flesh under subjection. Human beings, who are fallen from the moment of their conception, struggling against the lusts of their flesh, to be humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in their daily lives, all to God's Glory, is simply not normal. And so, when redeemed sinners do that, the entire world is shown that Jesus the Christ is the Treasure of Heaven and the Darling of the Trinity.

Kings have abdicated their throne over the love of a woman. Soldiers have fallen on grenades to protect their comrades. Fathers go to work every day, in a job they hate, so they can provide for their families. Mothers cook and clean and counsel, even when they're sick, because of their love for their children.

But who fights against temptation? Why struggle to pursue Holiness? Why wage war against lust? Duty? Obligation? No. Love. Admiration. Awe. Respect. Who, in their right mind, would fight so hard to obey when their eternal Joy is not at stake? Why put up such effort? There is only one answer:

Those who struggle against their own propensity to rebel, so they may obey the Commands of God, have beheld the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, through the Scriptures, and two things have happened as a result of them seeing Jesus like this:

1. They love what they see
2. They are changed into what they see

So, what the Apostle is teaching us is *not* that the "end result" of Salvation is sinlessness, or that we will become deity, but that the "end result" of Salvation is Obedience! But not just *any* Obedience, because there are at least three different "Obediences":

1. Forced Obedience
2. Fearful Obedience
3. Glad/Joyful Obedience

"Forced Obedience" is best understood as the Obedience that children have toward their parents. Children have no "say-so" or choice over the Rules and Regulations by which the Father governs and manages the home. They are simply *informed* of the Rules that the Father has *imposed* on them, and they are expected to obey. No discussion, no vote, and no exceptions, and no love. And, many times, the Father has imposed some of those Rules *not* because it is best for the child, but for no other reason than it makes it *easier* for the parents to govern the home.

"Fearful Obedience" is *similar* to "Forced Obedience", but it is accomplished when the Punishment for Disobedience is infinitely *worse* and more painful than any pleasure that could be had by *disobeying*. So, people struggle to obey in this case *not* because they see the importance of the Rules, or because they love the "rule-giver", but simply so they can stay out of trouble.

A good example of this is that long line of cars on the highway that faithfully stays eleven miles per hour *slower* than the sign, *not* because everybody suddenly got the urge to be a good citizen, but because the policeman is sitting right there with his radar gun.

Now I would suggest that in both of these two cases, there is actual Obedience. So, the Obedience is real. And the Righteousness that exists from the Obedience, is real, too. And I would also say that Obedience out of either Force or Fear is *better* than no Obedience at all. And if all that we had was to choose between an Obedience that was birthed in either Fear or Force, good and wonderful things would be done, and our lives would be better.

But I would also suggest to you that Obedience that is birthed in either Fear or Force *does not* possess the ability to display the infinite Value of Jesus Christ. And, it *does not*, because it *cannot*. Obedience that is birthed from Fear or Force utilizes such concepts as "Duty" and "Obligation" on my part. And that means that Jesus is not *as glorified* by a Righteousness that originates out of Fear or Force as He would be if we obeyed *gladly* or *joyfully*.

But, if I struggled against my fleshly lusts to obey God's Commandments, because I genuinely understood that they were the very *best thing* that God could do for me, if I truly thought that obedience to that Command was the pathway to the fullness of my Joy,

then my adherence to that Command would bring God infinitely *more* Glory, and thus would please God infinitely more than *anything* I do out of either Force or Fear.

But if my Obedience was merely the natural and normal *response* of being able to behold the very Glory of God in the Person and Work of the Christ as I read and study and meditate on the Scriptures, if I labored to push my sinful inclinations down and strive to be faithful to the Command of God for no other reason than it flowed out from my very soul, if my Obedience was simply another manifestation of the deep and abiding Love *of* God and Love *for* God, that God gave me for Himself, then I suggest that *this type* of Obedience magnifies the Worth and Value of Jesus better than anything else.

The Bible says that the ongoing testimony of blatant, unrepentant sin and rebellion to the Commands of God, and the constant *refusal* to submit to God is a sure sign that the individual is simply deceived, and that whatever experience with God he thinks he has is a lie.

Obedience to the Commands of God, *including* what Peter teaches here in this Passage, is *mandatory* if a person expects to spend eternity in Heaven with Jesus. But there is a huge difference in *our* relationship with these Commands under the New Covenant than what people had under the Old. And that *difference*, that *distinction* is seen in three main ways:

1. Our Obedience to God is a *response* to already being saved. It is *not* the path to earning Salvation.
2. *How* we Obey and *Why* we Obey is as Important as Obeying.
3. Obedience under the New Covenant is directly tied in with Worship.

... so, let's look at these three distinctions.

1. Our Obedience to God is a *response* to already being saved. It is *not* the path to earning Salvation.

Under the glorious New Covenant, God Himself took on flesh and was born of a virgin and came down and, as a real and complete Man. He obeyed God's Law *instantly, perfectly, and fully, 24-hours every day and 7-days every week*. So, humanly speaking, Jesus actually

accomplished what the Law commanded, perfect and continuous Obedience. Therefore, Jesus literally *earned* the Righteousness that was promised under the Old Covenant *by what He did*. So, in that sense, Jesus was “saved” by Works; His Own sinless Obedience to the Law of God

And so, now under the New Covenant, we are saved *not* because we love God or because we try hard or because we forsake sin. No, we are saved by putting all of our trust in Jesus *personally* and in His finished Work, as He perfectly and fully obeyed all that God required. Therefore, our Salvation is tied to Jesus’ Obedience, not our own.

But not only does God sovereignly provide the perfect Obedience, which is the very Foundation of our Salvation (in Jesus Christ), He also provides the gift of “Saving Faith” that He graciously gives to those He has chosen, so they will be *able* to believe and trust in Jesus. So, everything we do, including believing, is a response to the Work that God has already done in us through Jesus.

So, the reason that the New Covenant is infinitely superior to the Old is because God completely *bypassed* us. And the Father established the New Covenant between *Himself* and the other two Persons of the Trinity.

So, we are *not* saved by what we “do”. Because the reality is that *whatever* we do has fault in it. *Whatever* we “do”, no matter how sincere we are and no matter how hard we try and no matter how much effort we put into it, is not perfect and it isn’t full. So, we are saved under the New Covenant by what we “believe in”, what we “trust in”, and what we “confess”. And this is hugely important for us to understand, because that means that all of our Obedience, after we are saved, all of our effort to be in submission to the Commands of the didactic Books of the New Testament has nothing to do with human choice or human decision or human will-power or human discipline or human energy. Our Obedience is merely a loving and joyful *response* to the supernatural transformation of our nature through the miracle of the New Birth.

So, when you read the Commands of Peter in this Passage, you must *resist* the temptation to begin to roll up your sleeves and “get to work”, because, that is the mentality of the Old Covenant. And it is human nature. And it is perfectly understandable. But it isn’t Christianity. What is better than “going to work” is to “see” Jesus in

His magnificence, and then enjoy what you see and be changed into what you see.

2. *How* and *Why* We Obey is as Important as our Obedience.

Since God is not glorified best by either “Forced” or “Fearful” Obedience, we must then agree that “how” and “why” we obey is *just* as important as the fact that we obey at all. We make God look glorious when our Obedience is *glad* and *joyful*, and when it flows out from the Value that we place on Jesus Christ through the gift of Love for Him that God has given us. And this is what the Apostle John was talking about when he said:

1 John 5:3

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

Notice that John did **NOT** say that the Love of God was seen when we keep the Commandments of God, period. That is *not* what John said here. John said that the Love of God was displayed when two things happen:

1. We keep His Commandments
2. His Commandments are not burdensome

So, the “Love of God” (not *our* love *for* God), but the Love that belongs to God that God has for *Himself*, that God *gives* to those who are saved, when *that* Love is at Work in us, John said these *two* things flow out from that. And I would suggest that the only reason we “keep” God’s Commandments is because the Love of God is so at work in us, to so radically transform us, that whatever God commands changes in our eyes from being “burdensome” to being the pathway to everlasting Joy. And when that happens in fallen sinners, God is magnified the most.

3. Obedience Under the New Covenant is Directly Tied In With Worship.

So, if it is true that it is our understanding of and our experience with the Love of God that changes our vision so that we see whatever God requires as *not* being burdensome, and therefore, we gladly and joyfully keep them, then rather than focus on our Obedience, we should focus on Jesus. And as we behold Christ in His risen Majesty, as our vision is overwhelmed with the Beauty of the Lamb of God, the Promise of Scripture is that we will be changed from one degree of glory to the next. Here is how the Apostle Paul put it in **2 Corinthians 3:18**:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

And no matter how you slice this or dice it, this is worship. And this is the missing ingredient in far too many people that make up the modern Church. They have hour-long song services, conducted by world-class musicians, utilizing \$250,000 worth of equipment with lights and smoke machines, but they have never beheld the Glory of the Lord. And because they have never beheld Christ in His Glory, they only see Jesus as some kind of "cosmic tool" to get them a better job or a nicer car or a healthy body or more money.

Dear friends, it is the almost total absence of seeing Jesus as glorious as to why six out of ten men, who lay claim to be saved, are routinely engaged in pornography. It is why materialism and the love of money is so rampant, and why worldliness is so attractive.

So, yes, we desperately need a revival. But we don't need more emotion. We don't need more mysticism. And we don't need more therapeutic nonsense. We need a revival of the Fear of the Lord, and a return to the sufficiency of Scripture so we may escape the Old Covenant mentality and worship the risen Lamb!

And, yes, we need to obey God's Commandments. But we don't need either Fearful or Forced Obedience. We desperately need God to unveil our eyes, that have been blinded by the false promises of the world, and we need to see Jesus! Because, the answer has always been the same. As God wondrously unveils our eyes and we behold Jesus in his Glory, we will be changed. And then His Commandments will no longer be burdensome. As Helen Lemmel wrote in 1922:

Through death into Life Everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there;
O'er us sin no more hath dominion—
For more than conqu'rors we are!
Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful Face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the Light of His Glory and Grace

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.