

1Peter 11-03-25a

This is Friday, the 25th of March, 2011. We continue our study in the book of 1 Peter. We are in chapter 3. And we will pick up that study as soon as we take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, it is a great comfort to us to recognize that the success of our lives in the spiritual realm does not depend on us in terms of achieving a righteousness of which we are incapable. We thank you for the gift of your righteousness through the Lord Jesus, the satisfaction of your justice through his work on the cross, and the expression of love that you are free through him to make toward us in delivering us out of darkness and into the light, and not only redeeming us and rescuing us from our hopeless condition, but also blessing us and raising us up with Christ to great heights and wonderful potentials. We thank you for the message of the letter that we are studying.

We pray that you will bless us as we seek to understand the truth that it contains and that it will give each of us something to think about and a basis for better actions and better decisions in the days that remain to us in this life. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

The section of this letter that we have come to, this letter to the pilgrim Jews of the dispersion, is one of application. Having pointed out in several different ways and in several different places in the first two chapters the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter keeps returning to that. It reminds me of taking the sheep out to graze in the pasture and then returning to the water and watering them, and going back out and finding some more pasturage and then returning to the water.

But every few verses Peter returns to the theme of the Lord Jesus, his example, his suffering, his work on the cross. And the prototypical life that he led, and by that I mean he test drove the spirit-filled life. It is something I have pointed out many times before, but it is nevertheless true, that Jesus was the first human being to live his life in the light of the Word of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit all the time.

It wasn't an endowment of the Spirit as they had in the Old Testament. It wasn't a special dispensation of the Spirit that was given to a king at the time of his ascension to the throne or to the tabernacle workmen or some other task-oriented or office-related ministry of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit that we have now was first experienced and first exemplified in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's why Paul and Peter constantly, and I'm sure John and others, but we've studied those most recently, constantly give us Jesus as an example. It used to be so frustrating to me to be given that example of the Lord Jesus and thinking, well, but he's the Son of God. He's deity.

I can't do what he did. He's Jesus and I'm not. But the nature of his example is the Word of God

and the Spirit of God, that dual system of power which is equally available to all of us.

It doesn't matter how we were born. It doesn't matter our circumstances. It doesn't matter the ups, the downs, the goods, the bads, the assets or the deficits.

It all is overcome by God's power. We rest in the power of God. We succeed in the power of God.

That's why Peter keeps returning to the Lord Jesus. If anybody had a practical turn of mind, it's the Apostle Peter. It's Peter the businessman, Peter the fisherman, Peter the husband, and no doubt father.

We're not told about his children, but he seems to have had a rather large house, the one that they've excavated there in Capernaum. And so if Jesus was not a meaningful, viable example, Peter would be the first one to go look for something else. But over and over again, even in these first two chapters, we have seen this.

And in the end of chapter two, I glossed over something and I had a good question that Dan asked, I think last week, and I didn't address it, and I want to address it now. Look at verse 25 of chapter two. Peter is appealing to these people.

He first talks to the servants, and he gives the example of Christ's suffering, leaving us an example in verse 21 to follow in his steps. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. He committed himself to him who judges righteously.

We saw a very major point of application there. How do we do all of these wonderful exhortations? How do we live up to the commands of Scripture? Well, this is a big practical point. Commit to the righteous judge.

Forget about human evaluations, although we don't forget them entirely. If your boss gives you an evaluation, if you get some proficiency in conduct marks, if you get a word of admonition or some rebuke or correction or instruction, we want to take that on board. But in terms of spiritual progress, we don't look to the world of believers to tell us whether we are doing well or not, measuring how many souls we have won to the Lord through sharing the gospel individually and directly.

We don't look for some active involvement in ministry per se. We commit ourselves to God in heaven. A component part of that is, if we are going to commit and lay our case before Him and let Him be the judge, just like a good lawyer, we have to have some confidence that our case is good.

If a prosecuting attorney or a defense attorney is going to bring a case before a jury or before a judge, he wants to have some precedent. He wants to have some facts on his side. He wants to have some substance to make a convincing case.

And it's the same with us. One of the concomitants or one of the requirements is, for this to work, if we are going to pull ourselves out of unjust authority and if we are going to put it all at Jesus' feet and commit our way unto Him and so on, we need to be sure our way is going to survive that. The judge in heaven may be harder on us than the authority on earth if we are slack, if we are indolent, if we are indifferent, if we are apathetic, if we really haven't pressed toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, then laying our case before God isn't really going to advance us.

So the two things go together. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respectful obedience, not only the good ones but also the twisted. This is commendable if, because of conscience toward God, you endure.

But this would be a good faithful servant, one who can lay his servant performance before God and be approved. So I didn't really emphasize that before, but obviously you can't just appeal to God when you're a ne'er-do-well believer. And sadly, a lot of people do.

They'll just grab a promise here and a statement there. My God shall supply all your needs. Ask and it shall be given.

Okay, well God, I'm laying my stuff at your feet and the world is not being kind to me. We are knowledgeable enough to know when we can take our case to God and have it fly, have it succeed, that it's going to be pleasing in His sight. But it's a necessary corollary to what Peter is saying.

And of course he covered that in the first chapter and a half before he got to this practical application. But we need to keep that in mind. You can't just throw yourself on the mercy of God and expect mercy if you have crossed the line to where God's mercy is not possible and we're in line for judgment.

If we don't acknowledge our sins so that He can faithfully and justly forgive us and cleanse us, if we don't walk in the light, if we don't have His Word and keep it so that He and both God the Father and God the Son can come and dwell with us, well, it isn't going to work. It isn't valid without those preconditions being met. So we have to examine ourselves and see if we are in the faith.

We need to be sure that we keep the first chapter of this letter in mind before we start making the application in the second. But as we come to the end of chapter 2, he says, he himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, on the wood, remember that? That we, having died to sins, and this, as I mentioned, there's no word for death here, there's not apothenesko or any of the other words for death. This is the word that means to stop, to become away from a thing.

And it's the only place it's used in the New Testament. So anytime you only have one usage or two usages, you have to really, in my opinion, you have to kind of take the lexicon with a grain of

salt because many times the definitions in there are based on somebody's personal interpretation of this verse. They're kind of swinging free here.

They can go to secular Greek and try to find some precedence, but secular Greek is all over the map. It can be a personal letter, it can be a play, it can be Greek of 300 or 400 years earlier, it can be Greek of 200 or 300 years after, that is colored by the passage itself. So they try to say that this word means to die to, but that's really a stretch.

They try to base that on context. You die to sin and you live to righteousness, but it means to be away from, to stop participating in a thing. If you become away from the party, you're not singing and dancing and carrying on anymore.

And if you become away from sin, you're no longer participating in it. And the idea here being that this is an ongoing pattern. One of the other reasons they hesitate to translate it as to stop or to cease from is then you start getting into this sinless perfection idea.

They say, well, you've died to it, like in some of the other New Testament passages. If they say you have ceased from sin, well, now what are we going to do? Well, you're in the same boat as the epistles of John, where John says the one who is walking in the light and who loves God, he who is born of God does not sin, but it's in the present tense, and does not practice sin. This is a present as well.

It's not in a habitual state of sin. So we having habitually become away from sin, it's not the pattern of our life. It doesn't mean we never sin, but we're not characterized by it.

We're not known as that old sinner that lives down the street, that old sinner in my family, the old black sheep that's always getting into trouble. That's not our pattern of life. Having become away from, having ceased from sin as an ongoing thing, might live for righteousness by whose stripes you were healed.

The word stripes there is singular. It is the word for a welt, a wheel, or a bruise by whose bruise, singular, you're healed. You immediately think, bruise? Where have I heard that before? He shall bruise thy head, thou shalt bruise his heel.

So I looked that up to see if it was the same Greek word, and it's not. And that led me down a whole different rabbit trail because the word is only used two places in the Old Testament. The other place is in Job chapter 9 where he talks about a tempest performing whatever action that is on him.

Does the tempest crush him? Does it cover him? Does it suppress him? What exactly does it do? You only have this Hebrew word used in those two places. And in the Greek, they translate it in the Septuagint by tereo. You might remember tereo means to keep or to guard.

And they understood the Hebrew verb in a sense that it can be used, which means to take a firm

hold of, which is interesting. They read in the meaning of crush, but it's another one of those cases. They really don't have any extra biblical Hebrew to appeal to.

They're just saying, well, head and heel, it must mean crush. But if you go to the Job passage, you crush me with a tempest, doesn't quite fit. What does a tempest do? Besides make Windows startup noises.

A tempest pins you down. You can't travel in a tempest. You're held fast.

You've got to find shelter. You've got to find a cave or a hole in the ground or get indoors. And you, you know, especially in the ancient world, a tempest, you've got to hunker down and wait for it to pass.

And it's interesting to me, even when we went through Genesis, I guess I didn't really look into this verb like I did in passing for this, but both in Hebrew and in Greek, *tereo* means to keep or to guard, to hold fast, to place in custody. And so a possible translation, and I don't want to upturn 2000 years or more of a traditional translation here, but when it says he will crush or bruise your head, you will crush or bruise his heel to the serpent in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, I believe. A valid translation would be he will hold your head or grasp your head, or you can see where they get crushed, a real firm grip.

He had a crushing handshake perhaps, but the center of the verb is really more in the idea of controlling something, holding it fast, keeping it from doing what the owner might otherwise want to do. You take somebody into custody, he can't go where he wants to go. You grab someone's head, you've got them completely under control.

You will grab hold of his heel. You may trip him for the moment, but I'd much rather have something grab my heel than grab my head. Anyway, that was all peripheral to this bruise or welt or wheel, but it's a single act, and this is the sum total of Christ's work on the cross.

It's not the lashes that he received at the hands of the Romans, by whose stripes you get the idea that it was his beatings that healed us. It was the maltreatment, but it is the single bruise that was inflicted. It was a wound.

By whose wound you were healed. And the interesting thing about that is that Peter, who was a near witness of the arrest and the trial and the crucifixion, doesn't say by whose death you were healed. He says by whose wound, by whose bruise you were healed.

And what do you know about a welt or a wheel or a bruise? It's not the same as a scar. A welt or a wound goes away. You recover from it.

You get over it. It becomes in the past, and it is an indirect reference to the resurrection. Jesus was temporarily out of the picture.

He was temporarily in the realm of death, but he recovered. So it's not a scar. It's not a death per se.

It's just the wound. But the interesting part is in verse 25. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

Who's the audience here? Who's Peter writing to? Jewish Christians of the dispersion. And he says, You were like sheep going astray, but you have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. And Dan brought up a good point.

This kind of sounds like, well, had they been Christians maybe in Jerusalem, and then they got driven away and they fell away, they lost their faith, they apostatized, they gave it up because it was such a hardship, and now they're kind of coming back. Or how could they be returning to Jesus as the shepherd and overseer of their souls? What does it mean to return? You can't return to something you haven't already been with. This is one of the ways we understand the sheep and shepherd motif in the Old Testament.

All we like sheep have gone astray. Or Jesus talking about the ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold, but one was lost on the hill far away. Well, he was in the fold.

He's a wayward sheep. He's not a wild goat that the shepherd says, you know, I have ninety-nine, and I sure like to have an even century here. I'd like to have a hundred.

Let me go find a wild goat and bring him in. This would be a picture of evangelism, a picture of going out, finding the lost that had never... This is a possession. This is a sheep in exactly the same status as the ninety-nine in the fold.

And the shepherd goes to find the sheep that wandered away and brings him back and rejoices. He returns. There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repents, that returns, that changes his mind.

So this then seems to be a bit of a puzzlement because if these are Jewish Christians of the dispersion, in what sense did they depart so that now they are returning? Well, the key, I think, hinges on who is the shepherd and what is the straying that is being overcome here. What does Psalm 23 say? 23-1. Say it out loud.

The Lord is my shepherd. Who is the Lord to David, to the Old Testament saint? God the Father, right? God of Israel is God the Father. We don't see the revelation of the Son.

We have only minimal references to the Spirit of God. Trinitarianism doesn't come fully to the fore until the New Testament age when God is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, when you talk about God, He is the shepherd.

We saw this also in Ezekiel 34, looking at the irresponsible shepherds. Son of man, prophesy

against the shepherds of Israel. Prophecy and say to them, Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds, Woe to the shepherds who feed themselves, should not the shepherds feed the flock.

And then in verse 11, Thus says the Lord God, Indeed, I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out. I will search for my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.

I will bring them out from the peoples and so on. I will feed them in good pasture. I will feed my flock and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God.

I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick. I will destroy the fat and the strong and feed them in judgment. And as for you, O my flock, Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats.

This whole chapter is God as the shepherd of Israel. Psalm 23 and a host of other passages, God compares himself to the figure of a shepherd. Jesus, of course, also says, I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But then Jesus is also the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, like a lamb to the slaughter, like a lamb before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. So these are flexible figures that can be used non-exclusively, if you will.

And Peter himself, if you go to chapter 5, just flip over in 1 Peter to chapter 5, verse 4, Peter is talking to the elders here, and he says, Shepherd the flock of God, which is among you, in verse 2. Chapter 5, verse 2, Shepherd the flock of God, which is among you, serving as overseers, episkopos, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but by being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Who's the chief shepherd in 5.4? That's the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's the chief shepherd, right? Pastors, elders are under shepherds, reporting to the chief shepherd. So Peter himself, within the space of this book, is going to use shepherd for both God the Father and God the Son. You could say, well, I really think it's, maybe he's talking about Jesus over here at the end of chapter 2, but Peter is talking to Jewish Christians.

They made the leap. They crossed the dispensational line. They evidently were Old Testament saints, Old Testament believers when they heard the gospel of Christ, like the Apostle Paul, like Peter himself, like the disciples, like the upwards of 500 that saw Jesus ascend, like those in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

At the point of recognition that Jesus was their Messiah and the Son of God and their Savior and accepting him by faith, they became New Testament believers. And in that sense, Israel in general is pictured as the sheep that are scattered on the hillsides. Jesus looks at the multitudes and says they are like sheep without a shepherd.

But they return to God. God the Father is the shepherd. God the Son is the shepherd.

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me. And so in the Old Testament sense, he says you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls, the poimain and the episkopos of your souls.

Now let's try it the other way. Let's say, well, no, you know, I just think you're really pushing this into an Old Testament thing. I think these are just believers.

I think this is the Lord Jesus. Okay, so how does this work? You've got believers who have been scattered to the winds, many of them, if not most of them, because of their Christian faith, driven out of Jerusalem, Judea, by the likes of Saul of Tarsus and the other Pharisees who were persecuting them. And they are scattered abroad.

We now have to imagine that they had come to Christ and then they had apostatized and then they had returned. Paul writes letters to churches of this nature. Oh, foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? You started well.

You are running well. Who hindered you? But we don't have any clue of that pattern of faith and then apostasy and a return to faith in the first two chapters. So you're welcome to take it either way, but you'll have to answer that question for yourself if you see Jesus in this verse.

I think this is God the Father. Why is that pertinent? Why would it be in this passage and what difference does it make to us? What's coming up here? In fact, what has already come up? What section is Peter in? He has started talking about unjust authority, about bearing up under all different kinds of authority. Slaves, be submissive to your masters with fear, with respectful obedience, whether they're a good master or a bad master.

Be submissive to authority. What was the authority for the Old Testament saint? It was the law of Moses. It was the Old Testament scriptures.

And they had gotten largely away from that. They didn't observe the feasts the way they were supposed to. They didn't observe the law of Moses like they were supposed to.

The priesthood had gone all awry. The Levitical priesthood was all out of whack. There wasn't a Levite as the high priest anymore.

You've got Caiaphas and that crowd coming in. The whole thing has been kind of turned on its head and a mockery has been made of it by the legalism of the Pharisees and the scribes and

the priesthood as it existed in those days and had been for decades, for a couple of centuries and more. They never really got back to it after the captivity.

And in that sense, there were these two words, shepherd and overseer, both speak of authority. You have returned to the authority. Two different kinds of authority.

What does the shepherd do? What's the shepherd's responsibility? Protection and provision. That's what a shepherd does. He protects and he provides.

He also guides. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. They rebuke me, which gives me comfort.

But the rod and the staff, that's what the shepherd does. The shepherd will give his life for the sheep. He will take them to the green pastures and beside the still waters.

So that is, where do you look for provision? What is your authority? Where do you look and where do you not look for provision? What is an overseer? Oversight. Episkopos. This is translated bishop sometimes.

What was that function in the church? The early church, not church capital C. What do the overseers in the church do? This is decently and in good order. This is operational. This is governmental.

This is civil. This is interaction between one another. This is arbitration.

It is judgment of cases between individuals. You oversee and make sure that things run smoothly. If there's a squabble, if there's a conflict, if there's a stopping place, you resolve that.

So not so much security and logistics, but smooth day-to-day operations is in view when you talk about Episkopos. It's often used for governmental authority. Let's keep the traffic flowing here.

Let's keep the neighbors happy with each other. Let's make sure nobody gets and tramples on anybody else. So he says, you have returned to the shepherd and the overseer of your souls.

Jesus Christ has made a way. Was there no way to the Father in the Old Testament? There was, but there is a new and living way through the veil, which is His flesh. The veil has been parted.

We can now enter boldly. This is the theme of the middle section of Hebrews there, chapter 9 and chapter 10. The veil, which is His flesh, has been rent in twain.

And we, with our conscience cleansed and our bodies washed with pure water, come boldly before the throne of grace. It is a new and living way. There was a way, but it was limited.

It was a shadow. It was a harbinger. Now there is the true way.

So you have returned. You had this shadow way in the Old Testament, but now you were like

sheep going astray. The word astray in both Hebrew and Greek means aimless wandering.

It is used, for example, of Joseph when Jacob sent him to find his brothers. You remember the occasion on which they sold him into slavery? When he went to the first place where they were supposed to be, I forget if it was Shechem or where, they were supposed to be in one place, and he went and they had left and gone to Dothan. Well, a man saw him wandering aimlessly, wandering from here to there looking for his brothers, looking in the nooks and the ravines and so on.

Where are they? And this man, quote unquote, probably an angelic messenger of a certain assembly put by God, told him they had gone on and told him where they had gone. But that's the word used for that. So it can mean deceived, but it means led astray or not on a purposeful path, not on the right path.

Joseph had a purpose and he was looking around and he wasn't deceived, but he wasn't on the right path. He wasn't on the path to find his brothers. He wasn't certainly on the best path.

And that's what this word means, both in Hebrew and in Greek. So, going astray, all we like sheep have gone astray, very same word is used in Hebrew and Greek in the Isaiah passage. All we like sheep have gone astray.

I think you've got a footnote there in your Bible for that, for the Isaiah passage. Is it 54.3? 53.4? 53.4 of Isaiah? 53.9. So that's the idea. But the point being, it's of a piece with this proper orientation to and function under authority.

The sheep that were wandering aimlessly are now back under the shepherd through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the chief shepherd in one sense. They have returned to the shepherd in the Old Testament sense, an overseer of their souls that the train wreck of Judaism had scattered for them. So, then he returns and he says, likewise in chapter 3. And this is where we'll pick up, we're going to look at the likewise in verses 3.1 and 3.7. This theme of how do we live our life when all is said and done, and the sermon is over, and the Bibles are back on the shelf.

What is it we're supposed to be doing? How can we advance? How can we best live in a way that pleases God? It begins with orientation to what God has created by way of human authority, the katisis, the creation that exists between us. There is a structure, and it is functioning in that structure while looking to God that is the key. And if we have our ducks lined up, if we are properly availing ourselves of the resources that God has given us, we have the power to do this.

Well, that's what we'll pick up when we come back.