

## God's Will for You – 1 Peter 1:1-2 – *Continued*

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### INTRODUCTION

Well, this week we're finishing up what we started last week: *1 Peter 1, verses 1 and 2*. And if you missed last week, the sermon text is available on our website if you'd like to get caught up with where we're at in the book so far. But to sum up what Peter shared with us last week, I'll use two words: CHOSEN SOJOURNER. What we learned as Peter opened this letter to God's people scattered throughout Asia Minor, is that God intends his people to live in this world as sojourners, foreigners, pilgrims, strangers...people who look different, act different, speak different, and who aren't getting too comfortable here or thinking this is our true home.

But as sojourners we are NOT drifters, wanderers, lost souls with no sense of purpose. Instead we are CHOSEN sojourners. People sent by the all-knowing God into a foreign country to represent him and share his message and help other people find their true home with him... ambassadors who are fully supported and empowered and led by their King to accomplish his purposes. This is the identity we each need to embrace if we're to thrive and be fruitful in this pain-filled, sin-filled, broken world where most people are living for themselves and rejecting their Creator and the truth he's given us.

*A chosen sojourner.* Is that how you see yourself today? Or are your hopes and dreams still centered around this world and what it has to offer? You see, God wants to lead each of us away from building our hopes in this world to be like Abel, and Enoch, and Abraham, and Sarah...people who trusted the promises of God and built their lives around seeking him and following him wherever he led. Listen to how the writer of Hebrews described these 4 people in Hebrews chapter 11, verses 13 to 16:

***13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For people who speak***

***thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.***

They acknowledged they were strangers and exiles on the earth and they lived their lives in that reality. They had their eyes fixed on a better country, a heavenly one. And this is the same way God calls his people to live today, and as we do, he gives us what we need to thrive and have peace and accomplish his purposes through even the hardest of times.

So what is God's purpose for us as his chosen sojourners living in a foreign country? What has he chosen us FOR? Well, Peter's not going to leave us in the dark on this question. If you've ever wondered what God's will is for you and if your life has significance, you'll know by the time we're done today. Today, I'll share with you *4 purposes for which God's sojourners have been chosen*. And these purposes are important to God. Notice, as I read verses 1 and 2 of 1 Peter, that these purposes are so important that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in bringing them about in your life – Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

***Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.***

Father, Son and Holy Spirit are together working to accomplish God's purposes for your life. And his purposes for you are good, very good! Are you ready for them and are you cooperating with his efforts?

### **CHOSEN FOR SPRINKLING WITH CHRIST'S BLOOD**

Well, the first purpose for which God's sojourners have been chosen is this: *Chosen for Sprinkling with Christ's Blood*. And in fact, no one is God's chosen sojourner without this. It's only through sprinkling with Christ's blood that a sinful human being can even be God's chosen sojourner. Our most recent

memory verse that Rob shared with us, Psalm 51:7, speaks of this sprinkling of blood using something called hyssop. It says:

***Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.***

So what is hyssop? Hyssop is a “small..., bushy plant, probably [*what we know today as*] marjoram. Stalks of hyssop [have] numerous, small, white flowers in bunches, [which made them very] well suited for use as a “brush” to dab the lintels of Israelite homes with the blood of the Passover lambs (Exod. 12:22). [This use of hyssop to spread blood during] the events of the exodus perhaps led to its use in other rites, [such as] the cleansing of lepers (Lev. 14:4, 6, 49, 51–52) and the cleansing of those unclean from contact with a corpse (Num. 19:6, 18; see *Heifer*).<sup>1</sup> Hyssop, in fact, became so associated with the sprinkling of blood that in Psalm 51:7 hyssop and blood were virtually synonymous.

But the idea here is purification from sin through a blood sacrifice. And hyssop was simply the means used to sprinkle the blood for purification under the requirements of the Old Testament Law. This purification through the sprinkling of blood was necessary so sinful people could live in relationship with a holy God. But of course, the blood of goats and calves, could never permanently purify sinful people and pay the full penalty for their sin. So in Old Testament times, these animal sacrifices just provided a temporary covering of sin until the once-and-for-all sacrifice made by a fully obedient and sinless human being would one day be made.

Now the book of Isaiah probably gave more insight than any other Old Testament book into the identity and work of this coming Savior, Messiah, who would make that ultimate blood sacrifice. And listen to what God spoke through Isaiah, in chapter 2, verses 14 and 15, about this coming One. He said:

***14 ...his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind— 15 so shall he sprinkle many nations.***

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<sup>1</sup> Glaze, J. E., Reddish, M. G., & Wade, C. R. (2003). [Hyssop](#). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 799). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Through the whipping and the beating and the mocking and the crown of thorns he wore...through the nail-pierced hands and feet...through the spear thrust into his side...through this ultimate blood sacrifice of a sinless human being...Jesus, the Savior, made permanent purification for sins and his blood still sprinkles people from all nations who accept the sacrifice he made for them, by simply repenting of their sin and trusting in his work on the cross.

God's chosen sojourners are people who are sprinkled, purified from their sins, with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Nobody is God's sojourner without that. There's no other way to open the door to life with God in his kingdom. But always remember, the sprinkling with Christ's blood through repentance and faith in him is not the end...it's not the full story. Instead it's the beginning, the doorway, to your new life with God that's happening now and will continue forever, and is intended to bring radical changes to your character and priorities and power source, and prepare you to reign with Jesus Christ when his kingdom becomes visible for all to see.

### **CHOSEN FOR OBEDIENCE TO JESUS CHRIST**

And this brings us to the 2<sup>nd</sup> purpose for which God's sojourners have been chosen: *Chosen for Obedience to Jesus Christ*. God intends us to actually obey Jesus in our daily lives...in other words, that we do what he tells us to do and live as he teaches us to live. Just imagine yourself in the presence of Jesus someday explaining to him why you didn't do what he told you to do, why you didn't take his teachings seriously, why you didn't think his way of living life would work. Do you have some pretty good reasons you think will stand up in that conversation?

In the discipleship group I'm leading, we've spent a fair amount of time reading a few chapters of Dallas Willard's book, *The Divine Conspiracy*... which is quite a challenging read as the guys have let me know. But Dallas has some profound truths to share about the life of discipleship with Jesus, the life of following him and learning from him how to live. In the book, Dallas says: "...in the eyes of Jesus there is no good reason for not doing what he said to do, for he only tells us to do what is best...Just try picturing yourself standing before him and explaining why you did not do what he said was best." Dallas goes on to paraphrase the familiar house on the rock parable this way: "The one who hears [Jesus] and does what he says...builds the house of his or her life to be totally indestructible..."

It's like the Nike slogan: *Just do it!* [And] "in any case in which we do not 'just do it' we are, to that extent, missing out on the joy and fruitfulness of life in God's kingdom." Remember that simple phrase I shared with you recently about being a disciple of Christ? "*If I am Jesus' disciple, ...I am with him, to learn from him, how to be like him*" (Dallas Willard).

God's 2<sup>nd</sup> purpose for his chosen sojourners is that we obey Jesus, putting his teachings and life priorities into practice in the regular routines and responsibilities of our daily lives...at our job, at home, on vacation...in the regular stuff of everyday life. But his teachings are not burdensome and are not designed to make us miserable. On the contrary, they are life-giving principles from the Creator of the universe designed to lead us to joy and peace and fruitfulness and cause others to see that God is alive and well and still working powerfully through his people. Are you ready for simple obedience to the teachings of Jesus and the rest of God's Word? That's God's will for you.

### **CHOSEN TO BE SANCTIFIED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**

And guess what? God doesn't expect you to grit your teeth and "Just do it" in your own strength. That's the flaw with the "Just do it!" slogan. It suggests self-reliance and trust in human effort and willpower. But looking again at verse 2 of 1 Peter, we notice that we're not alone in this. We discover that God's Holy Spirit is overseeing and undergirding and empowering this entire process of us becoming like Christ through obedience to him...the process known as sanctification...or transformation into Christ's likeness. God's 3<sup>rd</sup> purpose for his chosen sojourners is this: *Chosen to Be Sanctified by the Holy Spirit*.

Now, sanctification is one of those big theological words people sometimes struggle to define. It's the English translation of the Greek word, *hagiasmos*, which broadly refers to the concept of being set apart as sacred or holy (*The Lexham Bible Dictionary*). A study of the New Testament passages speaking of sanctification reveals that it's most often used to describe the spiritual growth of a believer during their lifetime resulting in them becoming more and more like Christ over time. Additionally, Wayne Grudem identifies 3 stages of sanctification: 1) *The Beginning* – that which takes place at the moment of salvation when the believer is given new spiritual life, freed from slavery to sin and given the Holy Spirit dwelling inside; 2) *The Increasing* – that which takes

place throughout the believer's life on this earth and results in growing Christlikeness in our thought life and in our words and deeds; and 3) *The Completion* – that moment when our souls are finally and fully set free from any remaining sin in our lives and God completes the work once and for all (*Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem).

But it's so important to remember that *the increasing* phase of our sanctification during our life on this earth is important to God and is something the Holy Spirit inside of us is vigorously seeking to bring about. What we never want to do is think that our movement toward Christlikeness during this life is optional or unimportant. On the contrary, Scripture reaffirms over and over again that true saving faith will result in growing Christlikeness. And if that's never happening, there's a problem and we need to figure out what it is. It could be that we haven't truly believed and surrendered to Christ. Or it could be that we've bought into the lie that Christianity is just about believing in Christ and not about actually following him in our daily lives. Or it could be that we're expecting the Holy Spirit to do all the work and that no effort or discipline is needed on our part...no changes to our habits and priorities...no rearranging of our lives to allow for full pursuit and seeking of God. But remember, Jesus didn't say, *Make Believers*, he said, *Make disciples*. Make people who want to be with me and learn how to live life like me by the Spirit's power.

And Scripture teaches us that discipline and effort IS involved in sanctification. We don't just sit back and hope God changes us while we just do the same things we've always been doing. Instead we engage in dependent effort...diligent seeking...finding ways to seek after God and make ourselves available to him so he can do his work within us. ***You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart***, says the Lord in Jeremiah 29:13. And in 1 Timothy 4:7-10, we're exhorted to ***"...train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe."***

Train, toil and strive to know God more and watch him change you into the likeness of Christ as you set your hope fully on him. He does the changing – he

shows up – as we seek him and make ourselves available to him through disciplines like studying and meditating on God’s Word, getting alone to pray, fellowshiping with other believers and listening to the preaching of God’s Word, intentionally giving thanks to God and singing worship songs to him, engaging in confession and repentance when we see sin cropping up in our lives, serving others with the strength he provides, risking ourselves to share the good news of Christ with someone. These are all examples of ways we can seek after God and make ourselves available to him. We don’t do them to earn his favor or gain his love...because we already have that at all times in Christ. But we do them simply because we want to be with him...to seek after him and present ourselves to him for his work of transformation into the likeness of Christ... sanctification.

Jesus made quite clear, as do many other Scriptures, that how we live our lives here will affect our experience and our responsibilities in heaven. Sanctification during this life is important and though we’ll never reach full and complete sanctification before we die, God intends us to make significant progress, and the Holy Spirit is within us to bring it about as we make ourselves available to him and get serious about obeying Jesus. This is God’s will for all of you who are in Christ. If you’ve ever wondered what God’s will is for you, it’s outlined very nicely for us in these first two verses of 1 Peter. What is it? *Be transformed into Christ’s likeness through the power of the Spirit.* This will happen as you come to peace with him through repentance and faith in Christ and are washed white as snow with his blood, receiving credit for Christ’s righteousness. And then as you fully engage as a disciple of Christ, seeking to be with him, to learn from him, how to be like him...as you get serious about obeying him and how he teaches you to live life. As stated so clearly in 1 Thessalonians 4:3: “...**this is the will of God, your sanctification.**” If you want to be in his will, this is it!

### **CHOSEN TO LIVE IN ABUNDANT GRACE AND PEACE**

And this brings us to God’s 4<sup>th</sup> purpose for his chosen sojourners: ***Chosen to Live in Abundant Grace and Peace.*** As Peter closes the introduction to this letter, he expresses what he and the other apostles each believed was God’s intention for all followers of Christ, and that was that they would experience multiplied, abundant, grace and peace as they lived in relationship with God and walked through life seeking to follow him by his power.

And God's grace is so much more than unmerited favor, though it is that as well. We certainly don't deserve what God does for us. But the biblical concept of grace is this: *God giving us what we need to do what we cannot do on our own.* This happens at the moment of salvation and continues to happen throughout our lives as followers of Christ. It's God's grace from first to last, as we offer ourselves to him and he enables us to change by his power. It's God coming to act with us to accomplish his will in us and through us. It's God making us like Christ as we offer ourselves to him and believe his Word. To say it in the words of 2 Corinthians 9:8: ***And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.***

This is really good news, my friends. Becoming like Christ and accomplishing God's will on earth sounds like a tall order. And it is. And we will never make any progress as long as we're just trying to change ourselves and try harder and make it happen in our own strength. But when we realize that the transformation process is God's work that he brings about through his grace, through the power of his Spirit, as we simply offer ourselves to him as living sacrifices; then we can breathe a sigh of relief. Our focus then becomes just seeking him and spending time with him ...just finding ways to be with him more and more and make ourselves available to him. And as we begin taking little steps of obedient faith, believing Jesus and what he says is true, God begins to change us and gives us grace for life and the accomplishing of his will. ***And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*** This is God's work – the work of his grace – and he will do it when we spend time with him, believe his Word and begin putting it into practice.

And what about that abundant peace that Peter spoke of? Well, that's the beautiful gift God gives to his children as they follow him. We've talked a lot about peace over the last couple months, so I won't spend much time on this. But it's the peace that passes understanding that begins with the permanent peace with God we have through Christ, moves to growing internal peace within us as we learn to trust God's Word and act on it, and then begins blossoming within our relationships with other people as we offer the peace God's given us to others...as we become peacemakers.

## APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

*Chosen for sprinkling with Christ's blood...Chosen for obedience to Jesus Christ... Chosen to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit...Chosen to live in abundant grace and peace.* These are 4 of God's purposes for his chosen sojourners while we live this brief life in a country not our own...seeking a heavenly city and to bring along as many people as we can. Are you living your life right now in step with these purposes for which God chose you?

First, have you been sprinkled with Christ's blood...purified, forgiven, born again to new spiritual life? I trust that most of you here have. But if you still haven't made that crucial choice to be reconciled with your Creator through repentance and faith in Christ, I beg you to do that today. You can be forgiven of your sins and at peace with God right here right now. *Just tell God you've sinned against him and you want to change. Tell him that you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead. And then invite Jesus to be your Savior and the One in charge of your life from here on out.* It's that simple. If you say these things to God and mean them in your heart, you can be at peace with him and beginning a new life with him right now...the life we just talked about today...a life of transformation filled with abundant grace and peace from God.

And for those of us who have already surrendered to Christ, let's never forget that we still need the blood of Christ. We still sin because we're not fully like Christ yet...we're still a work-in-progress. We still need to apply Christ's sprinkled blood to those sins when they crop up. This happens through confession and repentance as we allow the light of Christ to expose the truth, being honest with him about our sin, asking for his forgiveness, and then making a plan for change with him. The life of a chosen sojourner is not a life of perfection...it's a life of steady growth in Christlikeness as we keep pressing on in pursuit of God and quickly and sincerely repent whenever we get off track.

But I want to ask you: *Can you see movement toward Christlikeness in your own life as you look back on it? And would you like to see the pace of that transformation increase?* I hope today, you've seen that God is committed to bringing that about and he's given you his Spirit to make it possible. It's his will for you. And my encouragement to you today, as we close, is that you would

prayerfully consider how you can make yourself available to him more and more so he can work his purposes in your life.

Of course, most central and foundational to all the various ways we can make ourselves available to God, is through regular, Spirit-dependent, prayer-bathed study and meditation on God's Word. Growth in Christlikeness and fruitfulness in accomplishing God's will on earth will be very slow indeed without daily intake of God's Word and a serious commitment to believing it and putting it into practice in your daily life. If this still isn't happening in your life, this is where you **MUST** begin. To be a disciple of Jesus today, you **MUST** be studying the Word on a regular basis. If you want to grow; *prayerfully read the Word and take it seriously.* If you want to be a part of the body of Christ in Union, Oregon, accomplishing the mission he's given us; *prayerfully read the Word and take it seriously.*

Set aside a chunk of time each day – preferably in the morning when it can impact the way you think and live for the day – a time when you will be alone with God's Word in front of you. Always beginning by asking the Holy Spirit to guide you. Then read and continue to pray as you do. Write down a key verse or thoughts that come to mind as you read. Meditate on it and how it applies to your life. Listen for what God's trying to tell you through his Word. And please, please, please, have a reading plan. Don't just randomly open the Bible to a new spot every day. A simple plan that everyone can remember and do is this: *Read 1 Old Testament and 1 New Testament chapter every day.* If you want to keep it simple, start with that and God will use it. Of course, there are tons of other reading plans out there that you can find and use. But please, find one and use it. And unless they really work for you, don't get hung up on reading plans tied to specific days of the year. Those can really be discouraging if you miss a few days, which will happen from time to time. Just ignore the dates and do the next one each time you read.

One more piece of advice, don't just start in Genesis and try to read straight through the whole Bible from front to back. You need to keep perspective by always having input from the New Testament to go along with the Old. We are under the new covenant now through Christ and we need to keep the new covenant perspective informing us daily. Life with God in his kingdom, under the new way of the Spirit and not the old way of the written code, is different than it was in Old Testament times. God hasn't changed, but the way we live with

him and walk with him through Christ and the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit has changed.

And for those of you who already have a good daily discipline of prayerfully studying and meditating on God's Word AND applying it to your life, consider other ways that you can seek after God and make yourself available to him. Some ideas:

- 1) Solitude for the purpose of prayer...getting alone in a room or in the wilderness to talk to God and listen to him...to seek his guidance...to pray for spiritual growth in yourself and others.
- 2) Using your Spirit-given gifts to edify the body of Christ and build his kingdom.
- 3) Taking a risk and sharing the gospel with someone.
- 4) Making the serving of Christ your top priority at your job.
- 5) Increasing your regular fellowship and interaction with other believers...on Sunday mornings and throughout the week.
- 6) Rethinking your use of the money God has given you to steward in light of his kingdom purposes.

These are just a few ideas, and there are many more. Experiment. But the goal in all of this is NOT to show God what a good Christian you are or rack up "points" with him. That's the path to legalism and pride. The goal instead is simply to seek after God – to spend focused time with him – and to reorient our lives and thoughts and priorities around him so he can do his work in and through us.

God's will for you is that you become like Christ in your daily life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's cooperate with his will and find ways of seeking after him and pursuing him and filling our thoughts and lives with him and his truth. When we do, he will show up with his grace and change us from the inside out to live like Christ and accomplish his will on earth as it is in heaven.

## **For Additional Study and Application**

Read Romans 1:1-17. What ideas in these verses are parallel to those found in 1 Peter 1:1-2? What is the “obedience of faith?”

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. What truths do we learn about sanctification in these verses? How would explain sanctification to someone else in your own words?

Think of or find at least two commands from Jesus that you find hard to obey? What makes these so hard to obey? What might they cost you if you obeyed them?

Read and meditate on 2 Corinthians 9:8. What does this verse tell you in your own words? Do you believe what it says?