# 1 Peter - Commentaries by Frederick George Patterson

Collected Writings, 1 Peter 1:1-2 (1:1-2)

Q. What is the general meaning of 1 Peter 1:1-2; and why is obedience mentioned before blood? E. C.

A. James, in his Epistle, addresses the scattered twelve tribes, as Israel had still the character of God's people in his eye: and he recognizes both the synagogue (James 2:2) and the assembly (James 5:14), as before the final separation of the believing remnant from the nation in general had taken place. It was a transitional moment, and he has the nation as a nation, although scattered, before him. Peter, on the other hand, takes up only the elect strangers of the dispersion, who were anywhere but in the land of Israel — Pontus, Galatia, etc. —and sets their eye upon a heavenly hope. Consequently, verse 2 is a complete reversal of the whole hopes of Israel, to this remnant of faithful ones. As to Israel of old, we might read it thus, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of Jehovah, through sanctification of ordinances, unto obedience of the law, and sprinkling of the blood of the old covenant" (Ex. 24), which sealed their condemnation. Now, he can write of the believing ones that they were "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father (the name He reveals Himself to Christians in the Son of His love, as Jehovah was His revealed name to his elect nation — see Ex. 6), through sanctification of the Spirit, (not ordinances) — who separates us from man, unto the obedience... of Jesus Christ" — that is, to obey according to His order and pattern, who never did even His own perfect will, but the Father's; "unto obedience (of Jesus Christ) and (unto) sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The Spirit separates us unto both. Thus separated or sanctified by the Holy Spirit unto His obedience — that is, unto that end — we come under the efficacy of the blood of sprinkling of the new covenant, which purges the conscience, instead of sealing our condemnation.

Words of Truth: Volume 1, First Epistle of Peter, Notes on the (1:1-12)

Peter's heart never left the spot in which the Lord placed it, in John 21:15-17; and this was such a beautiful exhibition of what grace can do, and how it acts. He had sinned and fallen sadly; but when the Lord first probes and then restores his conscience, He commits to him that which was most dear to Him on earth. He says, "Feed my lambs"— "Shepherd my sheep" — "Feed my sheep." And as we have said Peter's heart never left the place where Christ had placed it, he not only does feed the flock, but he encourages others to do so likewise. "Feed the flock of God," he says, "which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." (1 Peter 5:2) How sad when men call the flock of God their flock. Surely such a thought could not come from one who has the smallest apprehension of what the flock of God is, or fellowship with the mind of the Chief Shepherd, and possessor of it.

How gently, and with what suited pasture, does Peter, by the spirit of God, feed the flock of God, in the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles and in his Epistles. One is struck with the extreme simplicity of all that he says to them, telling them how they were converted, and how redeemed—how they should walk, and how they should grow to salvation—what various dangers beset them round about, and what trials they would pass through—and in each position he finds them, he has a suited word to lead them along. He owns that Paul has many hard things to be understood in his epistles, and things that unlearned and unstable souls might wrest to their own destruction; but he has his own business to feed the flock, and to choose suited and tender pasture to their need, and he sets himself to his work happily and simply.

Chapter 1—Now, the very opening words of his first epistle give us a key to the state of things that is contemplated.

He begins by addressing them as "Strangers." What! you say, Israel addressed as a stranger! —Israel in "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia," and not in their own land! Then all the world must be out of sorts-everything must be astray when Israel is a stranger. To be sure, everything is out of sorts, and this is what he contemplates. What is to be the resource then, if Israel is looked upon thus? Surely there must be some hope put before the flock, if Israel is scattered from the land of their fathers and the Messiah slain and rejected. To be sure there is; and not merely a hope, but a "lively hope." There is an inheritance "reserved in heaven for you." It won't "fade away "as your Canaan did. It can't be defiled as your fathers have defiled the land; it is uncorruptible and undefiled, and it won't fade away. Very sweet this for the flock of God to know—suited pasture in the wilderness for the strangers!

Now, let me read verse two, thus, and show you the contrast, what you have now, with what you have lost: — "Elect according to the purpose of Jehovah, through sanctification of ordinances, unto obedience of the law, and sprinkling of the blood of the old covenant, which sealed your condemnation." Your nation was chosen of Jehovah, and separated (or sanctified) by the ordinances with which He surrounded you, and you were thus brought under the obedience of the law, which you took upon yourselves, foolish people; and Moses sprinkled the book of that covenant with the blood, which sealed your ruin. What business had you to take upon yourselves a covenant of obedience? Look at the results of it now. Where is your Messiah? Where is your nation? The one slain, the other scattered.

But every privilege you had has been replaced by a better thing. You have been chosen now of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, who has brought you in His quickening power into the position where you can be obedient after the pattern of One who never did His own will, although it was a perfect will, but gave it up and set aside His will, because he came to obey, and His obedience ended in death. And His blood, instead of sealing your condemnation, has cleansed you from everything that would render you unfit for His presence, and has sealed your salvation instead of your ruin. Why, dear me, you say, how full is that little verse! how a dear one of the flock of God would have entered into all in it, in contrast to what he had lost. Surely Peter was feeding the flock. "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy.” Now, we will stop there for a moment. What does “abundant mercy “mean? It means, that while man had failed in every way, and Israel had most wretchedly failed, God’s mercy was only the more abundant. It could not be dried up, although man did everything that might have dried it up. And so, when all on man’s side was ruined, God’s mercy was only discovered to be the more abundant. Well, what has He done through this abundant mercy? He “hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Do you remember in the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke, when the two poor, sad sheep of the flock were wandering in such a disconsolate state away from Jerusalem, and when Somebody accosted them, and they said, “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.” Doesn’t your heart rejoice when you see what alacrity the “lively hope” gave to their feet in returning to Jerusalem with the news that the Lord was risen indeed, and had appeared unto Simon? They were surely begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. God had come in and taken their Messiah out of His grave, and was about to put Him in heaven, and, consequently, their hopes and prospects would be there with Him, in the “inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” It is not in your keeping now. If it were you would only lose it as you did the other. God is keeping it for you, and you may rest satisfied that He won’t do with it what you would.

But, you would say, I am sure He can and will keep the inheritance—He is well able to do that; but what about me? I can’t keep myself, let alone the inheritance. Well, but suppose, for a moment, that He is not only keeping the inheritance for you, but keeping you for the inheritance. Won’t that give you courage? And this is what He declares He is doing. The inheritance is reserved in heaven for you, and you are kept for the inheritance here below, and kept by the power of God, too. Now, is not Peter shepherding and feeding the flock of God? And who was better fitted to say that word than he? — “kept by the power of God through faith.” Don’t you remember, when Satan wanted to have him, that he might sift him like wheat? (Luke 22:31) And how the Lord prayed for him that his faith might not fail? Well, Peter was “kept by the power of God through faith.” He needed to be sifted, and the Lord did not pray that he might not have the sifting, but that he might be kept through the sifting. Don’t you think that Peter could say when it was all over, “O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.... Thou winnowest my path!” (Psa. 139:1-3, margin) Now, he could tell us a secret of how the Lord kept him and mark, it was not a being kept like a lifeless thing, but by the link of faith being sustained in the soul, teaching it to cling to God, who was sustaining the link with His own power. Surely he was thus doing what the Lord had told him to do. He was a man whose heart was converted, or turned back again to God, who was strengthening his brethren.

Well, you say, that is green pasture surely for the flock, and, better still, the work is never finished till the inheritance is attained—it is “unto salvation.” But then, again, you will say, Have we not got this salvation? Indeed, you have not, or you would not be a stranger. I’ll tell you what you have got. You have “the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls;” but you have not got the end of your hope—(vs. 13)—the salvation that is to be brought to you, and is now ready to be revealed. You must wait for that, and, meanwhile, you may “greatly rejoice” in it, even though now for a season you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

But surely “manifest temptations” are not “green pastures” for the flock. Well, they do not at first seem so; but there is a “needs be” for those things at times. We put gold in the furnace to purge away the dross from it, and what is pure comes out of the furnace divested of the dross. This is a little hint to the flock that they will have their faith put into the furnace to be tried. By-and-bye, we will see the various aspects of the furnace opened out to us largely, but here is the hint to prepare the flock for what is coming. And these trials of your faith are very precious, he says, and how much so when they will be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Do you remember when Thomas said he would not believe unless he saw the Lord—(John 21:25),—and how the Lord, after convincing him, says, “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” How sweet for the dear flock to be amongst those who had not seen the good Shepherd with their mortal eyes, and yet to have such a knowledge of Him in the heart as to have learned to love Him and know Him when unseen— “whom not having seen ye love, in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” Dear me, would a dear one of the flock say, how much better than all we have been looking for of old is what we now receive as the end of our faith. We used to be looking for salvation from the Gentiles, when they used to lord it over the poor captives of Zion; and salvation from our enemies, of our land, and our bodies: but now we have a much better thing, we have received the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. Surely this was a “green pasture” and a “still water,” after getting a glimpse into the furnace.

Now, we have a little parenthesis (vs. 10-12) about this salvation. The fine old prophets spoke about it by the Spirit of Christ, and when they sat down to study their glorious strains, they discovered that it was not for themselves but for us—for the dear flock—they did minister the things which the Holy Spirit had come down from heaven to proclaim through those who preached of those things. I am telling you, says this dear shepherd of the flock, of the journey which lies between the sufferings of Christ and His rejection, and the glories which the prophets saw would follow. I have got a commission from the Chief Shepherd to lead the dear flock through that journey. The prophets could tell you of the sufferings and of the glories which would follow, but they had not my business—to tell you all that would come in between these things.

What could the angels know of this salvation? Surely they desired to look into it, but it was too wonderful for one of these excellent beings to know. What an object for wonder and praise to God a redeemed sinner must be to them. An angel is maintained in his first estate, where God placed him; a redeemed sinner is taken up out of the dunghill, and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb of God, and brought up to the very throne of God itself. Wonder of wonders! Well may the angels desire to look into these things.