

Text: 1 Peter 1:13-25

Introduction

Today I will begin by reading a story included in the teacher's guide for today's lesson. Although I rarely use the materials provided by LifeWay, this story does indeed set an appropriate tone for today's lesson.

"Sal" jogged regularly in the same park I frequented. Occasionally we jogged together, and in such times we talked as we moved along. Sal had professed faith in Jesus as Lord. He expressed excitement about his relationship with the Lord and about his life in his church.

One day this single man began to speak about "sleeping with the ladies" and indicated he did so regularly. I asked him how he squared that behavior with his profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Without a moment's hesitation, he replied he was "not into legalism."

Later I brought up the matter of Bible study. Sal replied he was "not really big on that sort of thing." I asked him about memorizing Scripture. He answered, "I'm too busy loving the Lord to spend time learning Bible verses."

Sal's problem was evident. Since he did not know God's Word, he had no idea what accepting Jesus as Lord meant. He had unwittingly opted for an emotional experience without any moral commitment. Apparently no one had helped Sal understand the biblical concept of Christian discipleship.

Sadly, too many professing believers have made the same mistake. Because these adults are biblically illiterate and do not understand the meaning of Christ's lordship, they feel free to engage in any kind of conduct. They gamble, use pornography, take drugs for recreational purposes, and engage in sexual immorality, all with a clear conscience. In short, the lives of many professing believers are as unspiritual as those of unbelievers.

The "500-pound elephant" in the room, of course, is that many professing believers today are not believers at all, at least not in the Lord Jesus Christ as He truly is and is presented in Scripture. Let's look at Sal's lifestyle first of all. He enjoys his immoral lifestyle, and declares any restriction of his behavior to be "legalism." The Bible says otherwise:

9Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

The Bible teaches that people that engage in sins of all kinds can be saved, but those that are saved are "washed" and "sanctified." The key word is "were"—**such were some of you**. Individuals that still carry those titles (and notice that the Bible identifies people by their sin—scary thought, isn't it?) cannot rightly claim to have been regenerated. They are at the very least living carnally and need to repent, but most likely are not saved at all.

Next, we see that Sal has no desire to know or study God's Word. He clearly has no idea what it means for Jesus to be one's *Lord*. If He is Lord, then He must be *Master*. If He is Master, we must do what He commands. If we will know and do what He commands, we must study His Word. Jesus clearly stated that only those that keep His commandments "abide" in His love. Other professing believers are clearly only temporary, and are cast away.

1"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. (John 15:1-11)

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a *huge* problem in our churches today. Our pews are filled with “Sals” that think that they are destined for Heaven because they prayed a certain prayer, were baptized as an infant or kid, filled out a decision card, joined a church, etc. Those that teach and preach find themselves hamstrung because they don’t understand how a Christian could live in open defiance of God’s Word and separated from His Church, yet they refuse to acknowledge that maybe...just maybe...those people aren’t really saved at all. They are afraid to offend their “Sals” by approaching them for evangelism, and the “Sals” that are approached in such a way indeed are offended because someone had supposedly presented the Gospel to them and told them that they are “right with God,” and now they are being told that what they did wasn’t good enough. Shallow evangelism has filled our churches with a host of “Sals,” destined for Hell yet “inoculated against the true Gospel” through a halfway presentation of the Truth, and God *will* call us to account for this:

1Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)

So what are you saying, Micah? Are you saying that if I was saved as a child, or filled out a decision card, or something like that I’m not really saved? No, I’m not saying that. God saves all that truly call upon Him:

13for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:13)

I am, however, saying that a true salvation experience begins first of all with a true presentation of the Gospel. Consider Peter’s response to those that heard his sermon at Pentecost:

37Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" 38Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:37-38)

Peter told them to *repent* and *believe* (he didn’t say the word “believe,” but to be baptized in Jesus’ name indicates belief in Him and fidelity to His message). He didn’t lead them through a special prayer, and he certainly didn’t say “just come as you are.” He said *repent*—in effect, “your sins make you dirty and loathsome in God’s sight, and if you will enter His Kingdom, you must turn away from sin and follow Christ. Otherwise, you are dead in your sins, and destined for a Devil’s Hell.”

The Gospel is not that Christ died that we might condescend to allow Him a small part in our lives. The Gospel message is that Christ died and rose again to extend mercy to all that would call upon Him. We belittle God when we suggest that He begs us to let Him into our lives—rather, our place is merely to cry out to God for undeserved mercy, and know on the authority of His Word that He does indeed save those that do so.

Now, moving on toward the thrust of the passage we’ll be studying today, a true salvation experience begins with a true presentation of the Gospel, and results in a life of consistent service and increasing holiness.

13"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (Matthew 24:13)

22But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. (Romans 6:22)

Friend, if you are looking to a past experience for evidence of your salvation, you’re looking to the wrong place. While most of us can remember the time and place in which we confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior, that is not where we find the evidence of having been saved. The evidence is in the life now. Does your life *now* give any indication that you are truly in Christ? The book of James teaches us that genuine, saving faith will result in works commensurate with that faith, and Peter commands us to make our “calling and election sure.”

14What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19You believe that God is one You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 21Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. 24You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by

another way? **26For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:14-26)**

1Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: 2Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 5Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9For he who lacks these qualities is blind or shortsighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:1-11)

Certainly if the Bible commands us to “make sure” regarding our salvation, we should not be offended at the notion. Now, please do not take me as disputing the doctrine of eternal security. Jesus plainly stated that:

37"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. (John 6:37)

However, know also that those that would turn the grace of God into an excuse for licentiousness are not His at all, but have believed in a false Christ, and a false Gospel, and remain dead in their sins. If you would dare to knowingly and defiantly engage in sin under the cover of “eternal security,” then there is reason to doubt the veracity of your salvation experience. Repent of that sin and turn unto God.

11Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. 15What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? (Romans 6:11-16)

11But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one. 12For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? 13But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES. (1 Corinthians 5:11-13)

Indeed, the Bible commands that Christians remove from their churches any professing believer that engages in sins like those of “Sal.” We sin mightily in that we do not demand repentance from such individuals in order to remain in or restore fellowship, and the integrity and moral authority of the church is weakened. As we move into our main passage for this morning, let us carefully consider Peter’s inspired words. His exhortation to holiness on our parts is *not* optional—God *demand*s it of us! As we have seen, if one does not seek holiness, there is reason to doubt whether or not he is truly saved.

Proper Christian Conduct

13Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." (1 Peter 1:13-16)

The beginning part of this passage reads in some translations that we should “gird up the loins” of our minds, a reference to the long flowing garments worn during the time when the letter was written. When preparing for a physically demanding task a man would have to pull up the bottom part of the garment and tuck it into his belt, so that his legs would be free to move. In so writing, Peter

instructs his readers to prepare themselves for deep and thoughtful reflection and study of the Word of God. The Bible is not a trifling matter, and reducing it to quick “feel good” devotionals devoid of intellectual rigor belittles God’s Word, and is in defiance of the command given here. Similar commands in Paul’s writings convey the same thought:

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, (Ephesians 6:10-14)

15Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

The “armor of God” in Ephesians 6 begins with the same illustration Peter used, instructing us to “gird up our loins” with God’s Truth if we are to stand against the enemy. Paul’s letter to Timothy also contains an exhortation to diligent study so that he can accurately handle the Word.

Next, we are told to “be sober,” and to focus upon God’s grace. The exhortation to sobriety does not mean only that we should not become intoxicated, but certainly includes that. It is better understood as a command to exercise coherent thought and meditation on God’s Word and promises, and to exercise self-control in all things.

12The night is almost gone, and the day is near Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. (Romans 13:12-14)

22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

1But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. 2Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. 3Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. 6Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; 7in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, 8sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. 9Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. 11For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. 15These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority Let no one disregard you. (Titus 2:1-15)

Note how in the latter passage every group of people is instructed to be “temperate,” “reverent,” “sensible,” “dignified,” “sensible,” etc. God’s people are to be examples of holy, moderate living.

The admonition to abandon our former lusts “*as obedient children*” is reminiscent of Jesus’ words in Mark 10:15:

15"Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all." (Mark 10:15)

We often refer to the above verse in saying that in order to be saved we must execute a simple, “childlike” faith. Considering, however, that Christians are called not only to believe initially but also to continue in faith and obedience, the model of an obedient child is also applicable to the daily life of a Christian. Just as a good child seeks to obey and emulate his parents, so we are to obey and emulate our Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to holy living—what better example of holy living do we have than the example of our Lord when He walked on earth? In fact, we are specifically commanded elsewhere in Scripture to look to Him as our example.

1Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2**fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3**For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

If there is ever any question as to how we should seek to live, look at Jesus, and do likewise.

Conduct Before God

*17*If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; *18*knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, *19*but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. *20*For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you *21*who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Peter 1:17-21)

Have you ever noticed the flippant attitude toward prayer and toward our relationships with God so many of us take these days? It's as if we think that we are doing God a favor by taking time out of our busy schedule to talk with Him. In verse 17, though, Peter reminds us that the God that *graciously allows* us to address Him as Father is still the Lord and Judge of the universe, and we are to conduct ourselves before Him in fear and reverence. And, if God's *being God* were not enough, He furthermore determined before the world began to redeem us unto Himself with the most precious offering of all, the blood of the God Incarnate, Lord Jesus Christ. To claim to be His children and then to utterly despise and disobey His commands is to sin most grievously.

26For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, **27**but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. **28**Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. **29**How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? **30**For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY " And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." **31**It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:26-31)

Love for the Brethren

*22*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, (1 Peter 1:22)

Moving along from the commands regarding our conduct and reverence toward God, Peter tells us to love one another. Recall that Jesus identified loving others as the second greatest command of the Law:

28One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" **29**Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; **30**AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' **31**"The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:28-31)

More specifically, though, Peter is referring to the love shared among fellow Christians. John goes so far as to say that love for "the brethren," that is, fellow Christians, is an indicator of saving faith.

14We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. (1 John 3:14)

Therefore, as true believers, we should love our fellow Christians, seeing to it that their needs are met and that they are built up in the faith, and desiring their company as well. Regular gathering of ourselves together for worship and edification is not only an indicator of saving faith, but is also commanded in Scripture.

23Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:23-25)

If we do not regularly come to God's house for worship, instruction, and fellowship we are disobeying the command of His Word. Church attendance and participation are *not* optional!

The Word of God: "Imperishable Seed"

23for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. 24For,

*"ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,
AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.
THE GRASS WITHERS,
AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,*

25BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER "

And this is the word which was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:23-25)

These final verses bring to mind the Parable of the Sower. The "seed" of the Word of God was spread about, and when it fell on good ground, it produced a great harvest.

4When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: 5"The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. 6"Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. 7"Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. 8"Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." 9His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant. 10And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND. 11"Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. 12"Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. 13"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. 14"The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. 15"But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. (Luke 8:4-15)

Let us pray that our hearts are indeed "good soil," holding fast the Word which brings forth eternal life. And, let us be about the business of scattering "seed," as the Lord Jesus has called each of us to be about the business of spreading His Word. However, remember to preach the whole counsel of God—if we try to make the Gospel "palatable" to sinners we will water it down and produce more "Sals," poor souls that think they are saved and are not. Only God can cause a heart to become fertile soil in which the Word will become rooted and grow, and we are to give Him all glory for allowing us to have a small part in building His Kingdom.

19"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

6I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. (1 Corinthians 3:6)