

Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

An Expository Journey Through **2Peter**

2- A Bond-Servant and Apostle of Jesus Christ

May 17, 2020

2Peter 1:1

Simon 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:

To the Glory of God

Now by the time the old fisherman wrote this second Epistle- he was no longer the brash novice that we read about in the Gospel Records. Simon, who had been renamed, "Peter" by the Lord, was now one of the most respected men in the Church. And what a life he had lived! Peter's experiences traversed the full range of what anyone could ever hope to know and see.

Peter had stood on the mountain and looked at Jesus in His transfigured Glory. He had literally walked on water- even if it was only for a moment. He had talked with; and touched Jesus after His Resurrection. And Peter was among the 500 souls, who watched Jesus rise up in the air into Heaven.

But this same man had also betrayed Jesus- not once- but three times. And as they led Jesus off to beat Him- the echo of the rooster still in his ears- Peter looked fully into the eyes of the incarnate God- and it had crushed his soul. And he was the only Apostle to hear the Christ he loved- call him, "satan" (**Matthew 16:23**).

But all of those experiences had shaped him and molded him to be the kind of man, who could write such an amazing Letter as **2Peter**.

Now there is a Greek word, "*doulos*" that is found 67 times in the New Testament. And this word is almost *universally* translated into English as "*servant*". But that's wrong. This word *doesn't* mean,

“servant”. It has *never* meant “servant”- it means “slave”. And every Greek translator, worth his salt knows that. So, *why* do they translate this word as “servant” rather than “slave”? I’m not sure- but I pray that from now on- every single time you see the word, “servant” in the New Testament- you will automatically think, “slave”.

And here in verse 1- the Apostle gives himself two titles:

1. Bond-slave
2. Apostle

... which, on the surface, seems to be a contradiction. For example, if we called someone today a “CEO” and a “Janitor”; or a “President” and a “Prisoner”; or a “Kingpin” and a “common Laborer”- it WOULD be contradictory. Someone, who has reached the pinnacle of success in this life would be insulted to be saddled with a term used for bondage or people who have been “imprisoned”.

But Christianity is different than anything else in all the world, because in **Matthew 20:25b-28**, Jesus said,

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

.. and this is a Universal Truth. And it applies to *everyone* who names the Name of Jesus.

And so, in Christianity, the *closer* a person gets to God- the more *humble* he is. The more spiritual a person really is- the *less* prideful he is. The more an individual understands about the Bible- the *less* he desires to be the center of attention. The *more* he understands the magnificence of Grace- the *less* he thinks about himself. The *more* he beholds the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus- the *more* he wants people to see and hear from God- rather than himself. And the *more* a person is empowered by God the Holy Spirit- the *more* “slave-like” he becomes. And *that* is what the word, “*doulos*” means.

Now back in the 1st Century, there were different *kinds* of slaves. There were those slaves, who had been *forcibly* made to be slaves due to

war. Their nation had been conquered by another and the people, who had been overcome- were *forcibly* made to be the slaves of the victors. But there were also slaves- who had been born into slavery. And as far back as they could remember- their family had *always* been slaves.

But then there were slaves- who had *voluntarily* become slaves. Either by necessity; or because they needed protection; or for other economic or social reasons- free men had *voluntarily* renounced their freedom and had submitted themselves to other people- as their slaves. Please turn with me to read what God gave to Moses in **Exodus 21: 2-6**

If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. If he comes alone, he shall go out alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out alone. But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,' then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.

... and these people were called, "bond-slaves". These are slaves, who had entered into slavery out of love. Look again at what Moses wrote in verse 5:

But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man...

... so, this man *refused* to be free- out of love for not only his own wife and children- but also out of love for his master!

And this is the kind of "bond-slave" that Peter is telling us that he was: a man, who loved his wife and children; and a man, who out of love for his Master, Jesus Christ, had become a "bond-slave". And this is something that we should all pray for. That, out of love; not for any other reason- but out of love for the Master- Jesus Christ- that we too would feel the sting of that awl- as it bores a hole in *our* ear- so that the "sign of slavery" would be evident to all- and that we too could be "bond-slaves" to the Lord Christ.

The Scottish theologian, William Barclay (1907-1978) gave insight into what "*doulos*" meant when he said:

“To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he is inalienably possessed by God. In the ancient world a master possessed his slaves in the same sense as he possessed his tools. A servant can change his master; but a slave cannot. The Christian inalienably belongs to God.

To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he is unqualifiedly at the disposal of God. In the ancient world the master could do what he liked with his slave. He had the same power over his slave as he had over his inanimate possessions. He had the power of life and death over his slave. The Christian belongs to God, for God to send him where He will, and to do with him what He will. The Christian is the man who has no rights of his own, for all his rights are surrendered to God.

To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that the Christian owes an unquestioning obedience to God. Ancient law was such that a master's command was a slave's only law. Even if a slave was told to do something which actually broke the law, he could not protest, for, as far as he was concerned, his master's command was the law. In any situation the Christian has but one question to ask: "Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do?" The command of God is his only law.

To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he must be constantly in the service of God. In the ancient world the slave had literally no time of his own, no holidays, no time off, no working-hours settled by agreement, no leisure. All his time belonged to the master.”¹

But then Peter says something strange. After he identifies himself as a “bond-slave” of Jesus- he then goes on to identify himself as *more* than a bond-slave. He also called himself an,

... apostle of Jesus Christ

Now an “Apostle” was a very unique man. He was NOT merely a member of the early Church; nor was he simply a Leader. No, Peter was a part of the most exclusive group known to Man. Peter was someone, whom Jesus had personally chosen to establish Christianity on the earth. Peter, along with the others, was called to be the “foundation” of the Church. Look what Paul wrote about this in

Ephesians 2:19-22:

¹ *The Letters of James and Peter*, rev. ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976], 345-46; emphasis in the original

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

So, there are *two* ingredients; *two* components; *two* different parts of the Foundation of the Christian Church:

1. New Testament Apostles
2. Old Testament Prophets

... and these two components make up the very Foundation on which the Church is built- with Jesus Christ Himself, being the Cornerstone or the Footing underneath the Foundation. But it isn't the men themselves that are the Foundation of the Church- but rather- what these men *taught*; and what they *believed*; and what they wrote down on the pages of Scripture. So, it is the Teachings of the Apostles and Prophets- as found on the pages of the Bible- that is the Foundation of the Christian Church.

And the reason that Paul placed the Apostles ahead of the Prophets- is to show the *superiority* of the *New Covenant* (Testament) over against the *Old* or the *First Covenant* (Testament).

So, the way that the Apostles and Prophets act as the Foundation of the Christian Church- is through what the Prophets (and their designees) wrote down in the 39 Books of the Old Testament; and what the Apostles (and their designees) wrote down in the 27 Books of the New. That makes the inspired Words that God spoke through the Apostles and Prophets; and which have been recorded for us in the sacred Scriptures- which act as the Support or the Foundation of the Christian Church.

And that means that the Ministry of the Apostles was very *narrow* and very *limited*. They were NOT called to merely read and study the Bible. They were NOT called to merely preach and teach Divine Truth. They were NOT called to simply live godly lives and tell others about Jesus. No, these men were chosen to do at least six things:

1. **Receive** the superior Revelation of the New Covenant directly from God the Holy Spirit by way of "Inspiration"
2. **Articulate** that Revelation; explain it; exposit it; and write it down
3. **Give** "Divine Credibility" to that Revelation by being used by God in Signs; Wonders; Miracles; and various Gifts of the Holy Spirit.
4. **Propagate** that "Gospel" (Good News) throughout the "known world"
5. **Establish** Churches and Appoint Elders to govern those Churches
6. **Handle** Doctrinal and Theological Disputes

Now there are many men today, who are called by God, to accomplish the *last* three components:

1. *Propagate* that "Gospel" (Good News) throughout the world
2. *Establish* Churches and Appoint Elders to govern those Churches
3. *Handle* Doctrinal and Theological Disputes

... but ONLY the Apostles were called to do the *first* three:

1. *Receive* the superior Revelation of the New Covenant directly from God the Holy Spirit by way of "Inspiration"
2. *Articulate* that Revelation; explain it; exposit it; and write it down
3. *Give* "Divine Credibility" to that Revelation by being used by God in Signs; Wonders; Miracles; and various Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And this is the reason *why* there are NO Apostles in our day. It isn't because God lost His Power. It's NOT because we don't believe the Bible. And it ISN'T because we are *limiting* the Holy Spirit; or that we don't believe in a "Move of God's Spirit" in the earth today.

No, the reason there are no more Apostles in our day- is because they did their job! They *accomplished* the Plan of God. They *fulfilled* their Calling. The Christian Church has been established on the earth. And it will *never* be established again. And they way that it was established was by and through the radical Revelation of the New Covenant that God gave *directly* to the Apostles in Scripture.

So, the Christian Church was NOT established because people built buildings. And the Christian Church was NOT established because some people *assumed* positions of Authority and Power within the

visible Church- that they had no business assuming.

No, the Christian Church was established because *Christianity* was established. And Christianity was established by what the Apostles believed; and taught; and wrote down; in the pages of the New Testament. So, the Church did NOT create the Scriptures.² No, the Scriptures- *especially the New Testament*- created the Church.

So, the unique Calling; and the Giftings; and the Offices; and the Ministries; and the Uncction; and the Anointing that God gave to these specially selected men- to *establish* the Church on the earth- succeeded. And, therefore, we no longer need those particular "Means of Grace".

What we need today are the unique Callings; and the Giftings; and the Offices; and the Ministries; and the Uncction; and the Anointing; that God will graciously give to unworthy clay pots which will enable and empower specially selected men- to take the *already established* Church; the *already established* Christian Faith- and *propagate* it around the world- to every tribe; and people; and tongue; and nation!

And so, when Jesus comes back- He will receive a mighty crescendo of praises and delight and celebration from the multitude of peoples- who have been saved by His Grace- that represent every nation on earth!

So, the way this is written is that Peter is telling his first century audience- and us- that he was two things that may seem to be contradictory at first. Peter said he was:

A bond-slave of Jesus Christ

... but then he went on to say that he was also:

An Apostle of Jesus Christ

... and he filled both Callings- *simultaneously*. He was both humble and yet- authoritative. He was both gentle and strong. Peter was a very kind and loving man. Yet- he was also the worst nightmare to anyone who was trying to monkey around with the Scriptures.

Now there are certain verses in the Bible that were given or spoken to the Apostles. And, down through the years, we have taken many of these verses out of context and used them to apply to *ourselves*.

² This is yet another false Teaching of Rome.

For example, in **John 14:26**- when Jesus said,

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

... He was NOT talking to all believers. The context of this verse has to do with the Apostles. Here, Jesus was telling the Apostles how they were going to receive the Divine Revelation that has become the New Testament.

Now, it is true that we do seek God the Holy Spirit to bring back to our remembrance- everything that we have read about what Jesus said in Scripture. But that is NOT the correct context of this verse. That is- in actuality- taking this verse completely *out* of context.

And, likewise, there are other verses in the Bible that are referring ONLY to the Apostles. And one of those verses is when the Apostle John said this in **1John 1:3**:

what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Now there are three words that we need to look at:

- **We** (twice)
- **Us**
- **Our**

So, who are the “**we**” and the “**us**” and the “**our**” of this verse? Is John talking about all believers here? No. But how do we know that? Because of what he said here about the “**we**”.

... what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also

So, the “**we**” here is attached to two other words:

1. Seen
2. Proclaim

... so, *whoever* “**saw**”; and whoever is “**proclaiming**” the Revelation of

Jesus Christ back in the 1st Century are the ones who constitute the “we” of this verse. And whoever is the “we” of this verse is ALSO the “us” and the “our” of this verse.

Now the “you” of this verse is easy. That is the believers, who make up the Christian Church. John didn’t write this Epistle to lost people. He wrote it ONLY to the saved. So, John is wanting the saved people of the Church to listen to the Revelation that *somebody* he calls, “we” saw and that somebody he calls, “we” is proclaiming.

So, who personally saw Jesus do the things He did and say the things He said; and who *received* the Divine Revelation of the Christian Gospel directly from God the Holy Spirit- and then began to *proclaim* it to those who were already saved- to strengthen and encourage them? Only one group. The Apostles. Now look what else John said,

... so that you too may have fellowship with us ...

John wrote this Epistle so that the people of the Church, who are already saved- would have “fellowship” with the Apostles. So, they would be in “one accord” with the Apostles. So, they could be “united” with the Apostles. In other words, John wrote this Epistle so that the people of the Church, who are already saved, would understand what Orthodoxy (Right Believing) looks like. Now look what he said next:

... and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

John is making an amazing Statement here. John is saying, “*We Apostles are right; we are correct about what we believe and teach.*” John is saying that they have a true “fellowship” with both the God the Father and God the Son. In other words, John is saying here that the Apostles are in perfect harmony; perfect union; perfect fellowship with the Father and the Son. Another way of understanding this is that John is teaching here that what the Apostles have written down in the 27 Books of the New Testament is without *any* error! It is true and correct and in accord with both the Father and the Son.

But then he goes on to say that the only way *anybody else* can be right with the Father and the Son- is to be right with what the Apostles teach. In other words, John is saying right here- that because the

Apostles are correct about what they believe and teach- if we hope to be right with God- we have to align ourselves with; or be in fellowship with the Apostles- in what they wrote down in Scripture.

So, if any of us in the 21st Century hope to be in true "fellowship" with both God the Father and God the Son- we must be in a true "fellowship" with the Apostles. *"But how can we, Brother Blair- they're all dead!"* We may be in a true fellowship with the Apostles by being in accord or in alignment with what the Apostles wrote down in the New Testament.

This is amazing! No human on earth today can say truthfully this! No human has this level of Authority in Christ. So, as much as I try to "get the Gospel right"; as hard as I study; as much as I pray and beg God to help me- I *always* have the capacity to be wrong. And, while periodically, I may be Inerrant (without error)- I am *never* Infallible (not having the ability to be in error). And this is yet another reason why there are no more Apostles in our day.

But the Apostle Peter made a statement like this himself. Please read again the next part of verse 1:

... To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours ...

Here, Peter is telling us to whom he is writing this second Epistle. He is writing to those who,

... have received a faith of the same kind as ours ...

So, Peter is writing this Epistle to those who have received "a Faith" that is the same *kind* of Faith- that the Apostles received. Because the word, "**ours**" is NOT all those who are saved- because that would be redundant. So, the "**ours**" here is the Apostles.

Again, this is an incredible statement! And only an Apostle could make a statement like this. Because, in essence, what Peter is saying, is that the Faith that the Apostles have- is the *correct* Faith; the *right* Faith; the *true* Faith. And so, he is writing this Epistle to those who also have received a right and correct and true Faith- the *same* Faith that the Apostles received.

Now by using the word, "**received**"- we automatically *eliminate*

any hope that Peter was teaching that we are born with this Faith; or that we can work it up; or that it already exists in us- but is simply laying dormant until God awakens it. Peter is NOT teaching any of that. What Peter teaches here is that Faith must be “**received**”. Now this word is translated from a Greek word (*lanchanoo*; Strongs #2975) that has to do with: *obtaining something or attaining something that you did NOT labor for*. This word was often used to describe the casting of lots. But even where there is no casting of lots, this “attainment” is *not by one's own effort; or as a result of one's own exertions- but is like ripe fruit falling into one's lap*.³

Now the way that Peter positions the Greek here- shows us that he is saying that both the Apostles and everybody else, who is truly saved- “received” this Faith. And this shows the great Humility that the Apostle has ‘been granted’ over the years due to the intense Persecution and Hardship he has faithfully endured. He is NOT saying that the Apostles were super-spiritual believers, who were born with this Faith. No, both the Apostles and all those who have truly experienced the Miracle of the New Birth are unworthy sinners, who have been graced by God to have “received” this Faith.

Now, believe it or not- I really struggled with the word, “**a**” here. Peter didn't say, “*the*” Faith or just “Faith”. No, he wrote, “**a**” Faith. And so, there are a couple of possibilities here.

Several times in the Scriptures, when you see the word, “Faith”- it is NOT talking about our own *personal* Faith- but rather the Christian Faith. But other times, it IS talking about our own, personal Faith. For example, when the Apostle Paul wrote **Ephesians 2:8** and said,

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

... he was teaching that individual sinners are saved “by” the Grace of God and “through” the Gift of “Saving Faith” that God sovereignly gave them- when He chose to *interrupt* all their Plans; and *violate* their will; and *insert* Himself into their lives- by giving them new, spiritual Life. Of course, this is what the Bible calls, being “Born Again”; and what theologians call, “Regeneration”.

In that single, sovereign Act of God- He *undoes* for His elect what

³ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Copyright © 1972-1989 By Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. All rights reserved.

the Fall did to *all* human beings. So, God *forcefully* opens our blind eyes- so we can behold the magnificence of Jesus in His risen Glory through the pages of the Bible. God also *powerfully* unstops our deaf ears- that allows us to hear the sound of Amazing Grace. And then God *effectually* takes out of us that hard, stony heart; and gives us a "heart of flesh".⁴ Now the phrase, "heart of flesh" signifies a "soft heart" that has both the *ability* (power) and the desire (will) to believe and trust in Jesus; and in His finished Work- as opposed to a "hard heart" that *rejects* Jesus as God; that *refuses* to love God; and that *resists* a joyful submission to God's Ways. And the Bible teaches that God gives us that new, spiritual Life- BEFORE we want it; WITHOUT us asking for it; and despite the fact that we have NOT even prayed for it.

So, we do NOT *initiate* our own new, *spiritual* Birth- any more than we *initiated* our first, *natural* birth. And we don't *cooperate* with God in being Born Again- anymore than we *cooperated* with our parents and the doctors to be born in the natural. No, Regeneration is entirely a sovereign Act of God alone.

So, part and parcel to the New Birth is the Gift of "Saving Faith". God gives us this kind of Faith- *immediately- sovereignly-* as we are born again. And with that Gift of Saving Faith- we have the power to believe for Salvation. So, Salvation is granted to us- as individuals- **BY** the Grace of God in choosing us and calling us *out of* Sin and the World and calling us *into* the Church. And Salvation is granted to us- as individuals- **THROUGH-** this Gift of Saving Faith.

Yet when Paul said this in **Galatians 1:22&23:**

I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."

... he was describing the *Christian* Faith; or Christianity; or even Salvation- and NOT his own, individual, *personal* Faith. So, which one is Peter talking about here in **2Peter 1:1**? I really struggled with this- so I consulted with other English translations. The KJV says,

... to them that have obtained like precious faith with us ...

⁴ God does all of this for those He has chosen to save. But God does NOT do something to the non-elect to damn them. All humans are already sinful, blind, deaf, and hardened against the Gospel by the fact that we are already fallen at the moment of conception. All God has to do for them to go to Hell- is to leave them alone.

... the ESV says,

... To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours ...

... the Hollman Christian Standard Bible says,

... To those who have obtained a faith of equal privilege with ours ...

... while the original Greek says,

... To those equally precious with ours having obtained a faith...

... and none of them really helped. Yet, I'm leaning for this to refer to our *own, individual, personal* Faith- because of what Peter says next. The *last* part of **2Peter 1:1** says,

... To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

Now you would *normally* expect Peter to say something like,

... To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the GRACE of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

... but instead he uses the word, "**Righteousness**". Why? I would suppose that if you asked 50 people- all 50 of them would use the word, "Grace" here instead of "**Righteousness.**" And the fact that most of us would never use the word, "Righteousness" in a sentence talking about "Faith" shows us how far removed we are from what the Bible actually teaches concerning Salvation.

I discovered my *own* shallowness in this area when I spent 9 years and 9 months going verse by verse through **Romans**. I thought that, since **Romans** contained about 65% of everything that the Bible teaches about Salvation, that the most common word in that Epistle would have been "Grace". But it isn't. The most common word found in **Romans** is "**Righteousness**". And that phenomenon caused me to study just what Righteousness is all about.

The modern church has so watered down the Gospel that there are only three words that dominate any discussion about Salvation today:

- ✓ Mercy
- ✓ Grace
- ✓ Love

... and to be sure- those three words are, indeed, wonderful. Without Mercy, Grace, and Love- none of us would have a chance. But there is usually no mention of other biblical words like:

- ✓ Repentance
- ✓ Righteousness

... which are equally used throughout the Scriptures when talking about Salvation. But even in the rare moments when Righteousness is used- it is usually used incorrectly and unbiblically.

Righteousness has to do with being "right" and being morally perfect. So, Righteousness is Sinlessness. And as it pertains to Salvation- the Bible teaches that every human being, who enters into Heaven, HAS to be just as Righteous as God Himself is Righteous.

Now ever single false religion and humanly engineered Philosophy teaches the very same thing: Sinful humans have to "do something" to *earn* Righteousness. And the only area where they differ- is in the details of exactly what we have to do. For example, those deceived by Rome believe and teach that we have to faithfully attend the Mass and participate in the Sacraments to be saved. And then, over time- we BECOME Righteous. But even Rome thinks that's too hard- so they invented Purgatory where the faithful go to be purged (made Righteous) after they have died- so they can achieve perfect Righteousness and enter into Heaven.

But the Bible does NOT teach that. The Bible teaches that sinful humans are MADE Righteous- INSTANTLY- by Faith- in the part of Salvation called, "Justification". Now as I said, over the years most Protestants have taken words like "Born Again"; "Salvation"; and "Saved"; and put them all in the same pot. In other words, to the average church member- all those words are simply synonyms of the same thing- "Salvation". But the Reality is that these are all *different* parts of what the Bible teaches about Salvation.

So, being Born Again and being Saved are NOT the same thing. Being born again is the *part* of Salvation which is the sovereign Act of

God- whereby He gives the lost person- new, spiritual Life. But once that individual has his eyes open; and his ears unstopped; and his heart softened- he then goes through "Justification". And it is in "Justification" that two things happen:

1. He is forgiven of all Sin (past, present, and future)
2. He is made Righteous (fit for Heaven)

Yet all that most Protestants know about "Justification" today is that their Sins are forgiven. And, again, that is due to being very poorly taught. But look, it is wonderful to know that all our sins can be forgiven. But the word, "Just" itself comes from a Latin word, "*Iustus*" which means: *to be Righteous*. So, to be "Just" is to be "Righteous". And that means that Justification is NOT merely the Act whereby we are forgiven- but it is also the Act of being made Righteous. And Justification has two parts to it:

1. Repentance
2. Belief

It is in the part of Salvation called, "Justification" where Repentance is found. And Repentance is REQUIRED in Justification. *Nobody* is justified before God without Repentance. And this is why it is counter-productive to teach that lost people need to "*ask Jesus to come into their heart*". Of course, we need Jesus in our hearts- that isn't where the disagreement comes in. And, of course, we need to "call upon the Name of the Lord". That is biblical.

The problem is in the Reality that to tell people, "*Ask Jesus to come into your heart*" and "*Repent and believe the Gospel*" are NOT the same thing. But without Repentance- there is no Justification.

Now some are confused as to *why* God requires us to "do something" here- like Repent- when we keep saying that Salvation is a "Sovereign Act of God absent any Human works". If we are told to repent- we are doing something. So, us doing something IS part of being saved- right?

The only reason this is confusing is because most people skip over several of the "Steps" in the "Order of Salvation" (Ordo Salutis); or leave them out- all together. And this is due to the fact that most people in

the modern Church are very poorly taught about what the Bible actually teaches about Salvation.

The *part* of Salvation that is a sovereign Act of God absent any human works- is the Act of "Regeneration" or being Born Again. And this is God giving lost people- new, spiritual Life. And the reason this is a "sovereign Act of God- absent any human works" is because before we are given this new Life- we are "spiritually dead" (**Ephesians 2:1**) and we CANNOT do anything to contribute. We CANNOT initiate being Born Again; we CANNOT contribute to it; we CANNOT cooperate in it. We CAN'T even pray for it or even *want* it. Why? Because we are stone cold dead.

But once we are given this new, spiritual Life- we DO want God. And once we are born again- we DO desire to be saved. Once our eyes are open- we see two things:

- The Beauty and Glory of God (in, by, and through Jesus)
- Our own hideous Sin

... so, based on seeing the Glory of God in Jesus- we comprehend the great contrast between our own wicked acts and His glorious Magnificence- and we are smitten with Holy Spirit Conviction. And this Conviction causes us to *hate* our Sins- while we also love Jesus. And this Conviction *precipitates* our Repentance. And this Repentance is deep and wide and real. It is literal *agony* over the putridness of our rotted flesh.

So, our Repentance is merely a "human response" to seeing the Beauty of God compared to the horror of our own evilness. And once our ears are unstopped and our hearts are made soft- we are given the ability and the desire to believe- which is the Gift of Saving Faith. And with that Gift- we respond by believing; by trusting; by putting our Hope in God while abandoning any Hope in ourselves.

And the Bible teaches that unworthy sinners are *instantly, eternally, and completely* "made Righteous" by the simple but profound human response (to what God has already done in us) of *believing*.

So, from what Authority do we get that idea? From the Bible. Yet that doesn't mean that we stop sinning- *completely*. But it DOES mean that we don't sin- *as much*. So, while we are NOT sinless- we DO sinless. And that helps our own personal, intrinsic righteousness to

improve.

But the Righteousness that allows us entrance into Heaven is perfect. And that is why it CANNOT be our own, personal, righteousness- because *that* righteousness will NEVER be perfect. So, while it is true that we CAN and we DO and we SHOULD be more and more Righteous (the longer we are saved)- it is also true that no matter how hard we try or how long we try- we will NEVER become *perfectly* Righteous.

So, we need *another* kind of Righteousness in order to go to Heaven. And, thanks be to God, He has provided that *other kind* of Righteousness for us. And this is *why* Jesus had to be born and live a human life for 30 years BEFORE He ever entered into His Ministry. Because throughout His entire time on this earth- Jesus was *perfectly* sinless. He *never* sinned- not a single time. He *never* had a bad attitude. He *never* lusted. He *never* coveted- ever. He *always* loved God with all His Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength- for every second of every minute for every hour and for every day He was on this earth. He *always* loved His neighbor as Himself- in every way. Jesus was *perfectly* submissive to His Father in every way- 24/7. He was *perfectly* led by God the Holy Spirit- 24/7. And He perfectly *delighted* in God- 24/7.

And what this means- is that Jesus EARNED His Own Righteousness. He obeyed His Father- in all things- *perfectly*- without a single flaw. He *perfectly* kept all of God's Law- without any failure. And the Law promised that whoever kept every part of it- would be Righteous.

So, Jesus *developed* His Own Personal Righteousness through His Own sinlessness. And it is *that* Righteousness that God drapes over the elected sinner- by Faith alone. So, whereas the Righteousness that we are developing every day through our struggle to obey- is slowly and gradually getting "better"- it will NEVER be good enough to allow us into Heaven.

But as we *believe*- our Faith (which is actually a Gift from God) counts as Righteousness for us. So, as we put our full Faith and Hope and trust in Jesus and in His finished Work- and God takes the spotless Righteousness of Jesus and He "imputes" or "credits" that Righteousness to us- even though we are still personally sinful. And

this is what is called, "Imputed Righteousness". And the Apostle Peter believed in it; and he teaches it right here when he said,

... To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

So, we see that Peter taught that it is an *external* Righteousness; a *foreign* Righteousness; an *imputed* Righteousness that allows guilty sinners to enter into Heaven; and NOT our own *personal* righteousness.

So, Peter is teaching here that the believers' "Saving Faith" is available ONLY because of the "**Righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.**" In other words, wicked sinners are given Eternal Life- NOT because they are worthy- but because Jesus *imputes* His perfect Righteousness to them; covering their Sins; and making them fully acceptable to God the Father

Romans 4:1-16

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "*ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.*" Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

***BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.*"**

Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "*FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.*"

How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he

would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation. For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

O how great is our God! This is the very BEST news is all the world! We are NOT made Righteous by what we "do"- but by Who we "believe in"; and Who we "trust in"; and what we confess!

Amen! Let's pray.

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

