

SESSION 9: TO THIS YOU WERE CALLED PT 2

FROM THE LAST SESSION:

Throughout his letter, Peter honours and lifts up the name of the Lord above all things that were, that are and that are to come. Yet he continues to point out the Lord's example of submission, service and sacrifice.

What is the difference between our heavenly status and value on one hand and the earthly roles we are called to fulfil on the other?

How does our fulfilment of our earthly roles affect our heavenly standing?



READ

Having settled the issue of *submission*, service and sacrifice become much easier to understand (even if they remain difficult to fulfil!)

Service

Read Philippians Ch2 v 5-11.

Discussion: How does Peter encourage and instruct his readers to adopt this same Christ-like attitude?

It certainly helps when we keep in mind that our heavenly status is not defined by our earthly roles. Peter makes it clear that whilst 'praise, glory and honour' belong to the Lord, no other human being has ever come close to the act of service Jesus carried out on our behalf when He chose the cross. In fact, it is only when we have the assurance of our standing before God that, like Him, we can be truly free to serve others.

Someone once said that the way we view a place is defined by the path by which we chose to travel there. If this is true of heaven, then we should always be ready and willing to adopt the role of servants in order to one day hear the words of the Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Once again in Ch 4 v7-11, Peter makes it clear that the inspiration for adopting the attitude and role of a servant in every part of our lives should spring from the praise and glory of Jesus at the final coming of the Kingdom of God. *Whatever* we have in our lives should be used to help and serve

those around us. We should strive only to be channels, never destinations, of God's blessing!

In Ch 5 v1-4 Peter makes it especially clear that this should be the attitude of leaders to those in their charge.

Peter is also very clear that he is not just talking about theological niceties, he is expecting this *mind of Christ* to be expressed in the most practical details of daily life.

Discussion: *With this in mind, how should we define a 'good' day?*

And finally ..., "It's alright being a servant until someone treats you like one!"

- *Why do we find it so difficult to maintain the attitude of a servant in our daily lives?*
- *How can we encourage one another in this?*

READ

Sacrifice

In Ch 2 v5 Peter tells his readers that they are called to be a 'holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'.

To sacrifice something means to give it over forever to another person, being or cause. In the Old Testament, a sacrifice would often take the form of an animal, such as a lamb, goat or bull. It would often be sacrificed as a recompense for some shortcoming or misdemeanour. The shedding of the animal's blood would mark the forgiveness of these.

Sacrifices *always* came with a cost – often a very high one.

In the temple worship described in the Old Testament, the sacrifice would be made by a specially chosen group known as the priesthood. Once a sacrifice had been made, it could never be reclaimed. Often it was completely destroyed.

Peter makes it clear that the Lord's sacrifice on the cross fulfilled every requirement of the Old Covenant sacrificial system. However, he also makes it clear that as a new 'royal priesthood' his readers are to offer up to God their own 'spiritual sacrifices'.

These no longer involve the sacrifice of animals, but are made up of the surrender of ourselves to the Lord in thanksgiving for what He has done for us. In this sense, 'submission' and 'service' are both forms of sacrifice.

In fact, it is possible to read Peter's instructions after Ch 2 v5 as a series of examples of the kind of 'spiritual sacrifices' the Lord expects of us.

Discussion: Look at the remainder of the letter together. Which sacrifices might involve the greatest cost for us as a Church, a fellowship and as individuals? Where might the Lord be asking us to make greater sacrifices? How can we encourage one another in these things?

READ

Suffering.

So, Peter encourages his readers to celebrate their salvation and sanctification through submission, service and sacrifice. However, he never forgets that all this must occur in the midst of increasing suffering. In fact, he warns them that to adopt these attitudes might even add to their suffering.

Towards the end of his letter, he gives a clear indication of who lies behind the trials his brothers and sisters are facing. Perhaps Ch 5 v8 is another example of Peter drawing on his own experiences to help and guide others. Luke Ch 22 v31 and 61 could well be relevant here.

Nevertheless, Peter's letter is full of joy and hope. He encourages his fellow believers to hold fast and to never forget the wonderful future that awaits them. Above all, he reminds them over and over to love one another. The whole letter is based on the understanding that his readers can only grow into healthy disciples as part of a loving community of believers. Even the most challenging trials can be overcome if 'stand firm in the faith together'.

The suffering we must endure if we are to follow Christ will last only for a 'little while', whilst the glory we will share with Christ and one another will last forever.

Discussion: How can we encourage one another to 'stand firm in the faith' in the face of Satan's attempts to stop us?

TO FINISH

Can you remember your list of qualities that define a 'healthy disciple'?

Have these changed at all during your time studying Peter's first letter?

What are the encouragements and lessons we can take from his letter as we seek continue to grow into healthy disciples?



Back to the beginning.

Our vision statement for this year is to *multiply healthy disciples* and *transform communities*.

These Bible studies have been based on a single premise, namely that if we become healthier disciples, we will inevitably multiply and as a consequence we will transform communities.

So, these studies are only a starting point but hopefully they will point us in the right direction as we continue on our way, filled with the living hope and inexpressible and glorious joy of knowing Christ, who has gone into heaven before us and is seated at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.



And remember ...

We have only scratched the very surface of the wonderful truths to be found in the letter. There is far more to learn than we have uncovered so far. Nevertheless, by God's grace we can take what we have learnt here and build on it together.

May the Lord bless and keep us as we strive together to become healthy disciples. May we multiply and prosper and, as we do, may we see our communities transformed to the eternal glory of our God and Saviour. Amen.

