

In “The Chronicles of Narnia, the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe”, a story by C.S. Lewis, the author has two girls, Susan and Lucy, getting ready to meet Aslan. Two talking animals, Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, prepare the girls for their encounter with Aslan – who they assume to be a man.

Mr. Beaver responded, “Aslan – a man? Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the woods and the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the Sea. Don’t you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion – the Lion, the great Lion.”

“Ooh!” said Susan, “I’d thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.”

“That you will, dearie, and make no mistake,” said Mrs. Beaver, “if there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.”

“Then he isn’t safe?” said Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver. “Don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about being safe? Of course, he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

In this story by C.S. Lewis, Aslan the great lion represents the Lord, and I think this description of Aslan by the Beavers serves as a good springboard to lead us into our passage this morning.

Last week we focused on the idea that hope leads to holiness, stemming from two commands by Peter – first to **fix our hope** on the return of Jesus, and secondly to **be holy** because our heavenly Father is holy. As children of God, who identify with God, there should be a family resemblance to God – our Father. That’s the idea behind holiness. We want to look like our Father.

This morning, we are going to continue with the subject of holiness – more specifically, we are going to consider other motivations for living a life of holiness. So, turn with me to **1 Peter 1** and were going to begin with **verse 17**.

¹⁷If 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;

In this verse, Peter continues to explore the believer’s relationship as a child to their heavenly Father, which is to be an intimate relationship, but Peter reminds his readers, and us as well, that our heavenly Father, the Father we identify with, the Father who desires to hear our voice, the Father we run to, the Father who loves us far beyond we could ever know – that Father – will also judge us someday.

I thought the idea of judgment might catch some people of guard a bit, and I was curious what others thought about God's judgment towards them, so I asked the question: **As a believer, as a Christian, will God judge you?** As I expected, the answer was pretty much the same – as a born-again believer, God will not judge us because Christ has already taken our judgment upon Himself, and that is absolutely true when it comes to the matter of our salvation.

The Bible is very clear, we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone – period – end of story, but what some don't realize is that our works will still be judged. What we do – and why we do what we do, will be judged by God. As believers, what you do in this life – matters in this life, but it also matters in the life to come.

As believers, the Bible teaches that our works will be judged, not to determine our salvation, not to determine our eternal destiny, but to determine our rewards in heaven, and I want to share a few passages with you that teach this very truth.

Let's start with **Romans 14:10-12**, and keep in mind that Paul is writing to believers in Rome, and this is what he said.

¹⁰But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." ¹²So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

Paul was talking to believers, explaining that each one of them, Paul included would give an account to God. Now, in **1 Corinthians 3:10-15**, again Paul is writing to believers – this time to the church in Corinth, and he says this:

¹⁰According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

As believers, our works will be impartially and fairly judged, not to determine our salvation – I want to stress that again – that’s been settled, but to determine our rewards in heaven. According to this passage, some of our works will pass God’s high holy standards and other works will not, and the sad part about this judgment is that people will discover just how much they wasted in this life – focused on things in this life that just don’t matter. And, it’s not that these believers live immoral lives, but their focus is on their own kingdoms rather than the kingdom of God. Their focus is on their own agenda instead of God’s will. Their focus is on the things of this world that literally have no eternal value – instead of the things of God. They may suffer loss.

Let’s continue in **2 Corinthians 5:9-10**, where Paul is writing to the same church in Corinth, and he tells them:

⁹ Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

One day, as believers, we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ – also called the *Bema seat*, because the Father has deferred His judgment to the Son, and whatever works we have done – they will be judged.

And, I have one more. Look in the book of **Revelation 22:12**, where Jesus says,

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”

One day in the future, Jesus will impartially and fairly evaluate how we lived our lives in the here and now – looking to find something good – looking for good works so that He may reward us. That’s what will happen for each of us. We will all have to give an honest account, and I fear there are some who have taken the attitude that because of God’s grace and mercy, their behavior will just be swept under by the rug and go unnoticed by God. Not true! God knows what you do, and He knows why you do what you do. God knows your heart, and in the future, there will be a judgment of your works to determine your rewards.

So, in light of this future judgment, Peter commands us to **conduct ourselves in fear** since our time is short in this world – in other words, be holy, be different, be set apart in your entire way of life. Be holy in your walk, be different in your

manner of life, for there is no need to be anchored to this world, there is no need to follow the ways of this world since we are just passing through it. As Peter has already told us, we are just strangers here. This is not our home.

Now before we go any further, let's talk about this word **fear** for a moment because I want to make sure we understand this. In this passage, the Greek word for **fear** is "*phobos*" and it's the root for our English word "phobia." When attempting to explain this word **fear**, people sometimes explain it as being a *respect* for God, but if Peter meant it to be *respect*, he could have used the word *respect* – but he didn't, so we don't want to make the mistake of watering down this word **fear**. On the other end of the spectrum, we don't want to exaggerate this word either to suggest that we are to cringe in absolute terror of our heavenly Father. That's just as bad as watering it down, and that's not what our Father wants. So, this **fear** that Peter has mentioned is somewhere in the middle – somewhere between mere respect and absolute terror.

The best I can determine, the middle ground for this word **fear** seems to be the word *reverence* and it carries the idea of falling down to the ground in awe, mixed with a feeling of dread and wonder before someone who is considered much superior. This is what we read in **Revelation 1:17**, when John saw the Lord in heaven, and John told us,

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid."

That's the picture of reverent **fear**. It implies humility on our part and it flows out of a relationship of *knowing* who God is. This kind of reverent **fear** is the serious feeling you get when you *know* that a perfect holy God, who knows everything about you and still loves you, is watching you – and you don't want to disappoint or offend Him. It's a reverent **fear** that leads us to holiness and obedience and causes us to step away from anything that would displease our heavenly Father. It's a **reverent fear** that comes from *knowing* that God will impartially and fairly judge all of our works in the light of His high standards.

So, Peter tells us, if you have an intimate relationship with God – the God you call your heavenly Father – that's great, but be mindful of the fact that God will also judge your works – so, out **reverent fear** for God, live your lives, behave in such a way as to honor Him. That's a motivation for a life of holiness isn't it, and if that's not motivation enough for you, then let's move onto **verses 18-19**.

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.

In this passage, Peter presents with another motivation for living a life of holiness, maybe the highest motivation for holiness – knowing that we were bought at a very costly price – with the blood of Jesus.

Peter uses the word **redeemed**, which is a word that is at the very heart of Christianity. The word means “*to release, to set free by paying a price or a ransom.*” For us, **redeemed** is a theological term, but for the people in the first century under the rule of the Roman Empire, it was more than just a theological term – it was a desired experience. In those days, there were millions of slaves in the Empire who longed to experience the reality of that word **redeemed**; whereby, they could pay the price or someone else could pay the price to set them free from their bondage – to purchase their freedom.

Freedom isn't free, and our redemption came at a very high price. Every person, in their natural state, is born into bondage – the bondage of sin, and the Bible teaches that the ransom price demanded for sin is death. The price for sin that justice requires is death – something costlier than any amount of silver or gold could cover. So, in order to purchase sinners from the bondage of sin there must be death. According to **Hebrews 9:22**, without the shedding of blood, which is simply an expression for death – without death, there is no forgiveness of sin. So, the price of sin is death. But we are told that Jesus **redeemed** us. **What did He do?** He paid the price that sin demanded to set us free. Jesus shed His blood to purchase us out of our bondage to sin and set us free forever. It's a picture of the doctrine of substitution where an innocent victim gives his life for the guilty, and Jesus was the only innocent sinless person who could make that sacrifice on our behalf. Only His precious blood could pay the high price of redemption for sinners.

Several years ago, in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, George and Vera Bajenksi's lives were changed forever. On February 16, 1989, a very normal Thursday morning, the phone rang at 9:15 a.m. "There's been an accident..." It involved their son Ben.

As they approached the intersection near the high school, they could see the flashing lights of the police cars and ambulance units. Vera noticed a photographer and followed the direction of his camera lens to the largest pool of blood she had ever seen. All she could say was, "George, Ben went home--home to

be with his Heavenly Father!" Her first reaction was to jump out of the car, somehow collect the blood and put it back into her son. "That blood, for me, at that moment, became the most precious thing in the world because it was life. It was life-giving blood and it belonged in my son, my only son, the one I loved so much." The road was dirty and the blood just didn't belong there. George noticed that cars were driving right through the intersection--right through the blood. His heart was torn apart. He wanted to cover the blood with his coat and cry, "You will not drive over the blood of my son!"

Then Vera understood for the first time in her life, one of God's greatest and most beautiful truths...why blood? Because it was the strongest language God could have used. It was the most precious thing He could give-- the highest price He could pay. Through God's amazing love we were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

By the blood of Jesus, we are redeemed from the bondage of sin, and Peter adds that we are set free from our empty and miserable and sinful way of life – a life trapped in the corrupt fleshly desires for the things of this world – the desire for possessions, the passion for pleasure, and the lust for power and prestige – things that have no value in eternity. **Didn't Jesus speak to this?** In **Matthew 6:19-21**, He said,

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What's Jesus talking about here? He talking about misplaced values and priorities and ambitions – all of which we already know, will be judged by God. So, since this world is not your home, set your heart on the things above, fix your mind on God's kingdom and His will, and sure enough, your works will follow you.

Okay, let's move to **verses 20-21**.

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.

This is an interesting passage and it may surprise some of you.

The death of Christ was not simply a panicked, emergency, plan-B approach by God after sin occurred. Nor was it an accident or twist of fate. The death of Christ (the ransom price) was planned before the creation of the world. Redemption through the death of Jesus Christ was a plan made in eternity past, and when the timing was just right, God sent His Son Jesus, who died and shed His blood on the cross.

So, there was a Savior before there was sin. God already had the solution long before there was a problem.

Now, there is something else in these verses that could be easily missed. Peter tells us that the death of Jesus Christ, planned prior to creation, was **for the sake of you**. We should not view Christ's death as some generalized, distant, impersonal event. Peter personalized the death of Christ for each of us – individually. Yes, Jesus died for the whole world some two thousand years ago – but still, He had you in mind when He did so. It's a God thing.

When we consider the sacrifice by Christ for us on a personal level, certainly we should want to obey God and live our lives in holiness in the here and now.

A little boy went up to a missionary Sunday School leader in a pagan country. The boy said, "I like what you say about the God of the Bible, but I can't see Him. But if I go to the temple, I can see my god."

The missionary said to the little boy, "Listen, does your god bleed?"

The boy said, "I don't know."

The missionary gave him a pin and said, "Next time you go to the temple, when no one else is watching, prick him and see what happens."

The following week the boy returned to his Sunday School class, and he said to the missionary, "I did it, I did it, I pricked my god."

The missionary said, "And what happened?"

The boy replied, "Nothing, my god doesn't bleed."

Straight away the missionary said, "But my God did! He bled for me and He bled for you!"

Source Material:

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