

The Blessedness of Living Life Before the Face of God

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Our Identity in Christ

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Bible Text: 1 Peter 1:17-21
Preached on: Sunday, January 29, 2023

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Amen. Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 1. I appreciate Dalton preaching last week while we were out of town. A wonderful conference, the Founders Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention last week in South Florida. The weather was great. It was a wonderful time of hearing God's word. You may have an opportunity to go online, and those messages should be up pretty soon at founders.org. Some tremendous messages that we heard. But it's good to be back this morning and to worship the Lord together and be back in 1 Peter.

And so we come to this passage this morning. We'll be looking at verses 17 to 21 of 1 Peter 1. But I want to remind you just briefly of the context. Remember, Peter is writing about, or his concern is to help believers to be faithful in the midst of increasing opposition culturally. Persecution is growing and going to become much more intense. And so God, in his providence, has Peter write this letter to believers to prepare them to endure and to remain faithful to God in the midst of increasing difficulty. That's his purpose in the whole book. And then we noted that he begins this book, he's trying to help people to know how to stand firm in the midst of great opposition and persecution. What do you need? What do you need? Well, first of all, he emphasizes that they have a foundation of gratitude. In the first 12 verses of 1 Peter, he focuses on the great blessings that are ours in Christ, that we should know what they are and be grateful for them, actively thank God for them, and that gives us a foundation of strength. And then in verses 13 to 25, he turns to some key issues that we need to build upon that foundation of gratitude. We noted that there are four imperatives in these 13 verses. In English, it looks like there are more commands, but there's really in the Greek and the original language, only four actual imperatives, commands. And the first is in verse 13, we need to fix our hope on the grace that will come to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. We need to actively set our hope on the grace that will come when Jesus returns when we will be transformed. And the second we looked at two weeks ago, last time that I was here, and that command is to be holy, to pursue holiness. So we need to fix our hope. We need to pursue holiness and to pursue holiness means to see that our lives are set apart unto God, that we belong to God, that we are here for the purpose of worship, that all of our life belongs to him, that we have been set apart from the world for his purposes. And we come this morning to a related, closely related topic to the issue of holiness, but a third

command and that is that we need to live, conduct ourselves in the fear of God. See, that's the imperative in verse 17. And so the idea is we need to live in the fear of God or to live as has often been used a Latin phrase, coram Deo. We need to live before the face of God, actively set our minds that everything that we do, we do before the face of God, in his presence. That's what it means to live coram Deo and this is what Peter is exhorting us to in these next five verses, 17 to 21, that we would live before the face of God, live in the fear of God. And we're going to see the blessedness of living coram Deo and that's the title of the message "The Blessedness of Living Coram Deo, Before the Face of God." The blessedness, the joy that is ours, the beauty of living life before the face of God.

So let's read God's word. We'll read verses 13 to 21 to get the context, the immediate context right before, and we're focusing on 17 to 21.

13 Therefore, 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. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." 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.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we come this morning to worship You and to hear from Your word, to allow You to instruct us, teach us, O Lord. We ask You as the prophets, speak, Lord, Your servant is listening. Your servants are listening. Speak to us from Your word. Show us, Lord, how to live in ways that are pleasing to You, our precious Father. And we ask this in the name and for the glory of Christ. Amen.

So the beauty of living, coram Deo, the fear of God. The outline is basically two points this morning. We're going to talk about the exhortation, then we're going to spend most of our time on motivation because what he does is he issues a command and then he gives us reasons to obey that command. So that's how the flow of the text is. There is the command, the exhortation, and then there is motivation.

So we're going to start with exhortation. What is the command? What are we exhorted to do? What are we commanded to do? We are commanded to conduct ourselves in fear. To conduct ourselves in the fear of God. The King James says, "pass the time in fear." The

NIV says, "live your lives in fear." And NAS and ESV both use that phrase, "conduct yourselves in the fear of God." It means to live all of your life. We're going to see this. The word is used. It's interesting, the command is not fear God, though he could certainly say that, it is conduct yourselves in fear. And the word "conduct yourself" is a word we've already encountered in this passage in verse 15 when he said, "be holy yourselves in all your behavior." Same root word. That's the noun there. Here we come to the verb form of the same word. And Peter uses this word again in verse 18. It's translated, I'm reading the New American Standard, "as way of life." So behavior, way of life, conduct. Conduct yourselves. The verb. The Greek word, the verb itself, means "to turn up; to turn around; to turn about," and the idea is to turn from one thing to another. And so he's saying, and he uses this behavior, all your behavior, your way of life, it means everywhere you go, everything you do. That's the word he's using. So conduct yourself, whether you turn this way or you turn that way, or you turn this way or you turn that way, the issue is, do it in fear of God.

So he places emphasis on the fact that the fear of God is to be applied to every single thing that we do. Every single thing that we do. And the fear of God basically means that we're aware of his presence at every moment. That's what it means to live before the face of God, to realize that his eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, that he scrutinizes the path of the righteous, that he looks carefully and in a focused way at every moment of every day of everything that you and I do. He's not a distracted Father. He is completely focused and aware of everything. And so this is what Peter is saying. "Listen, cultivate and remember that all of life, everything that I do is lived before a loving Father who is looking closely at every detail."

Now where he's going to show us, this is something that we should delight in because the fear of God is important for us to understand the concept of the fear of God. Fear is one of the most important words in the Bible. It occurs over 600 times in the Bible. The verb "command" in the Old Testament. The word "fear" as a verb is used 335 times in the Old Testament, almost 80% of those are commands or related to fearing God. Fear God. Or he feared God. He was the fear of God. Abraham, he was the fear of Abraham. God was the fear of Abraham. And so the idea is fear God. Well, what does fear mean? Well, fear means to be afraid. It means dread, to be scared. But it also means reverence and awe. And what we have here is clearly in this context, it lays it out for us that the fear God is calling us to is the fear of a child for his parent. In fact, sometimes it's broken down by theologians this way, fear can be either servile fear or filial fear. Servile, s-e-r-v-i-l-e. That's the fear of a servant to a harsh and cruel master. That's servile fear. Filial fear, f-i-l-i-a-l, comes from a Latin root which speaks of sons or daughters. Filial fear is the fear that a son or daughter has toward a loving father or a loving parent, loving mother. That is, filial fear is fear accompanied with love. It comes together with love. Servile fear is fear that is accompanied by hatred. The unbeliever, the unregenerate has servile fear of God. The demons have servile fear of God. This is what James is talking about when he says, "You fear God, you do well, the demons also do and tremble." It's not enough just to fear God in that way. Yeah, anyone with any sense fears judgment. They fear the wrath of God if they have any concept of it. And truly, everyone does have that reality. It's written in their hearts. Even though they try to suppress that truth in unrighteousness,

they can't escape it. And servile fear is the fear that people have who don't know God and who hate God. They fear the wrath to come and they wish there was no God or that God were different than he is. But filial fear is that which happens when God regenerates the heart and now we come to see God as our precious loving God who has brought us into his presence and yet still who remains the King of kings and Lord of lords, who is the Most High God, who is holy, holy, holy. And so he's our Father, we come with an appropriate sense of reverence and awe into his presence.

So that's what he's talking about in this passage and it's made abundantly clear because he reminds us again that who is God? He's our Father. It's been a key part of the passage. I read earlier, I read that previous passage to remind us when he was calling us to holiness, which we saw two weeks ago, it was as obedient children pursue holiness. It's the relationship that we must not forget. In fact, that comes, the command is to fear God, to live in awe and reverence of God and to bring it to every part of your life. So that is, you know, every area of your life, everything that you do, how do you bring it into the presence of God? You think about your roles in life, the things that you're called to do. Are you a husband or a wife? Do you have a spouse? Your role as husband or wife should be brought before the Lord and lived out in such a way as you know that God is watching everything that you do. He's your loving Father, but he's a Father we're going to see in a moment, who is an unbiased judge. So the way that you speak to your spouse, God's watching. The way that you treat your spouse, God is watching. Are you a parent? The way that you treat your children, God is watching. He is evaluating. Like I said, he doesn't get distracted. He's not like us parents who, you know, the very best parent can be fooled, can be distracted, but not God. And so every area, your work, are you a child? How are you treating your parents? God's watching. Are you a student? How are you approaching your studies? God is watching everything that you do.

And so the message is conduct yourselves every part of your life, bring into the presence of God. It's already there. It means you're acknowledging and remembering and realizing what is already the fact because we forget because God's invisible to us. We can't see him. We tend to fear other people because we see them but if we had any sense, we would never fear people, we would only fear God. I mean, they're saying you can fear some of the people all the time, you can even fool all the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time. It doesn't matter who you can fool. You can never fool God at any time. So if you've got everybody fooled for some time, it really doesn't matter because God knows your motive and your heart. And so don't worry about it. We should, relatively speaking, we care about people, we're being kind and gentle, we're to try to do what is appropriate, certainly, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, but we should only fear God. In fact, if you fear God, you need fear nothing else.

There's so much application to this issue. I was reading Isaiah 6 to 8 yesterday morning, my devotional reading, and it was really a great passage to read. I encourage you to read it. The next time that you're looking at the news and you're getting kind of angry and also that anger coupled with some fear, what's going to be happening, what's it going to be like for our children, our grandchildren, how long can the world be like this? Go and read Isaiah 6 to 8 because what you see there in Isaiah 6 is when Isaiah sees the Lord. "It's in

the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." So the king dies. He was a king that had ruled over Judah in a time of great prosperity. When he dies, now there's always uncertainty when the king dies, what's going to happen now? What kind of king are we going to have? Well, they got some bad kings, Jotham, then Ahaz. And so things have turned down. And in fact, they're in a time of great crisis as you read on in chapter 7 and 8 because the northern kingdom of Israel is trying to attack the southern kingdom now. Remember the northern kingdom, they're all Jews, but the northern kingdom, the 10 tribes are trying to attack the southern kingdom of Judah. They want to take the king off the throne and put somebody else on the throne, get rid of the descendant of David. And they're cooperating with Assyrians, the Arameans, and the people in Judah are scared. They're trembling. And they're hearing about these kind of intrigues that are going on, that because it's Jew versus Jew, some of the northern kingdom, they've got some spies and they're trying to work things out to get rid of the southern king and so everybody's, you know, hearing conspiracy theory stuff, and so it says in chapter 8, "Don't you call a conspiracy what they call a conspiracy. Don't you fear or dread what they fear or dread. You fear Me." He's talking to Isaiah and through Isaiah to everybody else. "Don't fear what they fear. You fear God." And Isaiah had seen the Lord and he knew all he needed to do was fear God because all the other stuff doesn't really matter when you see who God is. And what's really the key point of that is that God is doing everything. In fact, if you read the first five chapters of Isaiah, especially chapter 1 and 2, you see that, hey, the Lord said he was going to judge Judah when they were sinning like this and so what's happening with this whole conspiracy is actually God is moving the events of history.

Now, think about that. We look at all the, you know, the grandeur that we see with our eyes and the danger that we see with our eyes, the people, but what Isaiah is saying is, "Listen, the reason that evil is coming in like a flood is because God has opened the floodgate and has ordained this. The issue is not what the people are doing. It's who God is and what he's doing." And that's true today, and so we can look at what's going on in our world and we can be appropriately saddened as we see, you know, foolishness reigning, people being deceived and destroyed by the deception that they're believing. We can be grieved at the same time and we can pray for their souls and we extend the gospel and we plead with them to come to Christ, but at the same time when they don't, when evil comes in like a flood, we can also at the same time praise God who is demonstrating and displaying his wrath, his holy wrath against sin.

And so if you fear God, you need fear nothing else and so Peter is calling them to fear God, is calling us to bring every part of our lives under the fear of the Lord. That's the exhortation. Conduct yourselves in the fear of God, bring everything in your life before the face of God to see everything that I do, the hobbies of your life, the interests of your life still before the face of God, enjoy them in his presence. So that's the exhortation. Now the motivation and this is where we'll spend most of our time. He provides reasons or inducement. "So good and gracious is our Father." He doesn't just give us a command, he gives us reasons that we should obey this command. He doesn't have to do that. I mean, he's God. He can just say, "Do this because I said so." Right?

But he gives us reasons and there's basically two main reasons with some subpoints on each one. When you look at this, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear." The first reason or motivation to live before the face of God, to live in the fear of God is because of who God is. So number 2A) because of who God is and we're going to see the second major point is because of what God has done. He says fear God because of who God is, fear God because of what God has done.

First of all, fear God because of who he is. Who is this God that we are to live in reverence in awe of, fear which is that kind of respect and loving, filial fear that a child has for a parent? Well, he's your Father. "If you address as Father." This is one place the NAS doesn't get it quite right. I think "address" would be better translated "call on." And really it's a present tense participle here. This is a participle that is translated, "If you address as Father," some of the other translations, "If you call on." Literally, it could say, "If you are calling on a Father. If you are calling on a Father who judges everyone." That's that's the idea. If you are continually day by day calling on a Father. He's reminding us that the privilege of being a Christian, the privilege of having a new heart when God opens your eyes to see the beauty of what Christ has done, his death on Calvary and you repent and believe and place your faith in Jesus, you are adopted into God's family and he sends forth his Spirit crying, "Abba Father" into your hearts. Romans 8:15 makes this point and also Galatians 4:6, that the Spirit of God is given to us and now we cry out in our times of need and our times of of anguish when we we feel overwhelmed, God has put his Spirit in to cry out, "Abba, Father," that is, "Papa daddy." We call God our dad, our papa.

And he understands, listen, it's wonderful to know that God is your Father. I mean, this is the most wonderful news in the world. This is what John says when he says, you know, "How great a love the Father's bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God and such we are." It's amazing that God has loved us enough to make us his children. But he says, "Don't presume upon that relationship." Yes, he is your loving Father but if you are calling Father the one who impartially judges according to each man's work, that ought to affect the way you live. You have a daddy in heaven who is scrutinizing everything and who sees everything.

You know, think about like if you were, you know, father and son woodworking. Let's take that as an example. And the father is teaching the son to do woodwork and the father is a skilled craftsman and he's got other workers there. He's got other people working for him besides his son and his son knows he's got a special relationship with his dad. And so his son, you know, is a little sloppy on some of his work. But his father is someone who comes and looks at every single piece that is done and he looks to see how did he cut that line? Is that line cut like it should be? Are those screws placed exactly where they should be? Are they tightened to the right level? Are they done to my specifications, to my standard? Now, if you have a dad who doesn't really look that closely, if you have a dad like me that would be inspecting woodwork, you've got it made. "It seems all right. Okay, good. Good work." But if you have a master craftsman who looks at it, it would change the way you do that, would it not? And it's not because you're afraid he's going to fire you. No, you're not an employee. You're a child. It's you're afraid that you would

disappoint your father. But you know his standards and so by his grace and by his power, you can't do it yourself, by his grace, by his power, you want to do the very best that you can to please him.

That's the idea he's getting at here. He is your father, but your Father is the judge of all men. He sees everything and he sees everything about everything and he cuts to the chase and knows exactly what has gone on and how to evaluate it. He's getting at the fact that, you know, he is now, in fact, the word translated "judges," it is a present tense Greek participle "who impartially judges," and the Greek present means ongoing action. He's continually judging. He's judging every single thing at every moment of time, all the time. He's never not judging. And it's so hard for us to relate to this because we can't do two things at once, or some of us can, some of us can't. But we can't do more than a few things at once. God can do an infinite number of things at once and he's not distracted in any way from anything else he's doing. Such is our infinite God. So he's able to know everything about what he's evaluating. At the same time, he's loving the person who belongs to him and he's wanting their best, but he is looking critically at it to see what has been done.

And he's keeping that in mind because he's going to judge us. In fact, just as Christians, we will experience a judgment of our works. Every work will be judged in heaven. God will do this. It will not take a long time. I don't know how it's going to work, but it's not going to be something that's going to last forever. It's going to be very quick, but he's going to judge everything. Listen to these verses from 1 Corinthians 3:10 to 15, "According 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. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each 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. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss." There will be a future judgment of every work that we have done as Christians. Our Father is even now, he already knows right now what's going to happen with it. It's not like it's going to be found out then. He knows, he's judging now, but we will find out on that day the works that we've done. We're talking about works now. We're not talking about whether we go to heaven or not. The only basis for the final judgment that the ultimate basis is whether you are in Christ or you are not. If you know the Lord Jesus Christ and you placed your faith in him, you will not be judged for your sins. All of your sins have been paid for in Christ. There remains no condemnation for them. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. So you are entering into heaven, and you will receive rewards, the question is, how many rewards? That's what this judgment is talking about.

He speaks of the same thing in 1 Corinthians 4:3-5. He says, "it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court," 1 Corinthians 4:3, "I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes." He says we can't really pass

judgment on each other. We don't know, but there is one who does know. You can also look at 2 Corinthians 5:9, and 10. It speaks about us appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, so that we may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he's done.

So the believer is judged for rewards, and it's happening now. God is already judging everything that we do. And if we know that, everything that you do is being scored by the Lord, evaluated by the Lord. Yes, he loves you because of Christ. Yes, you're going to heaven, but doesn't that make you want to take things a little more seriously when you remember that? That's who God is. He is your Father, who is also the judge of all men. So that's the first motivation because of who God is. The second motivation is because of what God has done. The reason we should want to live life, in every part of our lives, as though God is present, as he is, but he says, be reminded of what he has done for you. In verse 18, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

What has God done? He has redeemed you. The God that you stand before, and listen, I want you to think about this, he's talking about our relationship with God the Father. Sometimes and the wonder of being a Christian is, we have a relationship with a Triune God, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Each equal in power and glory. Each worthy of our adoration and praise. We pray sometimes to the Father, sometimes to the Spirit, sometimes to the Lord Jesus. But generally, we're taught to pray to the Father through Jesus but we need to remember that the Father loves us. This is what he's getting at. I want you to see your relationship with the Father. Sometimes, there's been false teaching that gets into the church sometimes, that makes it look like the Father and Jesus aren't on the same page. Like the Father is the God of wrath, and Jesus is the one who saves us from the Father. Well, the reality is, the Son and the Father are God's wrath. They both have wrath. If you don't believe that, there's a lot of verses you can look at. Revelation, just read that carefully and you'll see it. But Psalm 2, the king that God has installed is angry, and you better kiss the Son before he becomes angry.

So, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are completely of one mind about everything and so, if someone tries to make it look like the Father is different than the Son, that is a heretical teaching and what he's telling you right now is, he says, "Look at your Father. Your Father redeemed you." Other verses are talking about Jesus redeeming us. He is the Redeemer. He's the one who paid the price. But here it's saying, the Father paid the price because it's true. Both are true. He's saying the motivation for living before the face of God is that your Father has redeemed you. He's the subject of the verb here, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things but with precious blood as a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ, for He was foreknown." He's saying, the Father decided before time to give his Son as the payment. It wasn't just the Son deciding to do it. No, the Father is the one who gives the Son. That's the emphasis of this passage. So he's saying live your life in fear because look how much God loves you. Look how much this judge of all the world has loved you and loves you. Look what he paid for you.

Now the idea that this word "redeemed," it's important for us to take a moment to explain that. The word "redeemed or redemption" is a word in the first century which spoke of someone paying a redemption price to redeem someone from slavery or possibly a prisoner of war. They would pay the price and they'd be set free. The slave would be set free. The prisoner would be set free. And so He's saying God paid the price for you to be set free. He redeemed you from slavery, and the emphasis is on the great infinite cost. Look how he emphasizes it too. He doesn't just say, knowing that you were redeemed with precious blood, could do that. But he starts off with a negative then a positive to emphasize even more the wonder of what he paid. He says, "knowing that you were redeemed not with silver or gold but with precious blood as of a lamb unblemished and spotless." God didn't take all the money in the world and buy you back. That wouldn't have been enough, by the way. Couldn't have bought you back. He did something far greater than that. He gave the most precious thing he could give, the blood of his own dear Son. If God paid this much for you, how could you not trust his heart? How could you and I not want to live every moment in his presence, someone who loves us like that? This is why you want to live in his presence, because he's so good. He's so kind.

You know, the idea that God is the one who paid the price is something that was pictured way back in the Old Testament. I was talking with a gentleman recently and sharing that he was saying that, you know, if a person who's not real familiar with the Scriptures, he was saying that he's kind of marveling at how Jesus, you know, was crucified and had he maybe handled things differently, the Jews wouldn't have rejected him so quickly. I was like, no, that's not really it. I mean, he came to die and he was rejected because it was appointed that he would be rejected, that God had planned for him to be rejected. But anyway, one of the things that I wanted to follow up with this person was to send some things that show how the Old Testament has been telling from the very beginning that God was going to do what he did.

Look at me at Genesis 22, first book of the Bible. This certainly isn't the first place. It's talked about that we need someone to die for us in Genesis 3 because they couldn't cover their sin with fig leaves, God had to kill animals. Death happened, actual physical death happened, spiritual death happened when they sinned and started physical death but the first true death was when God killed animals to make skins to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness because without the shedding of blood, there is no covering of sin. So you have that. Then you have Genesis 15 where Abram is asking God about, it's interesting, this is the one of the times, the first time in the Bible it says, "Fear not." Genesis 15:1, God appears to Abram and says, "Fear not, I am your shield and your very great reward. Abram, you're afraid. Don't be afraid, I'm your shield and your great reward." Then they have a conversation, Abram's like, you know, "Lord, You promised me I was going to be a great nation and I've been in the land now for about 10 years and I'm 85 now, the biological clock is ticking. Sarah is 75, you know, we don't have a son." And God says, "Look at the stars, so shall your descendants be." Abraham believes and it's reckoned to him as righteousness. He was justified, he was saved. In the Old Testament, he was saved the same way that you can be saved, by believing the promise of God and looking to Christ. He was saved the same way and then it goes on, they have a covenant ceremony where God is showing him more of what it means to be in relationship with him and the covenant ceremony, they split the animals, they killed an animal, split it apart, killed

another animal, split it apart, and then they would make promises. Two parties of the covenant. This was the common way of making a covenant at that time. And they would walk through the pieces as they made the promises and the idea is, you're saying, "If I don't keep my promise, let me be like these animals." That's why you walked through the pieces. But in that covenant ceremony, only one party walked through the pieces. Abram did not walk through the pieces. God did. And so God was saying, "If I don't keep My covenant," which is unthinkable, "let Me be like these." And he was also saying, "When you don't keep your covenant, because you cannot keep your covenant, let this fall upon Me." The curse of the covenant falls upon God. That's what he said. Genesis 15, he's teaching us what salvation is.

Then you come to Genesis 22 now, and this amazing story of Abraham and Isaac. "Now it came about," verse 1, "after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.'" Now Isaac's now probably 10 to 12 or 13 years old. Born when Abraham's 100 after waiting 25 years from the original promise that God was going to make him a great nation. He receives a son and now 10 years later, God appears, 10 or so years later, God appears to him and says, verse 2, and listen to the language, look at the language that God uses, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." Take now your son, your only son, whom you love. He didn't say just take Isaac and go offer him. That would have been an easy way to kind of pull the Band-Aid off quickly. He says, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love." Abram rises quickly, saddles his donkey the next morning, takes two men with him and Isaac, his son. They take wood for the offering and they go to the place which God had told him. They see the place from a distance. He tells the servants, "Wait here while the boy and I go and worship and return to you." Now, Abram had incredible faith because Abram knew, Abraham knew that God had said, "Through Isaac your descendants will be named." Okay? But he's still wrestling with this. "Your son, your only son whom you love, sacrifice him as an offering to Me." But he, in his heart, is saying, "What is God doing? God told me through Isaac my descendants will be named. I know God is faithful. I know God is true." So he takes Isaac. He leaves his servants over here. He's got to say, "I've got to leave you guys here because you will try to stop me from doing what God has told me to do. You guys wait here. We're going over there. But we will return after we worship."

The author of Hebrews tells us Abraham had such great faith that he knew God would raise Isaac from the dead. But still, this is testing at every level, down to every cell in his body, every corner of his heart is convulsing under the weight of this request that God has made. And then even, like I said, God even makes it harder on him, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love." He doesn't say, "Hey, take Isaac. I'm going to raise him from the dead. Don't worry." He could have said that. "Don't worry. I'll take care of that." He could have reminded Abraham, "Remember, I promised you that through Isaac your sons would be named." He doesn't do that. He lets Abraham feel the weight of that and have to wonder about it and put it together in his heart because God is purifying and testing his faith. And when God brings hardship into your life, what he's doing, if you love him, if you've come to know Christ, he makes chasms sometimes in our hearts that are very painful as it happens but the chasm is made so that he can fill those chasms with

his love and his grace, and you would never know that love or grace if he hadn't done what he did in the first place.

So that's what's happening here, and so Abraham then does what he says. He goes and he's walking and the scripture says he comes to the place, verse 9, "Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him." Well, first of all, back to verse 7. I'm sorry I skipped over something. They're walking from where they left the servants and Isaac, verse 7, suddenly has an epiphany. He's carrying the wood. His father's carrying the knife. But he says in verse 7, "'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' And he said, 'Behold, the fire,' you've got the fire and you've got the knife, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" It's perfectly reasonable. This little boy, he's been with his dad when he did lots of sacrifices all throughout his life, because that's the way you had to worship God at that point in redemptive history. "We have everything except the lamb." And can you imagine how God allowed this to happen to Abraham, his heart just again being torn open?

Look what he says in verse 8. "Abraham said, 'God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.'" Clinging to God by faith. "So the two of them went on together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son." Verse 11, "But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.'" There it is again, your son, your only son. "Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, 'In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.'"

He again in verse 16 says, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you." Three times "your son, your only son." What was happening here? God put Abraham through that and the first time you read that, if you've not ever seen that before, you feel the anguish of that, and we should always try to feel it again when we read it because this is what God is showing us something incredible and wonderful.

"In the mount of the LORD it will be provided." Abraham left where he was and went two days' journey to be in what would later become Jerusalem and Mount Moriah is either the Temple Mount or the Mount Calvary. Scholars differ. It's either the Temple Mount or it's Calvary, but it's definitely Jerusalem. Before there was a Jerusalem, 2,000 years before Jesus would be offered, this event happens.

"And in the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." What is God saying? "Listen, you took your son, your only son, whom you love, and you were willing to offer him but I would never have asked that of you because I was teaching you and everyone else that would read this story that for salvation to happen, I must give My Son, My only Son

whom I love, who is far more precious than Isaac, whose blood is absolutely pure, who is sinless and spotless, a lamb without blemish or spot." The Father would give him for our salvation.

That's what he's telling us in 1 Peter 1. He's saying, "Listen, you weren't redeemed with perishable things, but you were redeemed with the precious blood of the lamb, unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." And one last thing to understand here from this passage, why does he say what he says in verse 20, "For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you"? He's saying, "Listen, God made this decision. It wasn't something He decided on a whim. Your Father decided before the creation of the world that He would pay the price of His own precious Son to redeem you. He counted the cost in eternity past, looking out over all of the future, and He determined, yes, I will pay that price for you." And Peter says in light of this, you have a Father that loves you like that, he's loved you from eternity past. You, in this sense, were chosen in him like Paul says in Ephesians 1:3, "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world." This is what Peter's saying. You were chosen before the foundation of the world. God paid the price. He knew and determined to pay the price of Jesus' blood for everyone who would believe, every single one before he created the world.

If God has loved you this lavishly, if God has loved you eternally, if this is your Father who's now says, "Live your life before Me," and you have a God that loves you like that, why would you not want, why would I not want to live every moment in his presence? He only wants what's good for us. All of the fears that we have that are left over baggage from our old man and the lies that have been inculcated throughout the centuries by the enemy of our souls, they need to be repudiated and rejected. The God who has saved us is worthy of our complete trust, our complete surrender in all of our lives.

The words of that song we sang earlier,

"I cling to Christ, and marvel at the cost:
Jesus forsaken, God estranged from God.
Bought by such love, my life is not my own.
My praise—my all—shall be for Christ alone."

This is because he loves me so much everything that I do, everywhere I turn, I should say, "Father, how can I do this more to please You? I need Your grace. I can't do it my own." He knows we can't. We need the power of the Holy Spirit. We need our union with Christ all that Jesus is for us is the only way we can accomplish anything good. But everywhere it should be, "Lord, how can I make this more pleasing to You? I want to live my whole life in holy fear, reverence and all knowing that You see everything. You know my heart." And when we know God loves us like this, you can be honest with your heart. "Lord, my motives aren't like they should be. You know that I can't fool You. Give me the motives of Christ." You know, you're reading your Bible, you're trying to spend time with the Lord in the morning and you'd rather be checking on your phone, the news or looking at the weather or whatever. Just confess that to God. Be like the psalmist. Just come and lay it before the Lord. "Lord, I don't want to read Your word like I should. I

ought to. Help me." Pour out your heart to God and say, "But I'm united to Christ. He's my elder brother. You gave Him for me and not only to deliver me from the penalty of sin, but the power of sin. He is my righteousness. He loved to spend time with You. Let that love to spend time with You from Christ fill me," and clinging to God in that he begins to transform us and we know as we become more and more like Jesus, we're pleasing our Father more and more and more. That's what God calls us to. The Christian life is a life that is to be lived in joyful, joyful service to our Father. We serve him but we serve him as sons and daughters delighting to be in his presence.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we thank You that You are such an amazing God that You would allow sinners like us to be forgiven through such an amazing sacrifice is impossible for us to be able to understand, and then to know that not only do You allow us to be forgiven, You bring us into Your own family. You call us your sons and daughters. You delight in us. Forgive us, Lord, for being so hard-hearted, for being so blind, preoccupied with the fear of man, fearing things in this world, not realizing that every moment that we live, we could be pleasing You by Your power and Your grace. And then everything that we do can have meaning and eternal value. Lord, make us more like Christ. We pray this in His marvelous name. Amen.