

Calling on the Father – First Peter 1:17

I. Introduction:

- A. The Lord Jesus was in the midst of His short period of public popularity.
- The last verse of **Matthew 4** tells us that *“great multitudes of people”* followed Him.
 - At that time He was in northern Galilee, but people came from as far away as Jerusalem and Judea.
 - In order to meet or just see Christ, people poured out of the cities of Galilee and even out of the Gentile region of the ten cities, called *“Decapolis.”*
 - Some came with their injuries & diseases, hoping for cures, calling His name & reaching out to touch Him.
 - Some came out of curiosity, and some with their questions about life and about theology.
 - First thing in the morning, when He came out of the house where He were staying, there were the crowds.
 - They were unrelenting throughout the day.
 - And that unending attention was exhausting even for God in the flesh.
 - There were times, when Jesus was so physically tried that He had to take a break to rest; to sleep.
 - Was he trying to escape when, as **Matthew 5:1** says, *“and seeing the multitudes he went up into a mountain”?*
 - Or was He simply looking for some sort of natural amphitheater in order to address the huge crowds?
 - “When he was set, his disciples came unto him,”* but it was probably impossible for the Lord to completely escape the crowds, so many of them heard the Sermon on the Mount as well.
- B. Peter was one of the men who heard the Lord that day.
- He listened with interest to the beatitudes and to instructions on marriage and heavenly investments.
 - Among other things, he heard the words and precepts of our Lord’s model prayer.
 - “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*
 - Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*
 - Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*
 - And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”*
 - Other than in **Luke 11**, we never hear any of the disciples, apostles or followers of Christ, repeating these words the way some Christians do.
 - This was not given to us as a talisman or a mantra to be repeated to ward off evil, or as a key to Heaven.
 - Jesus gave this to us in order to point out some principles to guide us in prayer.
- C. But I wonder if those words lay in the back of Peter’s mind as he was writing this first epistle to us.
- Jesus** directed us to address God as *“our Father which art in Heaven.”*
 - And **Peter** says, *“If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”*
 - This evening, let’s briefly think about *“calling on the Father”* and what Peter says about that.

II. First, we have to consider the context.

- A. Never should we isolate any verse of scripture from its neighboring verses, no matter how wonderful it may be.
- Monday I was reading a popular author as he rebuked people for thinking that the Bible was nothing more than a collection of witty sayings and proof-texts.
 - He said that it should be read as we read any other book: as a single unit with a primary purpose.
 - The Bible was given to us to glorify God. It was put into our hands to magnify Jehovah.
- B. Peter begins **verse 17** with a conjunction, tying it to the preceding thought or thoughts.
- “AND If ye call on the Father... pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”*
 - This statement flows out of the preceding, and it also sheds light upon it.
 - “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”*
 - “Sojourning here in fear”* is a part of *“be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”*

- C. And another thing which connects this verse to the context is the reference to *“the Father.”*
1. Christians are *“elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”*
 2. God and the Father *“hath begotten us again unto a lively hope”* through His *“resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*
 3. Not only have we been **begotten** of the Father, but we have been **born again**, and **adopted** into the royal family wherein we should be *“obedient children”* before our Heavenly Father.
 4. Obedient children of God yearn to be holy, because their Father is holy.
 5. And as children who love to call on the Father, they strive to pass their sojourning here in godly fear.

III. What is it Peter tells us here in this verse?

- A. His subject is *“calling on the Father,”* taking us back to our Lord’s thoughts in the Sermon on the Mount.
1. Did you call on the Father today? About what sort of things did you pray?
 2. Did you pray that God’s name would be holy and glorified through you, or that His kingdom would come?
 3. Did express your yearning for the revelation of Jesus Christ?
 4. Did you pray that the Lord would give you just what food you might need for the day? But not too much?
 5. Did you humbly pray for forgiveness for your many sins against His holiness yesterday?
 6. And did you ask for protection?
 - a. Remember, the Lord does not lead people into sinful temptations, but He does lead into testing.
 - b. It is all right to pray that the trials of the day might be manageable and useful to God’s glory.
- B. *“Calling the Father”* can certainly refer to prayer, as the Lord Jesus taught us.
1. But it can also mean much more. Webster has nearly two columns of explanation for the word *“call.”*
 2. For example, the first three churches of which I was member met on one of the weekday evenings before going out into the community to invite people to our services and to try to evangelize the lost.
 - a. Some churches call that effort *“Church Visitation,”* but at least one of mine labeled it *“Calling.”*
 - b. We had a Thursday night *“Calling program.”*
 3. For those churches *“calling”* and *“visiting”* were synonymous.
- C. *“Calling on the Father”* not only refers to prayer, but also to simply coming into His presence.
1. There is a sense in which your attendance this evening is *“calling on the Father”* – visiting Him.
 2. In fact, everything we do as obedient children is related to *“calling upon the Father.”*
 3. Because what we do in the Lord’s name is an invitation for Him to join us in that service.
 4. When you work on renovating or improving this meeting place, it could be considered an act of worship.
 5. And when you ladies prepare food for our Fellowship Sunday it is an invitation to Lord to meet with you.
 6. In these & a hundred other things, you may, or may not, depending on your heart, be calling on the Father.
 7. *“If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”*
- D. By the way, the word **“IF”** can be tricky when you find it in God’s word.
1. Sometimes it expresses doubt.
 - a. The Jews said to Jesus, *“How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.”*
 2. Sometimes *“if”* expresses doubt, but not in this verse, and not in a few others.
 3. Paul asked the rhetorical question: *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us, how shall he not with also freely I’ve us all things?”*
 - a. *What shall we then say to things things? IF God be for us, who can be against us.”*
 - b. *“If God be for us, and of course He is, who can be against us?”*
 4. We can all agree that the **Book of Colossians** was written to Christians.
 - a. In **3:1** Paul says, *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”*
 - b. He was saying, *“If ye then be risen with Christ, and of course you are, seek those things which are above.”*
 - c. Or – **“SINCE** ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”

5. Peter is not expressing doubt about these saints and their calling upon the Father.
6. Rather he is saying, *“When you call upon Him, remember the qualifying criteria.”*

- E. Christians should rejoice that God judges all men without respect to their ethnicity, their education, their gender, their wealth, their beauty or any of the other things by which people measure each other.
1. God judges without respect of persons, but according everyone’s actual condition, motivation and service.
 2. We rejoice that it is not necessary to be a Jew in order to receive proper treatment from the Lord.
 3. We don’t have to be rich or female, free or smart.
 4. God treats all the lost as equally lost and wretched, and he judges every saint based on the facts, not on any human relationship.
- F. But let’s not forget that He **does** treat every saint according to their **actual** work, heart and motivation.
1. He knows whether or not you are serving Him for the praise of other people.
 2. He knows if you are serving Him for some sort of reward or payment. *“God looketh on the heart.”*
 3. And *“we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath **DONE**, whether it be good or bad”* in His sight.
- G. But do you see the word *“work”*?
1. *“If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s **WORK**...”*
 2. Is there any special significance to the fact that it is singular and not plural?
 3. I have no doubt that the Lord is capable of judging every little action or thought we have ever had.
 4. But could the Holy Spirit be saying that the Lord puts everything into a single dossier under our name?
 5. Is it possible that sometimes the Lord looks at our lives as a complete unit?
 6. I will let you theologians answer that question later.

IV. But for now, let’s think about the point Peter is trying reach and teach.

- A. *“If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”*
1. First, recognize that because we are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we are nothing but visitors here on earth.
 2. In **verse 1**, Peter called his readers *“scattered strangers.”*
 - a. The Greek noun *“strangers”* is related to the verb *“sojourning”* here.
 - b. But actually, this *“sojourning”* is more rare, only being used twice in the Word of God.
 - c. Paul employed it in **Acts 13:17** when he said, *“The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as **strangers** in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.”*
 3. The gist of it is that we are **foreigners, aliens** and **refugees** awaiting our visa to enter the Promised Land.
 4. The holy God has an appointment calendar with your name on it, Christian.
 5. On the day of His appointment you will leave this world.
 - a. You will be given your glorious body and your Heavenly robe.
 - b. You will be given keys, so to speak, of your heavenly mansion.
 - c. And you will be home.
- B. But, as I said in an earlier lesson, you aren’t **there** yet. You are **here**.
1. *“So be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”* Live as separated unto God who is absolutely holy.
 2. Or as Peter rephrases it here *“pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”*
- C. This Bible word *“fear”* is such a misunderstood term that it can’t be clarified often enough.
1. In the context of the Christian, it is not the fear of a charging bear or lion; it is not the fear of a tornado or volcano.
 2. It is not a debilitating fear; it is not secular or fleshly fear.

3. Rather it is the fear of not sufficiently pleasing the One who loved us enough to send His only begotten Son to die for our redemption.
 4. It is a fear of not being sufficiently holy; of not being sufficiently separated from the lost world that we can't bring the Lord the glory due unto His name.
 5. It is such a mighty awe of the God who saved us that it changes us.
- D. Please turn to **Psalm 111**, and notice the well-known final verse: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."*
1. It might be argued that fear of Divine judgment and a fear of Hell, should be a part of the gospel.
 - a. I don't have a problem with that.
 - b. *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house."*
 - c. Someone might say that Christians should have a fear of God's *"angry face,"* and I suppose that is true.
 2. But let's consider the context of this verse.
 3. Just about every part of this Psalm is warm and delightful.
 - a. *"Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.*
 - b. *His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.*
 - c. *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.*
 - d. *He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.*
 - e. *He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.*
 - f. *The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure.*
 - g. *They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.*
 - h. *He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name."*
- E. The redeemed people of God... the people whom God has blessed in so many different ways...
1. The people who are delighted to praise the Lord with their whole hearts in the assembly...
 2. **These** are the souls who are exhorted to fear the Lord.
 3. In fact they are the only people who can properly fear God according to the Biblical definition.
 4. *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever."*
 5. And from where does this good understanding come?
 6. It comes from the Lord Himself when we are blessed with newly regenerated hearts
- F. Going back to Peter, I think that his reference to *"passing the time of our sojourning in fear"* is a description and explanation of what it is to *"be holy"* in God's sight.
1. If you wish to call on God's name, seeking the Lord's blessing, check to see that you are holy.
 2. If you are coming into God's presence to worship or serve Him, do so with reverence and godly fear.
 3. There are criteria to be met in our approach – our calling on – or visiting with the Lord.
 4. Holiness and fear are among those criteria.