Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

You Are What You Think
Scripture: 1 Peter
Code: 80-403

As I was thinking about what I might share with you tonight, maybe a little more personal and at the same time biblical as we stand on the edge of a brand new year. This is a time when people may typically rethink how they view life, reestablish some priorities, hit the reset button, hit the delete button and try to start all over again.

Perspective is really important and even self-speak as it's often called today, what you say to yourself about yourself and about your own life is very, very important. There are people now who are, no doubt, mulling over the ambitions that they have for the coming year, the achievements that they would like to accomplish in the coming year, the direction they would like to see their life take. But before you ever get to those kinds of things, there are some other things that you need to think about in terms of creating a structure and a paradigm for how you live your life as a Christian. And to take a look at those, I want you to go in the New Testament to the first epistle written by Peter.

First Peter is an eminently practical book and it shouldn't be too long in your life that goes by when you don't reconnect with 1 Peter in particular. It is a very dynamic book. It is dynamic in the sense that it speaks to life in a powerful way. And it is true that as you think, so you are, and thinking appropriately about yourself as a Christian is essential if you're going to be what God wants you to be. You need to sort of hit the reset button and reaffirm what it is that you're committed to as you move ahead.

Some essential, divine realities that form the structure of your own perspective on yourself as you look at yourself. Well, we're not talking about looking at something outside yourself, something beyond yourself, successes, achievements, accomplishments. We're talking about how you view yourself, how you look at your own life. And let me just say that there are a few things that Peter tells us that set really an incomparable structure for how to view your life as you move forward. And I'm going to give you as many of them as we can do in the next 40 minutes or so, and we'll edit as we go. These are things that have been a part of my thinking for many, many years and many, many decades—way back years and years ago, decades ago when I first went through 1 Peter. I was discovering these kinds of things that establish the grid of a paradigm for the life of a Christian and I want you to look at them. Many of them will be very familiar to you. You might want to jot them down as we go. You'll find them, I think, very helpful and very practical.

Number one, and here's what I think is the beginning point of an appropriate view of oneself as a Christian. Remember who owns you; remember who owns you; remember who owns you. You will notice in chapter 1 of 1 Peter, verse 18, "You were not redeemed, or purchased, or bought 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." Then verse 21, "Through Him you have become believers in God." What that's telling us is that God owns us because He purchased us. Acts chapter 20, verse 28, says that God bought us with His own blood.

Chapter 2 of 1 Peter, verse 9, "Since you have been purchased by God, you are a chosen race [Christians collectively], a royal priesthood, a holy nation." And then this: "A people for God's own possession." We have been talking through the last few years about the fact that Christians are slaves owned by God. First Corinthians 6:19 and 20 says, "You're not your own, you're bought with a price." "You're not your own, you're bought with a price." We know from the New Testament that you were chosen before the foundation of the world. Your names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life. You were chosen to be given to Christ as a part of His bride. In time the Holy Spirit convicted you, you were brought to salvation and you came to be the possession of Christ. John 6 says, "You were given to Him by God the Father." He paid the price, His blood, so that God could take you, own you, and then give you to Christ as a gift of His love. I think this is at the foundation of how a Christian views his life. You're not your own, you are bought with a price. You are not your own. And at all junctures, you have to constantly remind yourself I am not my own. I'm not a master of my own fate, I'm not the captain of my own destiny. I'm not in charge of my own life. I belong to God. Yes, there is a giving up of prerogatives, there's a giving up of personal ambitions. But at the same time, there's the promise of God that He knows best and will empower you to be everything that He wants you to be which is far more than you would ever be on your own. Everything starts with remembering who owns you, who bought you at an immense price, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the purchase price.

The picture here is a picture of a slave being bought with an extreme price. Not silver, not gold, but blood, not just anyone's blood, but the blood of the sinless Son of God. So that's where it starts. Let me give you a second one that's related to this. This, too, is part of the perspective grid that every Christian needs to have. It is this: remember who owns you, secondly, renew your oath of obedience, renew your oath of obedience.

As you go into this year, you have to renew the commitment to be obedient. You say, "Now wait a minute. Where does that commitment come in?" Let's go back to 1 Peter chapter 1 and see what Peter says about this, and it's very, very interesting.

Peter is an apostle of Jesus Christ, verse 1. He's writing to believers who reside as aliens in the world as we are all aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. They are chosen, they're the elect chosen by God according to His predetermined knowledge. Then he says

this, “They are elect according to the foreknowledge of God by the sanctifying work of the Spirit to obey Jesus Christ.” And that’s the whole point of your salvation is to bring you into obedience to Christ. This is not a burdensome obedience; this is a joyful obedience because obedience produces...What?...blessing. Obedience produces blessing in this life, grace upon grace. And it also produces reward, eternal reward in the life to come.

But you may not have realized that when you came to Christ, and you confessed your sin, and your sinfulness, and you asked Him to save you from your sins and to become your Lord and Savior, inherent in that was an oath of obedience. You were saying, “I confess Jesus as my Lord.” What that means is if He’s your Lord, you’re His slave. There was inherent in that confession—an oath of obedience.

And then in a most interesting statement in verse 2, Peter says this: “To obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.” What does that mean? That’s not talking about salvation as regards His death on the cross. There’s nothing about being sprinkled with the blood of Christ in any of the epistles of the New Testament. So what in the world is Peter referring to? What do you mean obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood?

Well, Peter is an Old Testament scholar. He knows his Old Testament. And I’ll show you where he drew this from. Go back to Exodus, the second book in the Old Testament, and the twenty-fourth chapter, one of the most interesting events between God and His ancient people Israel.

Moses, you know, has been given the Law, right? And it’s laid out in the twentieth chapter. And he brings it before the people and he starts unfolding what it is that God wants them to do. He lays out the Law of God. Verse 3, “Moses came, recounted to the people all the words of the Lord, all the ordinances, and all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words which the Lord has spoken, we will do.’” Now that is an oath of obedience. That is a pledge made to God. That, in a sense, is a covenant. The people say, “All the words which the Lord has spoken, we will do.” Then Moses wrote down all the words. First he gave them verbally, then he wrote them down. Then he arose early in the morning, and he built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars, each one for one of the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the sons of Israel and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the Lord. Then a slaughter began, a slaughter of animals because you have a lot of people here, a lot of people, numbering one or two million people in the group that came out of Egypt.

So they slaughtered these animals and then Moses in verse 6 took half the blood and put it in basins, and that word *basin* means a kind of a flat basin, much like a huge saucer, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar.

So half of the blood, the blood is all collected from these animals, half of it is put into saucers and half of it is put on this altar. Then he took the book of the covenant that he had written down and read it in the hearing of the people and they said again, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do and we will be obedient.”

Now in ancient times, how did they seal a promise? What did they use to seal a covenant or a promise? Blood. So Moses took the blood and literally sloshed it on the people. Those large saucers he just threw at the people. They went through the massive crowd, splattering everybody with blood and said, “Behold the blood of the Covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.” In that moment, a covenant was made. God said here is My Law, obey My Law and you’ll be blessed. That was God’s part of the promise. And the people said, “We will obey,” and that was their part of the promise. And to seal the covenant, both ways, blood was poured on the altar representing God, and splattered on the people representing them. That’s what Peter has in mind.

Let’s go back to 1 Peter with that scene vividly on our thoughts. When you came to Christ and Jesus Christ promised you blessing and grace and mercy and forgiveness and hope and joy and salvation, He made his part of the promise. And what was yours? To obey Jesus Christ, which is just another way to say to confess Him as your what? Your Lord. And it’s as if at that moment blood was splattered on you in the same way that it was splattered on the children of Israel at Sinai back in Exodus 24. Salvation is a covenant of obedience. In our case it’s not the blood of animals that is splattered, it’s the blood of Christ in a sort of symbolic sense, His blood is splattered on us as we affirm our obedience to Him. Can somebody be saved if they’re unwilling to confess Jesus as Lord? No. Romans 10:9 and 10, “You believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead and confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, you will be saved.”

I think sometimes we celebrate grace a little out of balance. And maybe it’s been a while since we renewed our covenant of obedience with the Lord. This would be a time to do that, to go back and say I made a promise when I was saved that when You gave me the gift of eternal life, everlasting salvation with everything that’s part of that, I confessed You as Lord. That was my part of the covenant. In so saying, I declared myself your slave and in so saying, I declared obedience to You as my Master. That’s why Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

I know we all struggle with spiritual obedience. I know we all struggle with being everything that we want to be. But the struggle becomes much easier and the victory much more likely if you renew this covenant, this oath on a constant, regular basis. Every time you sing of the lordship of Christ, as you have tonight, every time you confess Jesus as Lord in a prayer and address Him as your Lord and your God, you are affirming again your pledge to be obedient. That needs to be the forefront of your mind. True disciples continue in obedience to His revealed Word. And for us, it’s not the Mosaic Law, it’s all that is contained in the New Testament gospel.

So as you look at this year and you want to sort of reform the structure of your Christian life, start with remembering who owns you, and then renew the oath of the covenant you made at your salvation, a covenant of obedience.

Number three, and this is a very important one, remain faithful to biblical convictions, remain faithful to biblical convictions. First Peter 1:13, this is a very, very important statement. Literally the text is saying tie up all the loose ends in your mind. It's a picture of somebody, a soldier, let's say, who has a loose garment and he's going into battle, getting all the loose ends and sashing it up tight so things aren't blowing in the breeze. Tie all the loose ends together. "Gird up your loins" is what the Authorized Version said. Tie everything loose. That's actually how soldiers went into battle. They wore a kind of a modified dress, as you know. You've seen pictures of Roman soldiers and they would be easily victimized, or more easily victimized if they got into battle with their garments flying around in the breeze, so they tied them down tightly, pulled up the corners of the tunic inside and did everything they could to minimize anything that someone could grab hold of or that might be harmful to them. And that's exactly what Peter is saying. Tie up all the loose ends of your life, all your loose thinking. Make sure your doctrine is firm, your convictions are strong, and be faithful to your biblical convictions.

In chapter 2 verse 1, we find the source of these biblical convictions, putting aside all *kakia*, that's evil, and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander, like newborn babes long for the pure milk of the Word so that you may grow in respect to salvation. This is what it's saying. In the same way that a baby desires milk, you need to desire the Word of God. It needs to be your first desire. When babies come into the world, they don't—sorry to tell you this, moms—they could care less about the drapes, the color of the crib, the color of the blanket, the wallpaper. They don't care about it, they want milk, give them milk and deal with the consequences and that's all they care about. It's about the milk. And the apostle Peter is saying, in the same way that a baby has a singular passion for milk, you need to have a singular passion for the Word so that you may grow. That's where your convictions come from. We've talked about that.

First, you read the Bible, you get information. You come to understand what it says. Then as you continue to read the Word of God, that information becomes belief. And that belief then becomes conviction. And conviction is what I believe so firmly that it controls my life. And conviction then ultimately becomes affection. And that's when you say with David, "O how I love Your Law." Remain faithful to your biblical convictions. Don't be hypocritical. Don't be double-minded. Don't be duplicitous.

Another way to view that, and I love this instruction, in 1 Corinthians 16:13, we read this, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong." "Act like men, be strong." Now that's addressed not only to men but to women, and not only to adult men and women but to everybody in the body of

Christ in the family of God. Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, unwavering, uncompromising, faithful to what you know, what you believe about which you hold convictions and find a developing affection. Stand firm in the faith and act like men.

Well, how do men act? What does that mean? It actually says, “Act like men.” Well the next phrase says, “Be strong.” That’s how men act. Men are strong. Women are called the weaker vessels. Sorry, ladies, it doesn’t mean you’re weak, it just means physically speaking, men are stronger by God’s design as the providers and the protectors.

This statement in 1 Corinthians 16 “act like men,” is borrowed from the Old Testament and I want to show you the fascinating way this is used in the Old Testament. So go to Deuteronomy 31, Deuteronomy 31. This is a very important principle. This is Moses giving his final words. He’s at the end of his life, he’s 120 years old. He can’t go on. He’s not going to cross the Jordan. Joshua is going to take the people. And so in verse 6, this is what he says: “Be strong and courageous.” That’s an exact Hebrew equivalent to what I just read you. “Act like men, be strong.” Act like men means be courageous, be courageous. Be courageous, be strong; that’s what he expects out of the leader who will take his place. “For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you, He will not fail you or forsake you.” So Moses calls to Joshua, says to him in the sight of all Israel—he’s passing the mantle—Joshua will not become the five-star general in the Israeli army and lead them into the promised land. And he says, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. The Lord is the one who goes ahead of you, He will be with you, He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. Be strong and courageous.” It’s the same language as we read in 1 Corinthians, that’s how men act.

Turn to 2 Samuel, a few books to the right, 2 Samuel chapter 10. We’re going to run into this again. This is instruction from David. The Arameans are coming. They appear to be overwhelmingly strong. So what does David say in verse 12, “Be strong and let us show ourselves courageous.” The same words exactly. “For the sake of our people and the cities of our God and may the Lord do what is good in His sight.”

Turn to 1 Kings 2, 1 Kings 2—David’s time to draw to an end in his life, pass the mantle to son, Solomon, who will reign in his place. So what’s he going to tell his son? What do you tell your son when you die and he’s going to step into your throne? David says, in verse 2, “I’m going the way of all the earth. Be strong therefore and act like a man. Be strong and act like a man.” Men are strong and men are courageous. That’s what Moses told his successor Joshua. That’s what David tells his son Solomon.

Go to 1 Chronicles chapter 22, just to complete the picture here. First Chronicles 22:11, the record again of David addressing Solomon with the task of the Temple, this glorious building dedicated to

God’s honor. And in 1 Chronicles 11, “Now, my son, the Lord be with you that you may be successful and build the house of the Lord your God just as He has spoken concerning you, only the Lord give you discretion and understanding and give you charge over Israel so that you may keep the Law of the Lord your God, then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and ordinances which the Lord commanded Moses concerning Israel.” Obey the Word. “Be strong and courageous, do not fear nor be dismayed.” Fear makes compromisers out of people. Courage causes people to stand firm. And why would we exhibit courage when enemies come against us and against what we believe and against the gospel? Because we have God on our side.

In 2 Chronicles 32, these are the acts of faithfulness, “Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah, besieged the cities.” Hezekiah sees this invasion. He appoints military officers in verse 6. And then he says to them in verse 7, “Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the King of Assyria, nor because of all the hordes that is with him, for the one with us is”...What?...“greater than the one with him.”

I wish we could give that same speech to every army that went out in a just war and say, “Be strong and courageous, do not fear and do not be dismayed, for God is on your side,” but that’s not true unless they are God’s people who have covenanted obedience to Him. He is the protector of His own people.

The last one that I want to show you is in Joshua 1. Joshua got the message. You remember Moses told Joshua, act like a man, be strong, be courageous. Here it is again, the death of Moses. Moses is dead. Joshua is now in charge. Joshua calls everybody together. All his leaders, verse 6, and this is what he says, he repeats the speech Moses gave him: “Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them,” this is God speaking. “Only be strong and very courageous.” This is not only the message of Moses to Joshua and David to Solomon, and the message of Hezekiah to his people, this is a message of God. Be strong and courageous. Verse 7, again, “Only be strong and very courageous. Be careful to do according to all the Law which Moses, My servant, commanded you. Don’t turn to the right or the left that you may have success wherever you go.” Verse 8, “The book of the Law [the Bible, the Word of God] shall not depart from your mouth. You shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. Then you will make your way prosperous, then you will have good success. Have not I commanded you, says God, be strong and courageous. Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

That’s all about the courage of your convictions. So I say to you as you reset the button, thinking about how you view yourself in the future, remain faithful to biblical convictions, faithful to biblical truth. Know the Law of God. Believe the Law of God. Be convinced about the Word of God. Be faithful to the Word of God and develop a strong affection for the Word of God.

Number four, and this is a very important principle of life that Peter makes reference to: recognize all sin as a violation of a relationship. Recognize all sin as a violation of a relationship. You know, the world is full of people who violate the commandments of God, break the commandments of God. Unbelieving people break His commandments all the time. But they have no relationship to Him. This is a violation of His Law that will result in their judgment. But, believers, we have a completely different condition in which we function because we are the children of God, are we not? He is our Father. He has caused us to be born into His family spiritually. Furthermore, He has given us all the rights and privileges of an honored and adopted child. We belong to God. We have a relationship to Him. We have a relationship to Christ. Sin for us is not simply violating an objective law, it is breeching a relationship.

In 1 Peter 1:14 you could read the verse where it says don't be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance. And we would understand that. Don't live the way you did before you were saved. Don't go back to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. Don't live sinfully the way you used to live.

But the reason you don't do that is at the beginning of the verse, "As obedient"...What?..."children." You have a relationship with God. You are His child. He's your father. And you should be like Him. Verse 15, "But like the Holy One who called you into His family, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior because it is written you shall be holy for I am holy." That's repeated all through the book of Leviticus. Be holy because I'm holy. You're My children, you're connected to Me. Be holy the way I am holy. Demonstrate My life in you through your life.

You know, I think it really helps in dealing with sin to see every sin as a violation of a relationship with a loving, gracious, merciful God who chose us for eternal glory before the foundation of the world, redeemed us in time, forgave all of our sins, and promises us eternal bliss in heaven. How can I violate that relationship? That's how we have to think.

When David sinned, you know, he went up on his balcony and he saw Bathsheba and lusted for her. And then worked out a way to get her husband out in the middle of the battle that was being fought and told the soldiers, Take Uriah to the middle of the battle and then desert him, and don't cover his backside. Get out of there, leave him alone and he'll be killed and then he would not only be an adulterer but he would be a murderer, and that's exactly what he was. He worked out the murder essentially of her husband so he could take her as his wife.

When David came to his senses about his murder and his adultery, this is what he said in Psalm 51, "Against Thee, and Thee only have I sinned." He had sinned against Bathsheba. He had sinned against Uriah. He had sinned against his own wife. He had sinned against the people he was leading as king of the nation. He sinned against his own children, the child born out of that union with

Bathsheba died in infancy, and it was that kind of life that I think planted seeds for what his son Absalom became who led a revolution against his own father. He sinned against a lot of people, in a lot of directions. But when he came before the Lord on his face, he said, “Against You and You only have I sinned.” That’s when you view every sin as a violation of God. You know, you can get away with sin. If the violation appears minimal on a human level, you know, I didn’t do much damage, I stole a little bit but it wasn’t a lot, the company is not going to know. I falsified my expense report, but who is going to know that? That’s a minor deal.

It’s a very different thing if you’re not looking at the consequences on a human level, but understanding every iniquity as a violation of God whose standard is perfect.

In 1 Peter chapter 3. We read in verse 10, “The one who desires life, love, and to see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it.” Why? Verse 12, why? “For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears attend to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

You make your choice. You want God working against you or for you? Not a tough choice, frankly, not a tough choice.

All right, number five, and I have eight written down. We’ll see if we can get there in the next ten minutes. Number five: “Render love always to others.” Have a life marked by love, a life marked by love. First Peter 1, verse 22, “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls”...yes, you obeyed the gospel truth; your souls have been purified, wonderful truth. “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls,” to what end? “For a sincere love of the brethren.” One of the products of being saved is you love other believers. There’s a new level of friendship, isn’t there? A new level of camaraderie, a new level of enjoyment of those who are also in Christ because you have something profound and something eternal that you both hold to. That doesn’t mean you don’t love everybody. You do. God so loved the world; He loves everyone. And we love everyone. But there’s a unique sense in which we love believers. That’s why He says at the end of verse 22, “Fervently love one another from the heart, because you’ve been born again of an imperishable seed.”

In other words, you now have an eternal life principle operating in you that produces a love for other believers that is to be fervent. “Fervent” is a Greek word that means “stretched,” *ektenes*. It was used of a muscle that was stretched to its absolute maximum capacity. And what Peter is saying is, love to the maximum of your capacity to stretch. Render love to others. Our lives are to be marked by love.

In John 13 Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that you’re My disciples, that you have love for one another.” You know, there’s camaraderie in the outside world. There’s camaraderie in the business place. There’s camaraderie in a family. There’s a certain degree of affection among people who participate in the common enterprise, fight in battles, or on an athletic team. There’s a certain

camaraderie.

But it isn't what it is among those who are in Christ. That takes it to another level. We're not talking about sentimentality. We're talking about a deep love. And how do you define that love? Not as an emotion but as a willingness to render sacrificial service to that other person. To Jesus, "If you love Me, you keep My commandments." To everybody else, "I love you, I want to meet your needs. I love you, I want to sacrifice myself for you." That's how we're to love. Render always love to others.

So what have we said? Remember who owns you. Renew the oath you made at your salvation. Remain faithful to your biblical convictions. Recognize all sin as the violation of a relationship with God. And render love always to others. This is powerful testimony that you belong to God because it's a transcendent sacrificial love.

Quickly three more. Regard highly the effects of adversity. Relish the effects of adversity. Cherish the effects of adversity. Chapter 1 verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy caused us to be born again to a living hope, to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance"...This is all the good stuff..."an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." You have an inheritance. You're protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. That's all good. You've been saved. You've been forgiven. You've been promised resurrection, an inheritance that can't fade away, undefiled, reserved in heaven. You're protected; you're going to reach heaven. That's guaranteed.

Then verse 6, "In this you greatly rejoice." Of course! "In our eternal inheritance. Even though now for a little while if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials."

You know, this idea that Jesus wants everybody healthy, wealthy, prosperous, pain free is just absolutely a lie. All this prosperity, health and wealth kind of preaching is a fabrication and a deception. You want trials. Let me give you one good reason. Because, verse 7 says, "That's the proof of your faith." "That's the proof of your faith." That's the proof that your faith is real, because if you say, "Oh, I believe in Jesus, I believe in Jesus, I'm a Christian," and a trial comes and you collapse under that, start blaming God, deny Him, walk away. Then that trial revealed the illegitimacy of your faith. But if you're the real thing, the trial may be hard, it may be difficult, it may be painful. But when you come out the other side saying, "Glory to God, He has something better. I trust Him, I love Him, I'll follow Him no matter what the price," you have just had a tremendous gift from God, a tremendous gift from God. That's the assurance of the reality of your saving faith. Now you know because you passed the trial. And then he says this, "How valuable is that?" How valuable is it to know your salvation is the real thing? How valuable is that? It is more precious than"...What?..."gold that is perishable"—more precious than gold.

I can’t think of anything more precious than knowing my salvation is real so that I can fully enjoy it. And that becomes known to me through trials that test me, and I come out triumphant on the other side by the power of God and the grace of God.

In chapter 2, verse 19, he says, “It finds favor if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.” You know, you’re going to be persecuted for your Christian testimony, suffer unjustly. It finds favor with God. Verse 21, “You’ve been called for this purpose. You’ve been called like Christ was to suffer unjustly.”

What do you do? Verse 25, “You are...you are continually straying like sheep but now you return to the Shepherd and guardian of your souls.” What’s he saying? He’s saying trials drive you back to the Shepherd, right? You get so far away, you find yourself in the wilderness, the wild animals are around you and you turn and you race back to the Shepherd. Trials have the benefit of giving you the assurance that your faith is saving faith. And trials have the benefit of driving you in the direction of the Shepherd, which is where you want to go, casting all your cares on Him because He cares for you.

Chapter 4 verse 12, “Beloved, don’t be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you which comes upon you for your testing”...You’re going to be tested...“don’t think it’s some strange thing.” Listen to this, “To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing.” Keep on rejoicing why? “So that also at the revelation of His glory when you see Him face to face, you may rejoice with exaltation.” What does that mean? That for everything you suffer here in His name, you’ll be rewarded in eternity. Heaven will be more glorious, more glorious.

If you’re suffering, verse 16, don’t be ashamed, glorify God, glorify God. And verse 19, “Entrust your soul to a faithful Creator to do what is right. He’ll protect you, He’ll use you and He’ll reward you in eternity.”

Verse 7, “Cast all your anxiety on Him. He cares for you.” Verse 10, “After you’ve suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”

You know what trials do? They perfect you, they confirm you, they strengthen you, and they establish you. That’s why James says, “Count it all joy when you fall into various trials.” They have all these beneficial effects. That’s why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12, “I have a thorn in the flesh, I prayed for the Lord to take it away. He doesn’t take it away.” And his final testimony is one of the great testimonies in all of the New Testament. Paul actually celebrates his suffering. He says this, “Power is perfected in my weakness. I will rather boast about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weakness, insult, distress, persecution, difficulty for

Christ's sake for when I'm weak, then I'm strong." When I'm weak in myself, I'm strong in Him.

Two more. Number seven, retain the full function of your conscience. Retain the full function of your conscience. And this might have been better suited to fit in somewhere else in chronological order, but I want to point it out to you. You have a gift from God in your conscience. It accuses or excuses you. It's a mechanism in you that reacts when you do right and wrong. When you do what is right before God, it confirms you. When you do what is wrong, it accuses you. This is a gift from God. It's like pain. You say pain's a bad thing. No, pain is a good thing. Pain says you have an injury, stop doing what you're doing. Pain is a warning system. If you didn't have pain, you would die. That's what leprosy is. Leprosy is the death of all the nerves. People think leprosy eats fingers. It doesn't eat fingers. They rub their fingers off because they can't feel anything. They rub their ears off because they can't feel. They rub their noses off because they can't feel.

You're glad you have pain because pain is God's mechanism to warn you about physical damage. Conscience is God's mechanism to warn you about spiritual damage. And Peter is very aware of the role that conscience plays. First Peter 2:19, he speaks about the conscience toward God, conscience toward God. Chapter 3 verse 16, "Keep a good conscience." Chapter 3, again verse 21, he says, "Appeal to God for a good conscience." You want a clear conscience. I love the testimony Paul gave in 2 Corinthians 1:12. He was being falsely accused over and over and over and over. How did he defend himself? This is his defense, 2 Corinthians 1:12, "Our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience. My conscience is not accusing me. You're accusing me. Others are accusing me. My conscience is not accusing me. I have lived my life in holiness and godly sincerity, that's how I've conducted myself in the world and toward you." When you have a clear conscience, you're a happy human being. You're a happy human being.

One final comment. Recognize the supreme purpose of your life, recognize the supreme purpose of your life. It really comes down to two things. First Peter 2:4 and 5, you are, at the end of verse 4, "precious in the sight of God." "You also," verse 5, "as living stones." The imagery is in a temple, you're like living stones in a temple built up to the glory of God. "You are built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

What is a spiritual sacrifice? This is the purpose of my life, to offer up acceptable sacrifices to God. What is that? That's worship. Worship in every way. Worship with the mind, worship with the lips, worship with the songs, worship with behavior, it's a life of worship. So recognize the supreme purpose of your life involves worship. Paul says to the Philippians, "We are true worshipers who worship Christ in the Spirit." In John 4 Jesus says, "The Father seeks true worshipers." Our whole life is a spiritual sacrifice offered to God as an act of worship and adoration and praise.

Second, this is the companion element. Drop down in chapter 2 to verse 9, "You're a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Here's the purpose: "So that you

may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." That's evangelism, proclamation. Proclaim the excellencies of Christ and the gospel and salvation.

So your life goes upward in worship. It goes outward in evangelism. That's how you live your life. That's how we all live our lives, so that in the end, as he says at the end of verse 11 in chapter 4, "that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and the dominion forever and ever, Amen." Peter says amen and you think it's the end, but it's not. He has more to say. But for us, it's the end. And in all things God may be glorified. How is God going to be glorified? When your life is a constant act of worship and a constant proclamation of the gospel. Whatever it is you do in life, whatever your job, whatever your career, whatever earthly pathway you choose to take, whatever goals you set, the supreme purpose of your life is worship toward God and evangelism toward the lost. In fact, you should be able as chapter 3 says in verse 15, to "make a defense to everyone who asks you, to give an account for the hope that is in with gentleness and reverence." You ought to take so seriously the responsibility to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into light, that you're able to give an answer to the people who ask you questions about it. That's what we're called to do.

So maybe that will help you with the paradigm for the year ahead. Remember who owns you. Renew the oath of obedience at your salvation. Remain faithful to biblical convictions. Recognize all sin as a violation of a relationship. Render love to others. Regard highly the effects of adversity. Retain the full function of your conscience. And recognize the supreme purpose of your life.

And you can renew all of that by just going back to 1 Peter. That's why I anchored it there. Just go back over the next days and weeks and read 1 Peter and a lot more will be added to what we've said tonight.

It's been a wonderful, refreshing day, Lord, to be in Your Word and to hear You speak in this living Word. Scripture is alive, powerful, penetrating, captivating. And as Peter said, we have tasted of it and we know that it is able to feed our souls. Through it comes Your kindness and we've tasted that. Through it comes Your power; we've tasted that. Through it comes Your love, Your wisdom, all that we need. We thank You that when we live lives in this way, we are in the place to know the fullness of Your blessing. We don't deserve that. Even our best efforts fall short. But we thankfully have been set conditions that are imbedded in grace and not in law so that even though we come short of perfection, You love us and You bless us and You regard us as Your own and even as faithful and worthy of blessing and eternal reward. Help us to think of ourselves in these terms so that we face life in a way that honors You. And some day when we receive those eternal rewards, we will cast them at Your feet and give You all the glory and all the praise. Amen and amen.

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