A Life Without Loose Ends
1 Peter 1
80-355

Well we, of course, have the responsibility tonight to set our hearts toward the cross and the things of Christ and we also are very mindful of he fact that we are on the brink of a new year and this is a good time to kind of do a bit of a spiritual inventory. And as I thought about that, I was drawn to a text of Scripture that I would call to your attention for a few moments...1 Peter, 1 Peter. You might want to turn to it and we'll look at a couple of scriptures here in the first chapter of 1 Peter that will help us focus not only on the cross but on setting our priorities.

In the thirteenth verse of 1 Peter chapter 1, Peter writes, "Therefore prepare your minds for action." Now the Authorized says, "Gird up your loins, pull all the loose ends of your life together." This is kind of military language. When a soldier went into battle, he made sure that he pulled his tunic up, tied it around him tightly so that he could move freely and not be encumbered or hindered, or give any opportunity for the enemy. And as a soldier pulls all the loose ends together to go into serious combat, so we are called upon to prepare our minds for action, to call all of our thoughts into control. And then he says, "Keep sober," and what that essentially means there in verse 13 is to get your priorities right. Think seriously, think accurately, think nobly, be sober minded. He adds, "Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So in pulling in the loose ends of life, setting your priorities, you keep in mind the future revelation of Jesus Christ. We do everything we do in view of the return of the Lord when what we have done will be evaluated, and for that we will suffer either reward or the loss of reward.

As you think about your life at the beginning of a year, that's a good way to begin. This would be a time for you to begin to pull in the loose ends. That would be sinful loose ends, that would be wasteful, useless things that occupy your life and get your priorities where they should be as you anticipate the face of the Lord Jesus Christ and His glorious return, or your arrival in His presence in glory.

Now just exactly what is foundational to that? I think in this chapter there are a few things that we can look at that essentially give us a bit of a foundation for getting our lives in order, pulling in the loose ends, establishing the priorities. And I'm going to suggest a couple of them that I think you can mark out in your life as consistent perspectives that will help you keep your priorities right.

And the first one that I want to talk about, I guess I could call it, "Remember who owns you...Remember who owns you." If you'll go down to verses 18 and 19, the very familiar words, "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 without spot, the blood of Christ."

Here we have a call to a holy life. In fact, that call is familiar to anybody who reads this chapter

because it stands out dramatically in verse 16. “You shall be holy for I am holy.” What are the elements of living this holy life? This life with right priorities? This life without loose ends? This life that’s fixed on the return of Christ and our eternal reward?

The first thing is, I believe, to remember who owns you. All of that simply to say that you have been bought with a price. According to the New Testament, you’re not your own, you’re bought with a price. That is the testimony of 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20, that is the testimony of Acts chapter 20 verse 28, “You are purchased with the blood of God,” it says there which, of course, refers to the blood of the incarnate God, the Lord Jesus Christ. This blood is precious. Why? Because the Lamb who shed it is precious.

The blood here obviously refers to His death. We’re aware of the fact that it is by the death of Jesus Christ that we have been purchased by God, we have been redeemed, we have been bought. This is Galatians 3:13 that He redeemed us by coming a curse for us, that He purchased us with His own blood.

It is foundational, I think, to the believer to never loose sight of the fact that you do not own yourself. You do not exist as an independent person. You have as your ambition to please Him, as we read in 2 Corinthians 5 this morning, because He owns you. You are, in every sense, a slave of God, a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have been purchased out of the slave market, you have been redeemed with an inestimable price, the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. And as you look at your life day to day, incident to incident, event to event, it has to always be in the front of your mind that I am not my own, I have been bought. And that purchase is forever, the price was imperishable, the purchase therefore is imperishable as well. He paid, as it were, an imperishable price for an imperishable ownership of every true believer.

And so, from the standpoint of the foundational focus of the Christian life, it starts with recognizing that you are not your own. Every decision you make then should be made with the glory of the Lord in view with His praise in view, with His worship in view, with His reputation in view. How will this reflect on Him? How will it bring honor to Him? How will it enable me to serve Him? That’s what is the controlling reality of our lives. We live to bring honor to the one who purchased us. Remember who owns you. You are not your own. You have been bought.

And it’s a good thing you have been bought because in the slave market of sin, as a slave of sin, you were headed toward eternal damnation. You have been bought in order that you might be a slave of righteousness and a slave of God and of Christ.

The second thing to think about when you begin to assess how to focus on the right things, how to get your priorities right, is to remember the covenant of salvation. And Peter points that out. Go back to the beginning of chapter 1. And I don’t know if you think about salvation as a covenant but that is precisely the way it is presented here. “Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia who are chosen.” And now we jump from the temporal identification to the eternal selection, “Who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.”

That is quite an interesting statement. To be chosen...to then be sanctified by the work of the Spirit,

and that would encompass justification, regeneration, conversion, redemption...they would all be bound up in that. Sanctification is a very big word, it means to be set apart from sin. It can refer to our progressive sanctification, it can refer to our ultimate sanctification, or it can refer to that aspect of our sanctification that is connected to our redemption, our justification, our regeneration.

The point I want you to notice is the sequence. You have been chosen, you have been chosen obviously in eternity past, you have been set apart by the work of the Spirit, that would be the regenerating work of the Spirit which is the first sanctifying act. To, or with a view, or with an effect to obey Jesus Christ.

In other words, we have been saved in order to be obedient. And then this interesting phrase, “And be sprinkled with His blood....and be sprinkled with His blood.” Does that go back to the atonement? Doesn’t that seem to be out of order? Aren’t we sprinkled with His blood first of all?

Well the New Testament never describes salvation as being sprinkled with blood. It never describes it that way. So this is not describing something that we’re familiar with in the New Testament. Rather this is something from the Old Testament.

Turn, for a moment, to Exodus chapter 24 and in Exodus chapter 24 the people of Israel make a covenant with the Lord. Moses has come to them with the Word of the Lord, the Law of the Lord, and he recounts it to the people in verse 3. All the ordinances and all the people, verse 3, answered with one voice and said all the words which the Lord has spoken, we will do. This was a covenant. “They committed themselves verbally that they were going to obey the Law of God. Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord, then he arose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for 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. Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people and they said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken, we will do. And we will be obedient.’ So Moses took the blood and literally splattered it on the people and said, ‘Behold, the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.’”

This is a very fascinating moment. Covenants were a very important part of Old Testament life, as you know. This is the covenant that these people are making before God to be obedient and to signify this covenant and to create a symbolic representation of the covenant, blood is taken, it is put in flat saucers and it is just sloshed over the whole crowd. It rains blood on all of them as a...literally a symbol of their devotion to keep the Covenant. It’s almost like saying, “If I’m unfaithful to this, may I shed my own blood.”

Covenants between people in the Old Testament were very common and they were associated with blood in a very usual way. The people of Israel saw their response to the Law of God as a promise, same as the word Covenant, essentially. And they wanted to say to God, “We promise to obey You.” The purpose of sprinkling the blood was to consecrate the parties. Some of the blood is put on the altar which symbolizes God’s side of it, the other blood is sloshed on the people, symbolizing their side of it.

You say, “Well what does this have to do with us?” Well go back to 1 Peter. Peter borrows this

language, very interestingly, he says that we have been sanctified by the work of the Spirit, that's our regeneration. We have then entered into a covenant to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood. Symbolically we enter into the same kind of attitude as the people in the Old Testament. We are brought in to a covenant of obedience, a covenant of obedience. This is not referring to the sacrificial blood of Christ on our behalf, but rather the blood of a Covenant which symbolizes the devotion and the commitment to obedience. So Peter is saying, as the people in the Old Testament vowed to obey the Word of God, so when you come to Christ, when you experience the fulfillment of your election, namely the sanctifying work of the Spirit, it results in obedience and in a Covenant of obedience.

I guess you could say it this way, have the integrity to keep your promise of obedience. I doubt that there was any blood splattered on you when you were saved, pretty sure that didn't happen. But symbolically when you became a believer, if you were saying anything at that moment, you were saying, "I commit myself to obey You." That is essentially what is bound up in confessing Jesus as Lord, right? If you say Jesus is Lord, you have just put yourself in a position of being submissive and obedient to Him. And consequently, that is a Covenant, you made a promise. You turned from your sin, you repented of your sin by the work of the Holy Spirit, you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ savingly by the work of the Holy Spirit. And you promised and you affirmed that Jesus is Lord and thereby you affirmed as well your commitment to be obedient.

You know, sometimes we set that aside, don't we? We think that after we've made that Covenant at the point of our salvation, as time goes on, we take more and more control of our lives back and we need to go back to the original Covenant. Peter's point here is that you need to remember who owns you, who bought you and you need to remember the Covenant you made to be submissive and obedient to the Lord. Those are the focuses that will help you establish your spiritual priorities.

There's a third one and it's bound in this same section of Scripture. Go back to verse 14 for a moment. "As obedient children," that's what defines us, that's the outworking of that salvation, that's also the expression of the legitimacy and integrity of our Covenant promise, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance."

You don't go back and obey another master, namely lust. You stay faithful to your Lord. You maintain the Covenant of obedience to Him. And here is the focus that I want you to see. Verse 15, "Like the holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior because it is written, 'You shall be holy for I am holy.'" And here's the motivation. "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."

Now I want you to just focus on the concept of father because the third point that I want you to note is in order to keep your priorities right, number one, you recognize who owns you. Number two, you remember your Covenant with the Lord that you made at your salvation. And number three, you recognize all sin as a violation of a relationship...you recognize all sin as a violation of a relationship. And that is the essence of what it is saying here.

You are to be obedient children. You are to stay away from living by the lust that used to control your life. You are to be holy in all your behavior for He is holy and here it comes in verse 17, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, then conduct yourself in fear during the time of your stay on earth."

Christianity is a relationship, it is a relationship to God and all sin is a violation of that relationship. That is so very important to understand. All sin is a violation of that relationship. The Scripture talks about it not only in reference to God, but in reference to the Holy Spirit where it commands us not to quench the Spirit, not to grieve the spirit. We are told in the New Testament to do all that we do to honor the Lord, to do whatever work we do to the honor of Christ. Everything is spoken of relationally. Yes we are commanded to obey the moral Law of God, the Law that is unchanging, that is the same in the New Testament as it is in the Old Testament, the Moral and the Spiritual Law.

But the New Testament much more calls us to maintain the integrity of the relationship that we have. God is our Father and we are to love the way He loves and we are to behave the way He behaves as far as we can. We are to love our enemies and you're never more like God than when you love your enemies and express forgiveness as He expresses forgiveness.

When you sin, you don't really sin against a creed, you don't really sin against a code, you don't sin against an institution, even the church, you sin against a person. And that takes you back to Psalm 51 where David says that "My sin is against You, against You only have I sinned and done this iniquity in Your sight." It is essential for us to understand that sin is the violation of a relationship.

There's a fourth principle that I think I see in this opening chapter in 1 Peter that helps us get our priorities right. And this looks at it a bit on the negative sight. Embrace the effects of adversity, embrace the positive effects of adversity. Verses 6 and 7, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you've been distressed by various trials so that the proof of your faith being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Again this is that heavenly perspective. It's the same perspective that we saw in verse 13 where you're living your life with a view to the revelation of Christ. Here you're living your life with a view to the praise and glory and honor again that appears at the revelation of Christ, when Christ is revealed, either in His coming or when you see Him face to face, having left this world.

And verses 6 and 7 tell us that we are not just to rejoice, not just to be accepting of trials, but strong language, greatly rejoice though you have been distressed for a little while by various trials so that the proof of your faith being more precious than gold which is perishable even though tested by fire may be found." I'm going to stop there for a moment.

The greatest gift that you can have as a believer, I'm convinced, is assurance of your salvation. The toughest thing to try to live with as a Christian is doubt about whether you're really saved. That is a very difficult thing to experience and many believers do experience it.

The antidote, the cure for doubt is suffering, trial. Why? Because when trials come, various trials come and your faith stands the test of those trials and doesn't collapse and doesn't fail, that's the proof of your faith. And the proof of your faith, as he says there in verse 7, is more precious than gold. The most valuable thing you have is the confidence that your faith is the real thing, your faith is the real saving faith, that you're a true believer. The more trials you have, the longer you live and the more you accumulate trials, the stronger your faith becomes.

I can tell you after many years of living as a Christian, it is not my triumphs that prove my faith. It is my trials that prove my faith. The proof of the legitimacy and the reality of my faith is that it has stood the test of trial after trial after trial after trial and it comes out strong and stronger in every case.

Do you want to get your life in focus, if you want to pull in the loose ends, if you want to set your priorities right, if you want to live in the light of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, then you have to embrace the wonderful positive effects of adversity and the dominating positive that comes out of adversity when your faith is tested, it is revealed then to be the real thing.

On the other hand, if your supposed faith collapses under trial, when things just don't go the way you want them to go, and if you walk away from the Lord and abandon Him and turn from your profession of Christ as some have done, of course, in all generations, even in the New Testament time, then you have evidence that your faith is not the real thing...not the real thing. The deepest pains in life, the most challenging difficulties, the heartbreaking disappointments that come in relationships in this life with family and friends, the many other disappointments, the physical infirmities, the losses we all suffer are all opportunities for our faith to be tested and when it is tested, if it's the real thing, it is proven to be genuine. And that is more precious than gold which is perishable.

So just for tonight, I want to leave you with those four simple principles. If you want to pull the loose ends of your life together, remember who owns you. That is at the very beginning of all of this. You have to be committed to the fact that you are not your own and that the price that was paid was an infinite price, a staggering price. Remember, the covenant that you made when you were saved and renew that vow of obedience which you were so eager to make when you were so desperate to be saved. And, thirdly, consider all sin as a violation of a personal relationship with a loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and embrace adversity for its good work of making your faith evident. Peter says, "This is what proves you are real." That is a great gift. Let pray together as we come to the Lord's table.

Lord, we're grateful for the simple straightforward way in which the Scripture points us in the direction that we need to go and the way that we need to live to honor You, to enjoy You, to enjoy Your blessing and to gain an eternal reward which will be for us an everlasting joy. We thank You that the Scripture is so clear and so direct. Give us the grace to live this way, to pull in the loose ends, to establish our priorities and live in the light of eternity. Father, we thank You for our congregation in a church of faithful people, covenant-keeping people, people who understand what it is to have a true relationship to You and who cherish that relationship and never want to violate it. Thank You for a congregation of people who understand the power that trials and adversity has in life, assuring us of our faith and giving us that assurance that is the most precious of all blessings.

Lord, we thank You for purchasing us with the precious blood of Christ and for taking ownership over our lives so that You're responsible for us, to care for us, to provide for us, to discipline us, to reward us, to meet our every need. We rest in that reality. And, Lord, we're so grateful that in this congregation there is so much commitment, so widespread to these realities. We feel like even in saying the things I've said tonight that I'm simply reiterating what the congregation is already committed to. We thank You, Lord, that You've given us such great exposure to the truth and You've given us such a great love for You in response. You've prompted that in our hearts, You've shed that love abroad in us by the Holy Spirit, we're grateful.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).