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1 Peter 1:18 - 1:25



1 Peter - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg explores the meaning behind 1 Peter 1:18-25. He begins by discussing the idea of falling into bad terms with God and the importance of recognizing the high price paid for our redemption. Gregg emphasizes the need to honor God and obey Him, and how Christ serves as the lamb without blemish that foreshadowed His eventual sacrifice. He also touches on the concepts of faith, obedience, and righteousness, and the unique relationship we have with God as both servants and children.

Transcript

Alright, last time we left off, we were in 1 Peter 1, around verse 17 in terms of commentary. We read a longer section. We read verses 13-21 and spent all of the time discussing verses 13-17.

The last thing in verse 17 was that we should conduct ourselves throughout the time of our sojourning here in fear. When we left off, we were talking about what the fear of God is. The fear of God is a good thing.

We don't usually like to be afraid, but the fear of God doesn't really refer to being afraid. It refers to having that healthy respect for danger and avoiding it. There's lots of dangers that we take for granted that are very bad and it would scare us to be facing them.

But for that reason, we avoid them. We don't jump into the tiger pen at the zoo. We don't feel unsafe or afraid when we're standing where we ought to be standing in relationship to the tiger because he can't get us and we know it.

We're not afraid. But the prospect of falling or jumping into the tiger's pen would be a very frightening prospect, and so we take care not to do that. We like to stay in the proper relationship with the tiger.

Like wise God, we are wise enough, I hope, to realize that we need to stay in a proper relationship with God. And when we do, we're not afraid. We don't live in terror or in being afraid.

But the fear of God is simply the same thing as the fear of the tiger, in a sense. It's analogous to it because you should be afraid of the prospect of making yourself fall into the hands of the living God. It's a fearful thing, the book of Hebrews said, to fall into the hands of the living God.

Falling into his hands means falling on bad terms into God's hands and coming under his judgment. That should be something that frightens anyone who has any intelligence at all. But because we fear God, we don't do those things that put us on his bad side.

We've chosen a course of life other than that, so that we remain in a good relation with him. And though we have this fear of God always governing us, we're not afraid, not emotionally afraid of him. Unless, of course, we're contemplating doing those things that would change that good relationship.

Now, the sentence does not end at the end of verse 17. Just like Paul in Ephesians, Peter has several run-on sentences that go for several verses. And he says in verse 18, Now, there's something interesting, I think, about the relationship of the end of verse 17 and the beginning of verse 18.

Because 18 and 19 are telling us of the great price that was paid for our redemption. We were redeemed at great price, so be afraid. See, that's what he's implying.

He says you should pass the time of your sojourn here in fear because you know that you were redeemed by the blood of Christ. It's interesting how many people assume that being redeemed by the blood of Christ is the reason not to be afraid. Or is the reason not to have the fear of God.

And, of course, it is an occasion not to be afraid in the sense we were talking about a moment ago. Because of that redemption, because of that price that Christ paid, we are on good terms with God. Assuming we remain that way, assuming we choose to be that way.

Most of the people in the world, even though Jesus died for them, are not on good terms with God because they're rejecting Christ. We have that relationship based on our faith in Christ. And it should, in a sense, terrify us the thought of abandoning Christ.

The thought of apostatizing and not believing in Christ anymore. Knowing what we know. That God paid that kind of a price.

That's not something that he's going to take lightly if it's spurned. If he just paid with silver and gold and those kinds of perishable things, that's no big deal. God can make as much silver and gold as he wants to anytime he wants to.

Gold and silver are not valuable to him. As my former pastor used to say, he paves the streets in heaven with gold. It's just like pavement.

It's not that important. It's not that valuable. There's no limit to the amount of gold God can create.

He can create mountains of gold if he wishes. But his son, there's only one of those. And he sacrificed him.

So the price that God paid is a very unique price and irreplaceable price. And if we spurn that, it's a fearful thing. So we should live in the fear of God knowing that God is not one to be trifled with.

This is no trifle. His sending his son. Remember back in Hebrews chapter 10 when we studied that.

In Hebrews chapter 10, it says in verse 28 and following, Anyone who rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment do you suppose? Will he be thought worthy who has trampled the son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, a common thing, and insulted the spirit of grace? Now to apostatize from Christ is to do these things. To trample underfoot the son of God.

To count the blood of Christ with which you were sanctified, to count that a common thing. And to insult the spirit of God, the spirit of grace. So we see this is the theme of a number of New Testament thoughts.

That God has been so gracious to us that it's a great insult to him to spurn that. He has paid such a high price that to reject that price is a greater insult than if he'd paid a small price. If someone offers you a ballpoint pen and says, Here, I'd like you to have this.

You say, Oh no, I've got enough pens. That'd be no insult. But if someone goes out and buys you a house and says, I bought this for you.

It's my gift to you. And you said, Oh no, that's okay. I'm not interested.

That'd be much more of an insult because they've invested far more in expressing their love for you. And for you to spurn their love is to spurn that which has cost them a great deal. It's a much greater insult.

And so Peter says we need to take our lives seriously. Take God seriously. Live our lives in the fear of God because we realize he has paid a far greater price than anyone has paid.

In fact, it's the greatest price that even God himself could pay. A God who owns everything, nothing he would give would be very expensive to him, except for his own son, of course, because he can't just create those out of nothing like he can create worlds out of nothing. He can create planets of gold, but he can't create his own son who

is himself over again.

And so this is the preciousness of the blood of Christ by which we've been redeemed. Now, I want to point out to you in verse 18 what he says it is we've been redeemed from. And I may sound like a broken record sometimes because I repeat this thought a lot.

And the reason I repeat it a lot is because it's somewhat counter to the general thing we hear or assume all the time. That salvation is primarily about the afterlife. We often hear that salvation or assume that salvation just means that when you die, you go to heaven.

If you aren't a Christian, when you die, you go to hell. And that's what salvation is about, getting out of hell and going to heaven. Now, of course, the Bible does talk about the eternal benefits of salvation.

It does talk about the postmortem rewards and so forth. We're not denying that that is true. But when salvation is discussed in the Bible, most often it's not assuming salvation from after-death issues.

And this is a good example. There are many others that God has redeemed us from what? From your life of aimless conduct, an aimless life. In other words, God created us originally to fulfill a purpose that requires our knowing him and conforming to his will.

And when we wandered away from that through sin, we wandered into a life that doesn't have any real purpose at all. Once you don't have God as your purpose for living, you've got an aimless life. You may set certain arbitrary aims for yourself.

Well, I want to get married. I want to have a house. I want to achieve a certain rank in the military.

I want to achieve a certain educational level. I want to have this kind of career. I want to be recognized in these ways.

These are all worthless goals. I mean, they're not entirely worthless for the time being, but they have a short-range benefit. And it's really an aimless life compared to what is available.

If you're aiming at fulfilling the will of God, God had a purpose for your life when he made you. And if you miss that, then you're going to be aiming at other purposes that are of no value ultimately. And so what we've been saved from by becoming Christians, we've been rescued back into the will of God for our lives.

And he says in verse 18 that you were redeemed, not with gold and such. What? You were redeemed from your aimless conduct. This is a consistent teaching of Scripture.

The angel said to Joseph when he announced to him that Mary was going to have the baby, the angel said his name should be named Jesus because he will save his people

from their sins. Not from their post-mortem destiny, but from their sins, which is their present bondage that they are in. We need to be rescued from our sinful lives.

In Titus chapter 2, verse 14, Titus 2.14, Paul wrote that Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from what? From every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works. Now while Paul believed in heaven and hell, certainly he didn't mention it here. He says Christ redeemed us so that he could have what? He could have a people who are zealous for doing what is right and to redeem us from our lawless behavior, our lawless deeds.

In other words, our behavior as rebels against God is cheating God of what he really deserves to have from his creation. He deserves to have people who honor him, who obey him, who glorify him, who do what he made them to do, instead of who rebel and do something he didn't make them to do, who cheat him out of the years and minutes of their lives. God doesn't deserve to have that happen to him.

What did he ever do wrong that his creatures would rob him of his glory and of his claim on their lives? Well, he sent Jesus to buy us back. That's what redeem means, to buy us back. What? So he'd own us again.

He bought us back to be his servants again, which we should have been all along. And what he redeemed us out of is an aimless life, lawless deeds. He saves his people from their sins.

This is the bondage that has prevented us from glorifying God in our lives until we came to Christ. Now we've come to Christ, he's bought us out of that bondage and brought us into, as he refers to it in Romans 6, being slaves of righteousness, servants of righteousness, servants of God. So here, Peter, again, where he has the opportunity to talk about our redemption, and I might just point out, he could have mentioned anything he wanted to as to what it is we're redeemed from, because the emphasis of verses 18 and 19 are not really on what we're redeemed from, but what price was paid to redeem us.

He wanted to emphasize we weren't redeemed by gold and silver, which are perishable things, we were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. It's in passing, he says, we were redeemed from this. And he could have put anything in there that he believed, that he thought was the main point, and he did.

He put in the main point. God has redeemed us from a sinful life, from aimless behavior. And he says, we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

And at the end of verse 9, he says, which Christ was like a lamb without spot or blemish. Now, a spot is a birth mark on a lamb. A blemish is an acquired thing, not only on lambs, on people too.

Sometimes people have a birthmark when they're born, a spot. But in addition to that, in time, as they grow, especially in their teenage years, they get blemishes. These blemishes come and go, but they are acquired during lifetime.

Now, spots and blemishes, therefore, are birth defect and acquired defects. And this is, of course, figuratively speaking of sins. Jesus had neither sin from birth nor sin acquired in his behavior.

We have both. We sin from birth. We have a sinful propensity from birth.

And that's a spot, a defect in us from birth. That's our sinful nature. But then we have the acquisition of guilt from actual sins we commit.

Jesus didn't have either. He was not sinful, and he didn't sin. And therefore, he's like a perfect lamb.

Under the Old Testament sacrificial law, not every lamb could be offered. It had to be essentially a perfect lamb. And that's because the lamb had to foreshadow Christ as the Lamb of God.

It had to have no spots and no blemishes. Jesus qualifies. He indeed, verse 20 says, was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who believe, who through him believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Now, it says that Jesus was foreordained before the foundation of the world. The word foreordained there is *progenosko*. It's the word that's also translated in some places foreknown.

Genosko is the word for know, to know something. *Genosko* in Greek. *Progenosko*, *pro* means before.

Progenosko means to know before. That's the word that's used here that's translated foreordained. It's the same word that is used in Romans 8, 29, when Paul says whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son.

So foreknowing is really the concept here. Now, why does it say foreordained? Well, indeed, the fact is that foreknow can mean that too. Because to know or to acknowledge or to recognize are all meanings of *genosko*.

So to recognize has the meaning not only of just knowing who that is, I recognize you, I've seen you before, I know who you are. But also recognizing sometimes has the connotation to know with approval. Like if a kid says to his stepfather, I don't recognize you as my dad.

But it's not like he's saying I don't know who you are, I don't recognize who you are,

you're a stranger to me. He's just saying, I don't know you with approval. I don't approve of you as my dad.

I don't recognize you in that role. And the word *genosko* can have that idea of to know with approval or to recognize in a positive sense. In fact, the Calvinists believe that in Romans 8, 28, when Paul says whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son.

They think that foreknew in that case should be understood that way. Whom he approved in advance. They would even say whom he loved in advance.

Not just who he knew something about them, but whom he knew with approbation, with approval. It's impossible to know whether this connotation existed in the use of this word in every case. It is assumed by the King James and the New King James translators that it means that here.

It basically says in verse 20, it literally says indeed he was foreknown before the foundation of the world. But foreordained is the translation we have which suggests that God approved him, set his mark of approval on him beforehand. Either one could be true.

And it's not really that important to know which is true because the point that Peter is making here is not so much the distinction between just knowing or approving, but he's talking about the chronological difference. In the past, Jesus was known by God or maybe ordained by God, but it's not until recently that he was made manifest. The contrast is not between to merely know on the one hand or to approve on the other.

The contrast is between what used to be and what is now. It used to be before Jesus came that he was merely foreknown or foreordained or predestined or whatever God intended to bring him into the world, but he hadn't done so yet. He was predicted in the prophets.

He was unexpected, but he was only manifested, that is revealed, in these last times, he says, for you. Now notice he calls it these last times. The expression last times, last days, these are used in the New Testament to speak of the time in which the apostles lived.

In fact, Peter who wrote this also used a similar term when he preached in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost when they said, what's going on here? These people are drunk and Peter said, these are men are not drunk as you think. It's only nine o'clock in the morning. He said, but this is that which was predicted or prophesied by Joel when he said in the last days, I will pour out my spirit, says the Lord.

Peter referred to the days in which he was living as the last days. Here he refers to him as the last times. When we studied Hebrews, we saw that the book opens with a similar expression.

Hebrews 1 begins, God who at various times and in diverse ways spoke in time past to our fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken to us by his son. So the coming of Christ into the world the first time was the mark that the last days had arrived. The last days of what? What are the last times in the Bible? Well, we often think of them as the last days of the world or of history or something like that.

And there may be in fact sometimes in the Bible that that means that. But I think the apostles understood that they were living in the last times of the order in which they were raised and their ancestors were raised, the last days of the Jewish order. That God had for 1400 years related to man in terms of the temple and the sacrifices and the Mosaic covenant.

But now with the coming of a new covenant and of the Messiah, it was heralding the introduction of a new order and the end of the old one. And the new one of course began when Jesus died and the old one finally was swept away when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. And the period between those two were the last days of the Jewish order and the first days of the new order.

There was an overlap of the ages. The old age and the new age were kind of overlapping. In fact, Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 makes an interesting, uses an interesting expression that is a little baffling in some ways.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul in the first 10 verses catalogs some of the experiences the Jews had in the wilderness in the Old Testament after they came out of Egypt. So he's talking about the, you know, when God made the first covenant at Sinai and then how they violated it and so forth. And it says in verse 11, 1 Corinthians 10, 11, now all these things happened to them as examples.

The Greek word for examples is types, tupos, tupoi in the Greek. These were types. The Old Testament saints or the Old Testament sinners for that matter, the Old Testament Jews, whether they were saints or sinners, are types of our experience.

So all these things happened to them as types, the Greek says, and they were written for our admonition on whom, that is, we are those on whom, the ends of the ages have come. That's an interesting expression, the ends of the ages. He doesn't say the end of the age.

He says the ends, plural, of the ages, plural. In the Jewish mind, there was the age that they were living in. And then there's the coming age when the Messiah would come, the Messianic age.

And Paul says we're living at the ends of the two ages. The final end of the Jewish age and the beginning end of the continuum of the Messianic age. The two ages overlap.

You've got the end at the beginning, there's an end at the beginning, and an end at the

end of each age. And the time the apostles lived in was the overlap between the end of the old age and the beginning end, as the beginning extremity, of the new age. And so this was the time that the early Christians knew they were living in.

It was the last times, the last days of the Jewish order. The temple was soon to be destroyed and there'd be no more worship of God by that old system anymore. It'd be entirely replaced by the new system.

And so I think that's what Peter means when he says, in these last days. When Jesus appeared, it heralded the last days of the old order. And it says he was known by God before, from the foundation of the world.

But in these last days, he's been manifested. This, no doubt, is similar to what Paul said in so many cases where he said that the Christian era and the Christian reality was a mystery, hidden from generations past, but made known through the Holy Spirit, to the holy apostles and prophets. Paul spoke of this in Ephesians 3. He spoke of this in Colossians 1. He spoke of it in Romans 16.

And in 1 Corinthians 2. Four times Paul speaks about this phenomenon, that what he was preaching, this Christian message he was preaching, was revealed to him and the other apostles through the Spirit. And prior to that, in Old Testament times, it was a mystery, concealed from earlier generations. Peter seems to be having that thought in mind, too.

Christ was manifest only recently, but was concealed before that. And he's already kind of said that in verses 10 through 12 of this chapter, where he said the prophets inquired for more information. God didn't give them any more information.

He said it wasn't for them to know, it was for us through whom the Holy Spirit has made the gospel known to us. And so, the idea that the Christian message is not an innovation, it is something that God had in his mind all along, but it wasn't manifest until a certain point in time, is Paul and Peter's, for that matter, the writer of Hebrews, repeated theme. In Galatians 4.4, Paul said, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

Galatians 4.4. We see that there was a set time when this was supposed to happen. And it was the fullness of time when it happened. It was something that was planned out forever before that.

But it happened when it should happen in history. Now, it says of us in verse 21, who through him, this is 1 Peter 1.21, who through him believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Now, notice he's speaking of God here as the Father, because he says God raised Jesus from the dead.

And our faith and hope are in God. That is in God, the Father. It's very clear in the New Testament that although Jesus is God, in some sense, he came as the Son of God in

order to restore us to the Father.

As he says in John 14.6, no man comes to the Father except through me. The idea was to restore our relationship with God, the Father. Many times Christians have discomfort about God, the Father.

This is especially true of people who may have had really bad relationships with an earthly father and their concept of a father is not exactly a warm one. There are people I have known who simply cannot bring themselves to pray to God, the Father, because their own father was such a horrible example that they don't want to use the word Father to associate with God. It brings too many bad images to their mind.

But God, Jesus wanted us to relate to the Father. He said, when you pray, say, Our Father. He says, I won't ask the Father for you.

The Father himself loves you. You ask him yourself. You come to him in my name.

You speak to the Father, he said. And it's the Father that Jesus came to restore us to. In the story of the prodigal son, there's not even a character that represents Jesus.

There's the alienated children and there's the Father. And the story is about restoring the children to the Father, on good terms. Of course, Jesus is the mediator, but he doesn't even appear in the story that he told.

It's the Father that's the focus. God the Father has been alienated from his children by their own rebellion, and Jesus came to redeem them back to the Father, so that our faith and our hope are in God. Now, a lot of people, they almost substitute God with Jesus in all their thinking.

They pray to Jesus. They think their faith is in Jesus. And there's every reason to have faith in Jesus.

He's very reliable. But the point that Peter says is the relationship that we have as Christians is ultimately a relationship with God. And he means the Father, the one who sent Jesus.

And so that your faith and your hope are in God. Jesus has made this possible. And Jesus is also an object of worship, correctly so.

But I think it's a matter of focus. When John was caught up into heaven in Revelation, and he saw the one on the throne, and all the angels, and all the 24 elders, and all the four living creatures, and the multitudes were worshiping him, this was before even Jesus appeared in the vision. In the next chapter, Jesus appears as a lamb, and the scroll is handed down from the one on the throne down to him.

So the one on the throne is clearly not Jesus. It's the Father. And all of heaven and earth

are worshiping the Father in Revelation.

And then Jesus shows up, and they worship him too. But the point is, many Christians, in their lives and in their thinking, Christ has entirely eclipsed the Father. They come to Jesus instead of the Father.

They don't come to the Father through Jesus. They come to Jesus instead of coming to the Father. Because the Father is a character that they don't feel real comfortable with for whatever reason.

There's usually been some kind of mischaracterization in their mind of what the Father is like. Many people think the Father is the one who's angry at us, and Jesus is the one who's favorable to us. And that God was the one holding the lightning bolts poised to throw and kill us all, and Jesus came up between and says, no, God, please, let me do something for these people.

Give them another chance. But the Bible says, it's God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. It's God's love, not specifically or exclusively Christ's love for us, but the Father's love that caused Jesus to come.

And this is the consistent teaching of scripture. So Peter emphasizes that our faith and our hope are in God. We hope in God.

We believe in God. Jesus has made that possible. He's restored that relationship of hope and faith in God.

But it is God, in fact. And if we have not come to the point where we recognize that it's God, not just Jesus, but the Father that Jesus came to restore us to, then we haven't really come into the mentality that's normative for the Christian in the Bible. Now, in verse 22, it says, 1 Peter 1, 22, since you have been purified, excuse me, since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible through the word of God, which lives and abides forever, because all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man is the flower of the grass.

The grass withers and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. Now the statement in verse 22 has a phrase in it, through the Spirit.

Right in the middle of verse 22, you find this expression, through the Spirit. This phrase is not found in the older manuscripts, and so some of the modern translations don't have it. In fact, I don't think any of the modern translations have it, because they follow the older manuscripts.

The King James and the New King James have this phrase. So it actually says, in these

versions, since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, in sincere love of the brethren. But in the older manuscripts, it simply says, since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth, in sincere love of the brethren.

It leaves out through the Spirit. Some people think that through the Spirit was added to some of the later manuscripts, because otherwise it sounds like we have purified ourselves by our obedience, rather than it being a work of God. It sounds too much like a works righteousness thing.

If you leave out through the Spirit, it sounds like you've done this yourself. By obeying, you have purified your souls. And it almost makes it sound like it's all you're doing, and not God's.

So that someone added the phrase in a later manuscript through the Spirit to give the impression, or to make it clear, that whatever obedience we may have done is not our doing, it's through the Spirit. God has enabled us to do it. Now, I don't know whether that phrase should or should not be in the passage in terms of whether it's in the original.

But even if it's not in the original, I believe it would be one of those things that is truly implied. Certainly, Peter does not think that we save ourselves just by being good. And Peter, like Paul, and every other writer of the Scripture, knows very well that we live our lives through the Holy Spirit.

And our obedience to God is through the work of the Spirit, working in us to will and to do. It is a good pleasure. It's the fruit of the Spirit.

The love and the joy and the peace and the goodness and the patience, the things that are Christian in our behavior, those are the fruits of the Spirit. So, even if that phrase is not found in the original text, that doesn't mean that Peter somehow had a different view than is expressed by the inclusion of the phrase. He may or may not have mentioned it.

But he does say we have purified ourselves by obeying the truth. Now, once again, we've got this emphasis on obedience in Peter as well as in Paul and, frankly, all the New Testament writers. Obedience is essentially sort of a synonym for faith in Christ.

Not because faith and obedience are really the same thing, but faith in Christ's Lordship and obedience to Him as Lord are two sides of the same coin. You can't have one and not the other. If you have a coin, you've got the head and the tail.

You can't just have the head or just the tail. You have to have both. They're both part of one item.

And faith in the Lordship of Christ, the flip side of that is that you obey Him because He's the Lord and you believe it. If you don't obey Him, then you don't really believe it. So, obedience and faith are used really pretty much interchangeably as the same

phenomenon in Scripture.

And this is something that, of course, has been artificially separated in the minds of many Protestants. Partly in order to distance ourselves from being Catholic. The Roman Catholics, they have too much of an emphasis on justification by works in the mind of the Protestants.

So, we kind of want to distance ourselves from that. I don't want to be mistaken for a Catholic, so I'm going to say we're justified without works. But you really don't have faith if you don't have works.

Faith and works are parts of the same thing. Like the fruit from a tree. You have an orange tree, unless it's a dead one or an unhealthy one, you're going to have oranges.

If you have faith, you're going to have good works. If you don't have obedience to God, then you don't really believe what Christians are said to believe. So, you could insert the word faith here and the statement would still be true.

Since you have purified your souls in believing the truth, that's fine too. But to Peter's mind and the mind of all New Testament writers, believing and obeying are pretty much both the same kind of thing. If you don't obey, then you certainly don't really believe what you claim to believe.

And he says, in sincere love of the brethren, the end of verse 22, he says, since you have reached this condition of loving the brethren sincerely, which is a fruit of the Spirit, therefore, just continue, he says, to love one another fervently with a pure heart. Now, a pure heart would be unmixed motives. We should love one another with unmixed motives, without ulterior motives.

Pure means unmixed, of course. Pure water isn't mixed with anything else. It's all water.

A pure heart is a heart that has only one motivation and not multiple ulterior motivations. When you love somebody with the right motivation, you love them for their own sake. You are concerned about their own benefit because you value them as much as you value yourself.

This is not a natural state of mind. This is a fruit of the Spirit. This is something that comes about from being regenerated, having a new nature.

God loves us, not for ulterior motives, not because there's something we can give him that he's trying to get from us. He can take anything he wants from us, unilaterally. He can overpower us.

He didn't have to make us in the first place. If he wants our money, he can just smash us and take our money if he wants. What does he want that for? There's nothing we have

that he wants except our hearts.

He values our hearts. He values our love. And he does so because he loves us.

If he didn't love us, then our love for him wouldn't mean anything to him. He loves us with one motive and that is that he values us. He wants us to be well-off.

That's what love, of course, is. The desire for someone else to be well-off and the willingness to sacrifice even your own well-being at times for their well-being. This is the true motivation of love is that you care about them even without respect to anything you're going to get out of the deal.

On the other hand, though, because love is very seldom unilateral, it's usually reciprocated in some measure. I mean, if you're nice to people, they'll probably be nice to you. Not always, but more often than not.

If you love someone and do good things for them, there's probably going to be some reciprocation of some sort. And when you realize that, it's easy for the motivation to keep loving someone to cease to be so pure that, well, if I treat them nice, they'll treat me nice. If I give them a gift, if I send them a Christmas card, they'll send me a Christmas card.

You know, I mean, they're going to probably reciprocate my kindness to them. And therefore, as I do the kind act, I might be thinking somewhat in terms of I'm looking forward to them reciprocating somehow. That motivation begins to creep in.

And so Peter says, no, you have come to the place through the Holy Spirit, through your obedience to the truth, you have come to a place of sincere love of the brethren. Now, he's basically saying guard against insincerity, guard against other motivations creeping in, continue, he is saying, to love one another fervently with a pure heart, free from ulterior motives. Notice the word fervently is there, which means with heat.

If you love someone, it kind of warms your heart to think about them. And in that sense, love is not lacking in emotion. Love, however, is not the same thing as the emotion that many people think they call love.

For example, lust and passion and mere attraction often makes people feel like they're in love. It's love at first sight. They don't really know the person or have any reason especially to love them, but they believe that they could receive pleasure of some sort by having some kind of a connection with that person.

And it's not entirely pure. It's not necessarily pure evil either. There can be a mixture of selfishness and kindness.

But the point is that ideally, we want to be at the place where we couldn't care less. If

our love is reciprocated, we're going to give it anyway. If no one responds, we're going to love them not for their response, but we're going to love them because they need to be loved.

People need to be loved and many people are not well loved. It's like I sometimes tell the story that I heard from an Anglican charismatic. He was giving his testimony back in the 70s at a meeting I was at.

He was talking about how he was on a certain day driving his car and he saw a hitchhiker with his thumb out wanting a ride. And he said, well, I guess I'll just pull over. He was kind of chatting with the Lord as he was driving and he said, Lord, I think I'll pick up that hitchhiker.

Now, the way he tells the story, he says, God spoke to him and said, well, why are you going to do that? And he said, well, because I want to witness to him about you, Lord. And he said, the Lord spoke to him and said, why don't you pick him up because he needs a ride? In other words, why don't you just love him because he has a need to be loved and not have ulterior motives? Now, there can't be anything really wrong about wanting to witness to someone. But even if you knew you would not get a chance to do that, would you care that they are in need? If you see your brother or sister in need and you shut up the bowels of compassion from him, John says, how does the love of God dwell in you? Love is motivated by concern that somebody else has a need that you can help with.

Maybe you can witness to them. Maybe you can become a friend of theirs. Maybe they'll reciprocate someday, but that's not part of your motivation.

You just do it because they need it. People need someone to be nice to them. People need to be loved.

And that's the purest motive for loving is that someone needs it, not I need whatever it is they can give me back. Continue to love another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again. Now, notice this.

He says that we have already been born again and most of us here would not have any trouble with that. But from time to time, you'll run into people. I believe in my conversations with Mormons, I think this comes out from their belief that being born again, or maybe the Jehovah's Witnesses, I forget.

One of the cults that I've talked to, we've talked about being born again. And it turns out that they believe being born again means being resurrected at the last day. They don't believe you can be born again during this lifetime, that when the Bible talks that you must be born again, it means that when you die, you must be born again from the grave.

You must be resurrected. But this certainly is a place that would give a rebuttal to that

notion because Peter says we have already been born again. He's not talking about the future resurrection.

He says you have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed. That is through the word of God, which lives and abides forever. Now, that the word of God is a seed that germinates and produces, that reproduces, is a concept that comes up in the Old and the New Testament quite a bit.

We are very familiar with the parable of the sower where Jesus said a sower sows these seeds and some of them produce and some don't depending on the soil they land on. And when he explains the parable, he says the seed is the word of God. Now, why is the seed the word of God? Why is the word of God compared to seed? Well, seed has in it the potential to reproduce its own self or its parent more properly.

A seed of grain, a wheat seed or a grain of wheat comes from a plant that has the wheat nature. But when you plant it and it dies, it produces another plant that has the wheat nature. It's a reproductive bomb, really.

It's got all this genetic information in it from its parent plant. And when it explodes to life, it produces the same nature as its parent. The word of God is compared with that in that it comes from God, from his own nature.

In fact, Jesus is the word of God. And he shares the divine nature. When the word of God is received properly in the right kind of heart, it explodes into life and we are born again.

We come to life spiritually. And this new life is of the nature of the parent God. We have partaken of the divine nature, Peter says in 2 Peter 1.4. 2 Peter 1.4, he says that we are partakers of the divine nature.

Here he says we've been born again by the seed, which is the word of God. When the word of God is preached and received, it reproduces the life of its source, which is God. And therefore the divine life, the divine nature is brought forth in us.

And that's what the fruit of the spirit indicates. Is God loving? Well, then we are loving. Is God patient? Then we're patient.

Is God good? Then we're good. Is God gentle? Then we're gentle. This is the fruit of the spirit.

This is the production of God's nature in us. It's the reproduction of Christ in us so that we become, I guess some people would say, little Christ or little Jesus in a sense that we become replicas, but not just externally behaving like him, but inwardly sharing his nature. So that Paul says to the Galatians, in Galatians 4.19, Paul says, my little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.

Interesting expression. Not until Christ comes to live in you. That already happened.

He says, I'm going through the birth pangs again or the labor pains again, and I will continue to do so until I see that you have reached the goal, which is that Christ is formed in you. The reproduction of Jesus in us so that his nature and his person are actually brought into, reproduced, multiplied in us. This concept sounds perhaps a little mystical to us, especially if we've thought of Christianity merely as you adopt certain beliefs, adopt certain behaviors, and you join a certain organization, the church, and then you sing certain songs, and read a certain book, and you kind of have this counter-cultural phenomenon of being in the Christian world instead of in the pagan world.

But all of that can happen without any special miracle taking place. Anyone can start believing certain things and doing certain things. The miracle of regeneration was taken for granted by the biblical writers.

They assumed that the Christians had had a new life regenerated in them, that God was reproducing himself in them, that the word of God is alive and powerful and comes to plant in you, and you're born again as that explosive, reproductive capsule of the word of God breaks forth into new life in you, a new species of life. God's life begins to come, which is why born again is the term that is used for it. It's being born like into a new person, a new kind of life.

Of course, you're still the old person in many respects because your first birth has not expired yet. The condition of your original birth is it's got a shelf life, you're going to expire eventually, but in the meantime, you've got a new life added, and that's the life that's supposed to be manifesting in your behavior and so forth. That requires a little bit of warfare on your part because the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary to one another, but nonetheless, there is the divine nature there that has come to life within you.

All the teachings of the epistles is that we should cultivate that life and live consistently with that life rather than with the other, the old order, the old nature. Excuse me. Verse 23 says the Word of God is incorruptible.

It lives, and it abides forever. This is not the only place that speaks of the Word of God as a living thing. When we study Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12 says the Word of God is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.

The Word of God is alive. Jesus said in John 6, in verse 63, the words I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life. The words I'm speaking, they are spirit, they are life, they bring spiritual life with them.

When we speak, we're mainly aware of communicating thoughts merely. What comes out of our mouth are certain combinations of syllables which in our culture people have

learned to interpret those syllables and associate them with certain thoughts. And so we communicate ideas just like I'm doing right now.

I'm communicating ideas to you. Some of them might be new ideas. If they are, then you get, then I've planted ideas in your head that weren't there before maybe.

But when God speaks, He intends to plant more than ideas. He wants to plant Himself in us. His own nature.

It's like planting a seed which has got His nature in it. And so His Word is more than just information, more than just sounds coming out of His mouth. Jesus said the words I speak, they are spirit and they are life.

And so Peter agrees here that the Word of God through which we've been born again is alive and abides forever. Now in verse 24 and 25 he's quoting from Isaiah 40 verses 6 through 8 where he says because all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass the grass withers, the flower falls away but the word of the Lord endures forever. Now why does he quote this particular verse? It contrasts the transience of natural man all flesh it passes like grass passes grass doesn't last very long man usually lasts longer than grass does but the point is the transience of human life, natural life it appears briefly and then it goes away.

Jesus even said that in the Sermon on the Mount when He says consider the lilies of the field how they grow God clothes them better than Solomon could clothe himself. He says now if God clothes the grass which today is and tomorrow is thrown in the oven how much more will He clothe you, you of little faith. So Jesus also mentions that human life is brief like grass or at least that grass's life is brief and there's some comparison here.

But the contrast here is between the nature of the flesh which is our natural birth and the nature that is imparted to us by the Word of God which lives and abides forever. So He says unlike the transience of the fleshly life He says the Word of God, verse 25, endures forever which is the point Peter was making and that's why he quotes this scripture in its support. The idea is we were not born again by corruptible seed.

The seed of our Father our earthly Father through which we came into the world as babies originally it was a truly life imparted to us but it's corruptible, that is it decays. Corruptible means decaying and so you reach a certain age and after that it just goes downhill from there. None of us have reached that stage yet of course but we will and after that everything goes downhill.

The skin sags, becomes thin and brittle and bones become brittle, even the mind is not as sharp as it used to be, the muscles atrophy and then eventually it gets worse and worse until you're just dead. Not a very you know uplifting concept you know but that's just how the flesh is. It's corruptible.

The seed of our Fathers that brought us into the world was corruptible seed. It has its day like grass, it springs up till you're maybe about what, 30 years old it's getting better all the time. Then it goes over the top and over the peak and it goes downhill from there.

That's like grass. It has its day and then it has the end of its day as well. And that's what natural life is.

But we have another life. We've been born again of a different kind of seed that isn't corruptible. It doesn't reach a peak and then decline.

It just continues forever and ever. And so it's not like the grass, it's like something that never ends and the word of the Lord endures forever. And that's the seed by which new life has been imparted to us.

And he says at the end of verse 25, Now this is the word which by the gospel is preached to you. It's interesting, Peter's wording sometimes is surprising. You'd think he'd just say, this word is the gospel.

But he said, this is the word which is preached to you by the gospel. The gospel is a message. It is the word of God.

He talks as if it's only by the gospel that the word has come to us. That is, the word of God isn't the same thing as the gospel, but the gospel preaching is the avenue by which something deeper, the word of God, something that's not just the sound of the sentences that we were told, but something more spiritual. The word of God has come to us through the preaching of the gospel.

And these are things that probably would repay longer contemplation than we have time to consider here, but the relationship of the actual words of scripture or the true propositions about God that come from scripture or in the gospel, these words and sentences and propositions are related to and are the avenue through which comes this thing called the word of God. And we do say the Bible is the word of God and rightly so, in that the words in the Bible are from God. But there's something deeper than the printed page, deeper than the sound of the words when read out loud or preached.

There's something spiritual. It's something that is an impartation of God's own nature through the vehicle of the spoken word. And so when Peter says the word of the Lord endures forever and now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you, I would have found it more easy if he just said this word is the gospel that was preached to you.

But it says the word has been preached to you by the avenue of the gospel. I don't know, maybe I think too hard about these things and maybe Peter's just sloppy with his words and meant something much simpler than this. But it sounds to me that he's emphasizing the word not in the sense of being completely identified with the spoken words but with

the spiritual impartation of God's nature that comes through the receiving of the spoken words.

Anyway, Peter brings us then to the end of one thought and his next thought begins with therefore. Now we found a therefore in verse 13. So what Peter's doing is laying out a bunch of theological concepts, some of them very deep.

Some of them alluded to, I mean a few words or phrases to allude to a huge concept. This is certainly true in verses 3 through 12. And after he gives 3 through 12, he says therefore do this about that.

And then he starts talking about being born again by the word of God and then that's a big concept in chapter 2. When he's done with that, he says therefore do this about that in chapter 2 verse 1. And so we see some more practical instruction based on these theological concepts that we will come to when we come back to chapter 2. But right now it's time to quit this session and we will resume at chapter 2 verse 1.