

The One Who Impartially Judges

1 Peter 1:17-19

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

(1 Peter 1:17-19 (NASB))

These words immediately bring back to mind a concern that I have wrestled with often over these many years, especially as I have been involved in ministry, and even more especially so as I have lived and worked in amongst dear and earnest and often passionate fellow believers. The concern is that as I observe myself and my fellow participants within this religion of Christianity, I find that more often than not, we are far more caught up in the principles and the ethics and the value systems of Christianity than we are in God Himself and in who He is.

And yes, I know that those words sound odd. But the reality is most of the prominent religions of this world have some of the very same good principles and ethics and value systems as does Christianity. And there are some well-meaning and well-doing folks involved in those other religions.

But all those other religions have one major shortcoming. None of them have the One True God, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit at the heart of them. They have only ideas and principles and philosophies and systems of ethics and values. And while all those things are good and will provide a good life for those people on this side of eternity, they will do nothing to save their souls.

And as Jesus told one of the teachers of the law, Nicodemus, we need something more than just a system of good behaviors, we need a Savior and we need to be "born again".

Here, in these words of the Apostle Peter we see that he is addressing men and women of the church, men and women who are saved, who have been born again, men and women much like most all those that you I have lived and worked with for so many years now, but men and women who might still be trying to use the old ways of adherence to rules and principles and ethics and value systems as a substitute for a real relationship with the One True and Living God. And folks relationship with Him is the only kind of religion that God will accept.

Jesus demonstrated that need for relationship for us as He continually addressed God the Father as His Father. And because the Scribes and the Pharisees knew nothing of such intimate relationship with God, they immediately objected. How dare this lowly Galilean be so presumptuous in the way He addressed God.

But Jesus understood the need because He was a Son of His Father, the only begotten Son! But He also wanted to witness His relationship to others, those who would come to Him and receive Him as Savior and Lord. He wanted them to understand and want that same intimate relationship for themselves, people like those that Peter was addressing with these words, and people like you and me. Again, those words in verse 17,

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth.
(1 Peter 1:17 (NASB))

So then, may we go back to the basics and ask ourselves, "Can we, can you and I rightfully address God as our Father? And under what circumstances can we do that? When and how does God the Father become your and my "Father"?"

And yes, I know that we have learned all of this a long time ago, but though we might even be among the most mature of Christians, we still need to continually remind ourselves of why all of this is so. And that is exactly what God is doing in this passage. Here, Peter was preaching these words to some very mature Christians, men and women who had been saved for a long while. But God wanted Peter to remind them all over again of some very basic doctrines, here about their being "sons of God" and what that responsibility as a son required of them.

Verses 18 and 19 re-explain it all. Here, we are told that we can call God our Father because of the merit of one thing and one thing only, because we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. We

18 . . . were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19 (NASB))

Again, in these words we are reminded of several things, first, that our redemption, our salvation does not come through the things and the accomplishments that we do in our daily lives, though it be a right thing for us to do good to others. But no matter how good and well-meaning all those efforts may be, good works can never save us. Even the most valuable thing that men have in this life, their silver and their gold cannot save them. Salvation comes to mankind only as a free gift from God and is purchased

19 . . . with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:19 (NASB))

Again, yes we know all these things, but how much do we really take them to heart. Folks, while we were yet sinners, God loved us so much that He reached His Big Hand into our lives and drew us, pulled us, even dragged us into salvation, and into this relationship as a “son” of His.

But why would God do that? IF we use the rationale of this world, God really had no reason whatsoever to be so generous to us. But God was and always is generous beyond any manner of understanding that we might have. And it is God’s nature to love and to want the very best for anyone who would turn their hearts to Him. And so, because of that great love, He did everything that it would take to redeem us. And because God the Father and God the Son are of One Mind, Jesus shed His precious blood and paid our penalty so that it could all take place.

And the result of it all is that we, you and I, who surrender our hearts to Christ, are immediately adopted as “sons” by God the Father. As you and I are freed from the authority and control and bondage to the “father of this world”, the devil, we become as it were, orphans. And it is in those first moments of redemption that God the Father, with great compassion, receives us unto Himself and adopts us as His beloved sons and daughters. Listen to these words in Galatians 4!

3 . . . we were children . . . held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:1-7 (NASB))

So then, returning back to the words of today’s passage here in 1st Peter, we are being told that as “sons of God” and fully able to call God the Father our Father, then we should in all the matters of daily life begin to act and behave as “sons” of our Father, the Almighty God; and further, that in most all matters, being His sons is “serious business”, business that we need to always be about with great care. Verse 17 again,

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; (1 Peter 1:17 (NASB))

A question . . . why would it be so important, that we “conduct ourselves in fear during the time of our stay on this earth?” After all, does God not love us with an everlasting love, and are we not securely saved and assured of an eternity in heaven. We are now His sons and He can’t ever “un-adopt” us. Can we not, as Romans 6 asks, go ahead and sin, since all our penalties, both past, present and future have all been paid for in full. And if we sin more, won’t grace simply abound all the more and take care of our sinful behavior?

God answers the question for us there in Romans 6 by saying, “God Forbid!” But another answer is also true, “yes” we could continue to sin and not lose our salvation. Yes, we are “eternally saved” and God’s grace will abound to our benefit. But we must stop for a moment and look at three words that are interposed right in the middle of this verse 17.

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The three words that I’m speaking about are “impartially judges” and “fear”.

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;
(1 Peter 1:17 (NASB))

Folks, I really don’t know the whole meaning of those words, especially as they relate to you and me who truly are already eternally saved. But they are serious words of warning, telling us that we had better be careful as we sojourn on this earth. And we had better be sure that our behavior is in keeping with the proper behavior of a “son of God”, else God our Father will surely call us to account for our misbehavior. And because He loves us so very, very deeply, He will surely “reprove, rebuke and discipline us as sons”. Those words in Proverbs 3

11 My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, 12 for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights. (Proverbs 3:11-12 (ESV))

And also in Hebrews 12,

5 . . . “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” 7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers

who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they (our earthly fathers) disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he (God the Father) disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:3-11 (ESV))

And this verse 11 is God's desired outcome for you and me.

11 For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:11 (ESV))

Why is God so set on you and me "being holy" and "doing good and holy things", "having holy behavior"? There are many reasons I'm sure, but the first reason is that it is because He Himself is holy. And we are His beloved son. And if we are ever to be in His presence, anywhere near Him, then we too must be holy. As we have said on other occasions, God cannot violate His own holiness just so we can hang onto our unholiness. So, we must be holy because He is holy.

But there are also other reasons for us to be Holy. As we read in these words, Jesus, God's only begotten Son suffered and shed His blood so that we could be washed clean and be holy. We dare not, as Hebrews 6 warns, by continuing to sin, "crucify the Son of God all over again", and we dare not, as Hebrews 10 warns, "trample underfoot the Son of God, and profane the blood of the covenant by which we were sanctified, and thereby outrage the Spirit of grace".

Folks, that is exactly what takes place when we who have been saved and call God our Father, go ahead and willfully sin. We must be very careful in our behavior. There is much at stake. We are "sons of God" and we need always to take our relationship as a "son" really seriously. Our passage again,

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

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So then, how do we, in the practical occurrences of our daily lives, go about "being" who God wants us to be and "doing" what God wants us to do? Our commonsense would tell us that we should step back and take stock of the matters that we are confronted

with each day and then look into the scriptures to “find a fix for them”. And may I say, there are an untold number of earnest and well-meaning ministers out there in the churches and on televisions and in seminars that will provide all sorts of appropriate scriptural guidance that will seemingly be the answers and the “fixes” for all those problems. And those folks do help many with their efforts.

But may I strongly suggest that that approach to “being Holy” and “doing Holy” things is probably “backwards”. That approach would be similar to waiting until after you have committed a crime to find out if you are doing something wrong. And then trying to figure out how to defend yourself against the consequences.

God’s more perfect method of leading us into the Holiness that He has planned for us is that we instead vest our time and our energies into truly coming to “know” Him, “learning of Him”, understanding what it means to actually “love the Lord our God with all of our heart, our soul, our mind and our strength, spending time with Him in prayer and in studying the scriptures, and not just to find a “quick fix” for a problem, but rather just to get to know the Lord our God intimately and lovingly. And especially, we must humble ourselves and surrender ourselves over to Him, let Him be our God and we simply be the “sheep of His pasture”.

Folks, it is as simple as the relationship that we have with our own earthly fathers. We spend our growing years knowing His deep love for us, experiencing His continual provision and watch-care, seeing the testimonies of His mercy and grace as they take place on a daily basis.

If we will surrender ourselves to this kind of loving relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, then we will find that fewer and fewer of those problems that we would otherwise experience will even take place.

As we come to truly know and love the Lord our God, we will find that we will begin to take on His nature and His character. And then we will, by our new nature “be holy” and “do holy things”.

We really are “sons of God”. And we need to go ahead and get about being His sons, beginning each day by “crawling up into His lap” and getting to know Him as our loving Father. Our passage again as we close,

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from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.
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