



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Peter 2: 18-25

Summer 2024

"In His Steps"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. We are continuing our studies in 1 Peter and we're in chapter 2. 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 18 through 25; and this finishes the second chapter of 1 Peter. We begin,

<sup>18</sup>Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. <sup>19</sup>For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup>For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.

<sup>21</sup>For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, <sup>22</sup>who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; <sup>23</sup>and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; <sup>24</sup>and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. <sup>25</sup>For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

1 Peter 2: 18-25

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

Father, what a privilege it is to do what we're doing—to be able to read the Scriptures, as I've just done; to be able to sit and listen to them read—and to spend time reading the Scriptures on our own, and meditating and contemplating what You have revealed to us. This is Your revelation, this is a unique book, as I've often say. It's not like the great books that have been written in the Western World that contain wisdom.—No, this is Your Word, this is all wisdom and righteousness, and it's 'The way and the truth'; and it is a guide to us.

And fortunately, as Your people, as believers in Jesus Christ, we're not alone with this book—The Spirit of God is within us to interpret, and guide, and encourage, and direct, and empower. And as we read this text, we know we need that divine enablement to do the very things that Peter requires of us—that You require of us. So LORD, help us to think clearly as we go through this text today and think of our responsibilities in this world; and our responsibilities to one another—and how we're to live in light of You, and for You. The responsibilities are heavy, they're great, they're demanding: But we have the Spirit of God within us, the seal on our hearts to enable us to do the most difficult things. So, help us to do that; to walk by faith and to bear the fruit of that faith to one another, and to the world. Encourage us; motivate us as we consider this great passage.

Father we are dependent upon You for everything; spiritually, for certain; but materially as well. And there is so much 'out there' in the air we breathe; and the things we touch that can affect us...and infect us... and do so seriously; and we pray, Father, You would protect us from those things. And for those that are sick, we pray You would bless them and give them healing. And for those who are facing some major issues, health wise, we pray that You would resolve them. Bless them through the means they will be using. Whatever the path You have put them on, Father, may it be a spiritual path as

well, and an encouragement. We look to You to provide for us in every way—and we know You are faithful to do that, and we thank You for that, and we praise You for that.

And now LORD, we pray that You would bless us as we continue our service and that You would open our hearts to receive the things that come from You: The truth that is Yours and that You would apply it to us. And move us to live lives in the midst of this world, (this dark world that so needs the Light), that You would make us lights in this place.

We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

*(Message)* Some time ago I was reading the newspaper that I like to read and there was a piece in it by a man who contributes articles every once in a while on the editorial page. He seems like a very good and earnest man. He described himself as a father trying to raise good children and as a Christian trying to get to heaven.

I thought, (and what you're probably thinking), 'That's not a Christian. That's salvation by human effort, salvation by works, not by grace as a free gift.'

The Gospel is simple: Believe in Christ, trust in Him as God's Son and His sacrifice on the cross—and heaven is won. Trust not in self, not your deeds—"Not of works...", Paul told the Ephesians, "...lest any man should boast." (Eph 2:9).

That's the Good News. Salvation is free—I'm emphasizing that here: It is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That's the truth, and truth matters. But behavior also matters. And while no one is saved by his or her deeds or the greatest of human effort, not even by following the example of Christ Himself—still the saved do follow the example of Christ.

Deeds are the fruit of faith. Our works are the result of the new nature that we have; and that is Peter's lesson in 1 Peter 2, verses 18 through 25. In verse 21, Peter wrote that Christ has left us an example to, "follow in His steps." That example is good for the hardest situations in life; and sometimes the providence of God puts His people in very difficult circumstances—to live under trying conditions. It may be in the home, it

may be at the office, it may be in a hospital; and in verse 18, Peter addresses one of the hardest situations of all, *slavery*.

How is a Christian to conduct himself or herself when in bondage? And a lot of those early saints were. It's estimated that across the Roman Empire, one in five people were slaves. The Gospel was preached to them; what better audience to hear about freedom in Christ than those enslaved by men?

Many responded. That's clear from Galatians chapter 3, verse 28, where Paul wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

"In Christ", in the body of Christ, in the church, slaves were equal with free men. In fact a slave, depending on the gift that God had given him, might be the teacher of his master in the church; but outside, in Roman society, he or she was a servant.

Now commentators point out that the slavery of ancient times was different from the slavery practiced in America and the Western Hemisphere—it was less cruel. Ancient slaves had a more normal life than those working under the hot sun in cotton fields or on sugar plantations. Roman slaves were normally paid a wage, not a large one, but paid a wage and had the possibility of eventually buying their own freedom—and many did. Many were educated and had skilled jobs. Some managed businesses, some were physicians, or musicians, or teachers.

The word that is used here is not the typical word for slave, (which is '*doulos*'). Here it is a word that's related to the word for '*house*' in Greek. So this is more like 'a household servant'; so his treatment, (or her treatment), would be more humane than that with what we associate with slavery. In fact, some feel, (Wayne Grudem, for example), that a legitimate comparison here is more like an employee-employer relationship in the ancient world.

Now that doesn't mean the life was easy for these individuals—they were still property. They must have chafed under the yoke of bondage, and Peter felt the need to give them guidance on how to live as Christian slaves. He wrote in verse 18, "Servants,

be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable."

This is the same language that is used earlier in verse 13, (and what we looked at last week), of being submissive, "to every human institution", and showing respect. 'Respecting and submitting' to a person's master doesn't sound as noble to modern ears as, "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!" (The Communist Manifesto)

But the apostles were not revolutionaries. Their goal was not to overturn the human institutions of a fallen world, (which might foment bloodshed). The goal was to be a witness to the world—and few in that dark world needed that witness more than a 'crooked master.' And that's really the meaning of this word, "unreasonable". (vs18c). The idea is '*moral crookedness*' and suggests physical abuse, and/or cheating the servant—and that was a difficult and heavy burden on the servant.

But Peter gives the motivation for doing that, (i.e. 'being a witness to the world'), in verse 19, where he states that it, "*finds favor*" with God when a person suffers with an awareness of God. I'm reading from the New American Standard Bible, which translates, verse 19, "...for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows...". But I think the New International Version is probably better in its translation because he is "conscious of God", or "a person bears up" because of their consciousness "of the LORD".

Glorifying God by obedience is the motivation that pleases God. —It's what He will not forget and what He will reward. The godly servant is encouraged here to live for the eternal and not the temporal. It's with the upward look toward God and the forward look to the kingdom to come that we are able to endure hardship and injustice—and obey. This world is not all there is. The best is yet to come, and living for that enables a person to live well in the temporal, to live well in the meantime.

Well, that's the perspective we need; and that perspective enabled Paul and Silas to sing hymns at midnight rather than grumble about being beaten in Philippi and

thrown into a dungeon. Luke wrote that 'The prisoners were all listening to them as they sang hymns at midnight.' (Acts 16:25). And the world is listening to the things we say—just as the world is watching the things that we do.

Now Peter has a caveat in verse 20 where he warns that enduring suffering at the hands of a crooked master doesn't apply to hardship that was provoked by a servant's bad behavior; "For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience?...". Peter had in mind an actual problem, an understandable problem: Servants getting frustrated and angry with an unreasonable man, and, as a result, getting themselves in trouble. It happens; and it's understandable. But there's no reward in it—and that's the warning.

But if "...you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God." (vs20b). That is what pleases the LORD. It, in fact, is proof of a person's faith. But again, this is hard. So to respond well and endure it, we need perspective. We need the right outlook.

And Peter gives that in verse 21. He said, 'This is our calling to endure; even to do well in spite of injustice.' Easy to preach, hard to do—I admit it. But this is the life to which every believer in Christ has been called. It's a life of obedience. And sometimes, as here, it is to be a life of obedience under the most trying of circumstances—suffering unjustly for doing right, "...patiently endure it...", (vs20). Then Peter wrote, "For you have been called for this purpose..." (vs21).

Now that's taught in other passages of Scripture. In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas were on the first missionary journey in Asia Minor, (in the southern coast of modern-day Turkey), and calling pagans to salvation. When they came to the city of Lystra, they did that. At first there was a kind of welcome to them; but they misunderstood who they were, and when they found out what they were preaching, they were dealt with very harshly.

Paul was stoned for telling pagans about salvation; telling them of 'the way of life'; telling them the Good News. He was stoned and he was dragged outside the city—and he was left for dead. But he got up and he went on to the next city, Derbe.

After preaching there, he returned to Lystra to strengthen and encourage the young saints. What they had seen must have really been a discouraging thing for them: To see the man who brought them the Gospel, and they responded to it, and the response of the citizens around them was to try to kill him. So he spoke to them, saying, "Through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14: 22).

The world doesn't receive the Light of the Gospel without resistance. Early in the Great Awakening in England, George Whitefield and his associates experienced a lot of resistance. The Anglican church denounced them as "enthusiasts", and would not let them preach in the churches, (which were filling up with people to hear them). So they had to go outside, into the fields. But even there, there was a great deal of hostility from some in the crowds that came. Those people would pelt Whitefield, and the others that were with him, with rocks and things like dead cats. One of his friends lost an eye.

Satan doesn't give up ground without a fight; that's to be expected. But it is what we have been 'called to'—that's the life. And knowing that this is God's plan and purpose for us, (for it gives us perspective, it helps us to see things as they really are), and really, is an encouragement to us.

What Luke wrote was Paul encouraging them to continue in the faith by saying, "Through many tribulations, you must enter the kingdom of God." (ibid.). Paul prepared them for the unexpected. We have not been called to a life of ease. We go through trials in life, as all people do. It may be sickness; it may be the loss of a job—and how we respond is a witness to the life that we have and the hope that we have. As I say, 'The world is watching and the world is listening.'

Well, that was true for those servants who were subjected to unreasonable demands and unjust treatment. They were, 'called out of darkness' to serve God in a hard place. God didn't say, 'Flee that hard place'.

God has His people in every area of life; from the upper echelons to the lowest. And we're to be lights in wherever we are—here, it was to be a light to those pagan households. For us it means that we as workers are to be diligent and honest in every

situation, and rest in the providence of God—trusting Him as we go through a dark valley. It is His purpose and it's for our good.

And he has given us a model to follow. That's the next encouragement Peter gave; "...Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." (vs21b). Edwin Bloom explained Christ's sufferings, (referred to here), as, "*exemplary* as well as *expiatory*." The *expiatory* sufferings, (those that remove our sin and guilt), are mentioned in verse 24. Here in verses 21 through verse 23, it's the sufferings He experienced through His life as He lived in perfect obedience to His Father and served as an example for us in our daily life. All through His ministry, He faced bitter opposition from powerful opponents that finally resulted in His execution on the cross.

Hebrews chapter 2, verse 10, states that Christ was perfected as the Savior, "through sufferings". Meaning, His character as a man was fully developed, and His perfection revealed, through the sufferings of this life—the sufferings He endured unjustly. So we don't experience anything in life that He didn't experience, which made Him to be a merciful, faithful, great high priest. He understands fully what we go through, and He knows how best to help us, and intercedes for us continually. We're not alone in this world.

And He never requires us to go anywhere that He has not gone, or do anything that He has not done, or suffer any trial that He has not suffered—only He suffered it more fully and completely than we can do. And He always comes to our aid to guide us, to encourage us, and to lead us through the dark valleys that we go through...(and that He has called us to go through). Nothing happens by chance; and these trials you experience are not by chance; it's all according to God's will.

I can't explain how that fits in your life or anyone else's life, necessarily; for some things are mystifying. But someday He'll wipe away every tear from our eye; He'll explain it all and we'll see it worked perfectly, and it was right, and then praise Him for it.



A famous moment in the novel *Robinson Crusoe* is when Robinson finds a footprint on the shore. After years of isolation on an island, he realized he was no longer alone. And when he found the owner of the footprint, he found a friend and helper. We are not alone. We have a helper who is Almighty, who has been wherever we must go, and He has left us His path, like footprints on a shore or across a snowy field, for us to follow to our destination.

Peter must have had thought of how he did that literally during the Lord's ministry by following Him over the hills of Galilee and Judea, and in so doing, over some very rough terrain. Everywhere they went, the Lord faced challenges: Storms on the sea, hostile enemies in men and demons, and Satan himself. And Peter saw how the Lord met each challenge calmly, wisely, powerfully. So Peter was saying here, 'Learn from Him, trust in Him, follow Him.'

Peter explained the pattern of the Lord's life from Scripture in verse 22, (which was especially meaningful for servants subjected to unjust treatment), for that was Christ's life as prophesied in Isaiah 53, verse 9. Peter leaned very heavily on Isaiah 53 in this text. But there, verse 9 says, "...who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth..." . His life was perfect; His life was flawless in both thought and deed.; He is the perfect man. —And yet, all through His earthly ministry, He was harassed, He was assailed unjustly.

Still, He responded righteously, not defensively; verse 23, "...and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously...."

'*Reviling*' refers to insulting speech, which these servants were instructed to, 'patiently endure'. (vs20). 'Speaking back' is the natural response—but it's not pleasing to God. That's what Moses did; 'he reviled back'. The nation was always grumbling and what he went through, most of us could not go through: 40 years with a stiff-necked people grumbling continually.

In Numbers 20, they finally provoked him. They wanted water. That's understandable, but they grumbled about it. Numbers 20, verse 3, says, "The people thus *contended* with Moses..." The Septuagint, (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), translates the Hebrew word by the Greek word that's used here in our text; so, "The people '*reviled*' Moses. "

So in anger, Moses struck the rock twice rather than, 'speak to it', as God instructed him to. Water came out supernaturally, God blessed; but it displeased the LORD. And as a result of striking the rock in anger, and striking it twice, Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. We're all like Moses in that way.

But Christ is our example; He uttered no threats but kept entrusting Himself to God. He looked to His Father, trusted Him—and kept doing that daily, constantly. And He could do that with confidence because He knew the One to whom He looked, the One He trusted Himself to. He is the One who judges righteously.

We might think, 'You know, it's good to let off some steam. Maybe even good for one's blood pressure. —And hey, it's justified! If you knew this boss of mine, (or you knew this person I'm associated with), you'd understand!' But Peter didn't recommend that, (and it's not good for your blood pressure).

What Christ did was trust in the Father continually. All His life long He rested in Him. The Lord had strength to remain silent and refrain from vengeance. He could have called down legions of angels to intervene for Him—and carry out a vendetta, (or something like that). He didn't. He could do what He did because He knew God, He knew His Father and He knew that He judges righteously—knew that He would be just and fair and everything would be resolved in the very best way.

You know, we can't *see* that in this life; we have to *believe* that because that's life for the Christian. 'We live by faith, not by sight', and so in the midst of a hard situation we look to the LORD, we trust Him to deal with it because this is what He's told us to do. It's very important that we understand that.

We all have a sense of justice; that's part of being made in the image of God. We know right from wrong—and we want to see wrongs redressed—set right. People can't merely forget an injustice; and I mean, saints and non-saints, the believer, the non-believer, we can't just merely forget an injustice. There's no peace knowing that a cruelty will go unpunished, and that a criminal will get away with it.

Yet the reason we can suffer an injustice and rest, is because we know that God will deal with it in the right way, at the right time, and deal with it forever. There will be perfect justice so we can entrust ourselves to His care. And Christ did that at a time when He suffered the worst injustice that has ever occurred—so we can do the same. Again, easy to preach—but we can do that.

And the reason we can is given in verse 24, where Peter explained the unique aspect of Christ's suffering, (and which is the reason that we are able to follow Him), He has taken away our sin; He's changed us. Verse 24, "...and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

Again, we all have a sense of right and wrong, and we all believe wrongs must be redressed, remedied, with justice. And this is how the LORD redressed the wrongs we have committed against Him; this is how all our sins were removed and God's justice was satisfied fully: He punished them in our substitute. Christ, Himself, "bore our sins in His *own* body on the cross". (ibid.).

That is suffering that we cannot imitate; no one can. Unbelievers can bear their own sins; and they will bear their own sins and the guilt of their sins for all eternity in perdition.

But only Christ can bear our sins as our substitute. And He did that once for all at Calvary. Christ willingly took our place in judgment, and the Father counted all of our sins against His Son—or as Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21, "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin in our behalf..." , that is how He became 'our sin bearer.' So then,

'God punished Him in our place, putting Him to death, paying for all our sins, so that, Paul wrote, "...we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (ibid.).

Peter and Paul didn't invent this explanation of the death of Christ, which 'atoned', or 'satisfied', God's justice. Isaiah prophesied this very thing over 700 years earlier. In Isaiah 53, verse 6, he wrote, "...the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." And verse 12, "...He Himself bore the sins of many..."

But long before Isaiah, Israel had an object lesson of this very thing every year on the Day of Atonement. Two goats were chosen. One was a sin offering, slain on the altar. The second was the scapegoat. The priest would place his hands on the head of the second goat; he would confess Israel's transgressions, transferring them symbolically from the people, from the nation, to the animal, and then send it off into the wilderness. Christ fulfilled these prophecies, these 'types', these 'pictures' in His sacrificial death when He bore our sins, died for them, and carried them far away, "As far as the east is from the west..." (Psa 103:12).

That is true for everyone who believes in Him, who trusts in Christ's person as God's eternal Son, the God-man, and rests in His sacrifice. That's the Gospel. There is no other Gospel and there is salvation in no other way. There's no compromise. Truth matters.

But again, so does behavior. And while we are not saved by our behavior, still good behavior is the purpose, (or a central purpose), for the sacrifice of Christ. It is the reason He died for us. And Peter stated that in the rest of verse 24: Christ bore our sins, and the punishment for them, "...so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." (vs24b). That's Isaiah 53, (again), verse 5. Peter applies it to us morally.

Christ's wounds healed us of sin, (as though sin were a lethal sickness; something like leprosy; and that's often the illustration of sin). But when He died for our sins, He obtained for us healing from sin and its power. When we believed in Christ, we died

immediately to the guilt of sin and the punishment for sin. We were justified. We were declared righteous at the moment of faith; and the righteousness of Christ was imputed to us. So we're forgiven, and we're positively righteous in God's sight. That's our legal standing with the Father.

But we have also died to the power of sin; and we have power over it, daily, as we follow in Christ's steps. So we can have victory. —That's sanctification. Now, it's not perfectionism; we still stumble, and we'll stumble till the day we die. It is a *progressive*, life-long work of the Holy Spirit that empowers us to follow Christ daily and, “live to righteousness.” (vs24b). That's grace. Salvation, from start to finish, is altogether of the LORD. It's His work.

And He heals. And Peter makes that clear in verse 25, "For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls." That's a reference to Isaiah 53:6; "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us have turned aside to his own way."

Peter applied that broadly—beyond Israel, (Isaiah is written to the nation; it's describing the nation; and all of it is fulfilled ultimately in the nation); but it's true of all of us—it's true of God's elect. Peter applies it broadly here, and he wrote it in the past tense, for it's no longer true of us: ‘They, (we), have returned’, (that's conversion), “...have returned to the Shepherd...” (vs25).

Now that doesn't suggest that they had previously been with Christ. The word for ‘returned’ also means ‘turned’. It's used that way, for example, in Acts chapter 9, verse 35, of people who saw a miracle and, “...turned to the Lord.” The verb, ‘turn’, can also be understood as having a passive meaning—and read as, ‘you have been returned...’, or, ‘you have been turned to the Shepherd.’ And this is consistent with what Peter will say later in chapter 3, verse 18, "Christ died...so that He might bring us to God..." And that fits the image here of a shepherd going out to find lost sheep.

Here's the main point: All of us, all of this, is about what God has done for us in Christ. He takes the initiative and brings us to Himself. The result is they, we, are now

under His care as, "the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls." (vs25). He is our constant companion.

That must have been a great encouragement to those slaves who suffered under a cruel master. The Good Shepherd is guiding them, and guiding them always; He never leaves. And so like sheep, they were to follow Him. That's dictated, so to speak, by the nature of their relationship, (and our relationship), with the Lord. As His sheep, we are to follow Him.

And we will if we're His; "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." (Jn 10:27). It's our nature as new creatures in Christ, to follow Him. But also, it will be our desire to follow Him from love for the One 'who loves us and saved us'. (Rev 1:5).

John Stott called Christianity, "A rescue religion." Human religion is an effort to reach God—it's *trying* to get to heaven. Christianity is God *reaching* the helpless. Understanding that, understanding the nature of salvation, understanding grace, produces gratitude. And gratitude for grace is motivation for good behavior in the saved.

I can't emphasize that enough. To understand the grace of God, the free gift of God—that He's done it all and we simply receive it....As we understand that, that does not motivate us to be lazy, (it's not an excuse for that), rather it motivates us to be obedient and to act sacrificially for Him.

Well, there's no better example of this 'Believing and then living' than the one that we find in the middle of the Book of Acts; a man in the middle of the Book of Acts; Acts chapter 16. He's nameless, but we know his occupation, and we know his question. He asked a great question. He was the chief jailer in the town of Philippi, who supervised the arrest and beating of Paul and Silas and threw them into the deepest, darkest part of the dungeon.

Then at midnight, his world fell apart. There was an earthquake that shook open the prison doors. When he arrived and saw the situation he thought the prisoners had

all escaped; in despair he drew his sword and was about to fall on it—but Paul cried out, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" The man grabbed a torch; he rushed in to Paul's and Silas's cell and fell down before them, trembling, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16: 28).

That's one of the greatest questions ever asked: The simplicity of it; the urgency of it. And it received one of the clearest answers ever given. They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..." (ibid. vs31).

"Believe!" —And he did, along with his household.

That's the simple Gospel; it can't be any simpler. God could not make it any simpler than that. 'What must I do?'

'Believe!'

'Believe', or put it this way, 'Receive the gift! Just receive it like one opens a hand and receives a gift.' The simplest thing there is: 'Simply believe'.

And yet, it's impossible—and yet, it's the hardest thing to do because we're dead. So how does one believe? The grace of God intervenes to enable us to do that; 'to believe'.

And that's what happened there. This man was changed; he believed in Christ. But that's not all; Luke wrote that he then took care of Paul and Silas—he washed their wounds. (I suppose the very wounds that he inflicted on them.) He washed their wounds and he fed them; then he and his family were baptized. That is imitating Christ—caring for the wounds of others. That is fulfilling 'the whole Law': Loving God, and loving our neighbor. And that, in a Roman jailer, was the natural response of love to God's redeeming love.

'Truth matters; it matters seriously;' it is a matter of life and death. And if we know it, we value it as the greatest treasure we have: Truth.

And if we know it, we will do it, obey it; and imitate Christ and, "...follow in His steps." (vs21c).

If there's anyone here who thinks that his or her life is acceptable, you're a good husband or a good wife, you're an honest worker...that's good. But if you think that's good enough, Isaiah has something to say about that. He has a challenge: He said, "All our righteousnesses...", *(all our good deeds)*, "...are like filthy rags." (Isa 64:6). That's how God sees them.

We need grace; we need Christ's sacrifice that heals and cleanses the soul. So come to Him, trust in Him. Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. Then live for Him with deeds that really do please the LORD. We can do that...Sin has been dealt with in our lives; we're a believer in Jesus Christ; and we have a new nature. God will enable us as we walk by faith. May God help us to do that.

*(Closing prayer)* What great thing to contemplate\*, LORD:

What Your Son did for us on the cross,

And how His wounds plead for us,

And You hear those pleas,

You sent Him to die for us,

And You'll never turn us out,

You'll always be with us.

(\*The speaker is referring to the closing hymn just sung;

*Arise, My Soul, Arise)*

It's a great truth. Thank You for Your goodness and grace. May we live lives that honor You—but not from a sense of obligation, (we're obligated, that's true), but out of a sense of gratitude, out of love for You for the love You've shown us, and the love Your Son has shown us, and the love the Spirit, in drawing us, has shown us...and the knowing You'll never let us go. We praise You and thank You for that. That gives peace.



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*"In His Steps" by Dan Duncan*

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The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you shalom, peace. In Christ's name, Amen.

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