

The Stabilizing Power of Our Identity in Christ Part 2

Our Identity in Christ

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 2. 1 Peter 2. Continuing our exposition of this epistle of Peter, and particularly 1 Peter 2:4-10. It's our focus again this morning, we began looking at it last Sunday and we will continue this morning looking at that passage. And I want to remind you that the purpose of the book of 1 Peter, before we actually read 1 Peter 2:4-10, Peter is writing to strengthen believers in Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey. He's writing to strengthen Christians in that area for upcoming trials, difficulties, storms, persecution and so he writes to strengthen them. In fact, the purpose of the book is really seen in 1 Peter 5:12, where he sums up the whole letter by saying, "through Silvanus, our faithful brother, for so I regard him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it." He wants the people to stand firm in the grace of God. He knows that they are experiencing persecution. We're going to see more of this. They're experiencing suffering. One of the key words in the book is the word "suffer." We're going to see it again and again and again as we go through this letter.

So how do you bear up in suffering? How do you bear up in times of persecution? In times where life is becoming difficult because of our profession and our love for Christ? How do you bear up? This is the purpose of this entire letter and one of the things that we see that's a major theme in the letter becomes a major focus in this passage. How are you going to bear up in times of difficulty and persecution? One of the major themes is you must know who you are. You must be clear about your identity. At the core of who you are, that's where strength is found, knowing who you are in Christ. This is what Peter is trying to hammer home. It's actually the very first thing he says in the letter. We saw this when we looked at 1 Peter 1. He tells them right up front, "I'm writing to you who are elect and aliens," in chapter 1:1. He wants them to know, "You are chosen by God and you're strangers to this world. God has chosen you. How precious you are to God." This is what the theme of the passage we're looking at right now is how precious the believer is to God, how precious the fellowship of believers is to God. And so if we're going to bear up, we need to understand our identity.

So the title of the message is "The Stabilizing Power of Our Identity in Christ." It's part 2. The stabilizing power of our identity in Christ. So I want to read beginning at verse 4 of 1 Peter 2.

4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," 8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. 9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Let's pray and ask God's blessing on his word.

Our Father, we praise and honor and worship You because You are worthy. We thank You, Lord, for the privilege we have to come into Your presence by the blood of Christ, to come to the throne of grace, and to ask for mercy and help in our time of need. And Lord, we come asking that You would feed us today with Your word, that it would be the bread of life for us, that it would help us to walk in Your truth, to cling to our Savior, to treasure Him more, and to be more faithful. We pray this in His name. Amen.

So the stabilizing power of our identity in Christ. If we're going to bear up in times of difficulty, it's essential that we know who we are, we know why we're here, we know what we're supposed to do, and we know how to do it. That's basically the outline this morning that Peter is calling us to look at. He wants us to know who we are, why we're here, what we're to do, and how we're to do it and knowing that enables us, in the midst of whatever comes at us, to be about the work we're called to do.

You know, the power of building our thinking on the word of God and meditating on the word so that it becomes second nature to us is so important. We were talking this week about the familiar kind of saying or slogan that police officers or firemen, first responders will say, in a moment of crisis, you don't rise to the occasion, people fall back on their training. You don't rise to the occasion as much as you fall back on your training. So we need to train our minds and our hearts in such a way that when crisis strikes or when whatever comes, we fall back on our training and we know who we are and why we're here and what we're to do. And we do it. And so this is this passage. He's trying to help us do that. In fact, the whole letter, he continues to pound this idea of who you are and why you're here. But this passage in a wonderful and beautiful way.

So know who you are. That's the first point this morning. Know who you are. If you're going to bear up, you need to have this in your heart. Know who you are. What is your identity? Paul writes to a region characterized by ethnic hostility, history of political conflicts. He writes to five different Roman provinces in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. In verse 1 of chapter 1, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These are different ethnicities, different people groups, different languages, different cultural backgrounds. And he writes to them as to one people. He uses terminology throughout the letter, but particularly in this passage, which tells them that if you want to know who you are, there's two subpoints here in this first point, know who you are, you are to see yourselves as one people. Not individually, you're to see yourselves corporately with the rest of the body of Christ as one people. Not to say that our ethnicity doesn't have a place that we should value it, of course. Our culture that we come from, of course. And part of loving one another is understanding these things and appreciating these things. But the fundamental reality of who you are is not defined by your ethnicity, or your national origin, or your cultural background. If you are a Christian, your fundamental identity is rooted in your relationship to Jesus Christ and that means that everyone else who names the name of Christ is your people. Regardless of skin color, background, whatever, it doesn't matter, we are the people of God. Do you see how he hammers... and read 1 Peter and just keep reading it and you see he hammers this over and over and over. You are... I mean, in verse 9, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people. Those are four collective nouns. Don't think of yourself atomistically or individualistically like we are prone to do in Western society. Think of yourself as a part of a people. A part of a nation. A part of a priesthood. A part of a race. Christ's race. His people. His nation. His priesthood.

So see yourself as God sees you. It's really profound to think about that, that Peter also is writing as a Jew to a largely Gentile audience. I mean, he's writing to Christians, right? Now Christians are those who believe in Jesus. He's writing to Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus. Gentile is the biblical word for everybody that's not a Jew. So in the Old Covenant, there were two groups of people, Jew and everybody else. Jew and Gentile. And the Jews were the people of God. And the Gentiles were the goyim or the nations or those who were lost in darkness, idolatry, wickedness. But when the gospel comes, we see that God always intended to save a people from all nations, not just the Jewish nation. The Jewish nation was the foundation, a part of the building that he was building was the prophets and the work of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses, Elijah, all the prophets. Praise God for the gift of the Jewish people and the Scriptures but he's always had in view, from the time he called Abraham, he said, "Through your seed, all the families of the earth will be blessed," Genesis 12:3. The call of Abraham was with a view toward the nations.

But still, for a Jew like Peter, who'd grown up going to synagogue, hearing his ethnic identity, his spiritual identity wrapped up as a Jewish person, for him to use these terms of a largely Gentile audience is especially glorious and wonderful. He says, "Listen, it's not about being a Jew anymore, it's about you, Asian, Bithynia, Cappadocian, you, because you are in Christ, you are now my people. We are one people." And now, but there are two races, and this is still, it's really typified in the Old Covenant with the

Jewish people, it was God's people, the outward nation of Israel, and everybody else, but the church is God's people and there's everybody else and our desire is to see more and more of the "everybody else" become part of God's people.

That's what our commission is but we must see ourselves as one people. Second subpoint here, not just to see yourselves as one people, see yourselves as the one people who belong to God. You belong to God, if you're a Christian. He has bought you. He owns you. He has made you his own as his precious child. The passage Ted read at the beginning of the service, you can approach the throne of grace with boldness because your daddy is on the throne of heaven. You've been brought near. You were far off, but now you've been brought near by the blood of Christ. But that means you belong to him, and the images that he uses in this passage make this so powerfully clear. He says, as we saw last time, we looked at, you're a part of the spiritual house that he is building. Technically, I mean, what he's saying is, you're a part of the real, true temple of God, that the physical temple was replaced by the body of Christ, and the body of Christ now is the body of Christ. It was his body when he tabernacled among us, now risen in glory, his body is everyone who's united to him by faith is his body, and we are his temple. To be the temple, that's a building that belongs to God. You're a priesthood. They're the people that belong to God.

So, you're one people who belong to God. You're not your own. You're here for his purposes, for his pleasure, and for his glory and to understand that changes everything. So know who you are, one people who belong to God. Second point this morning: know why you are here. Closely related to who you are, it helps, if you know who you are, you understand why you're here. The two images make up one wonderful word picture, the two main images in the passage, you're a part of the temple, and you're a part of the priesthood. So, you're both a stone in the temple, the building, and you are a priest ministering inside that building, lays those images on top of each other.

Now think about that. Why are you here? To be a member of the priesthood and a part of the temple is saying in a powerful way, you are here to be completely and exclusively devoted to the worship of God. Completely and exclusively. I mean, think about it. The temple is used for nothing else. You know, the temple wasn't rented out for big family events in Israel. It wasn't to be a place to be used as a basketball gymnasium. No, it was devoted to worship. The priesthood, when someone was serving as a priest, you wouldn't call them on their cell phone. You couldn't have done that, of course, but if they had a cell phone, you wouldn't have called them on their cell phone, "Hey, you're offering an offering right now, can you come help me move some furniture?" The priest is doing the most important thing in the world. He's not to be interrupted. He is devoted to worship. Do you see that? So the building and the priesthood, both of these images laid on top of each other applies to every single person who has truly come to know Jesus Christ and both of those images laying on top of each other say, you are to be completely and exclusively devoted to the worship of God.

Now what we're going to see, of course, is that that doesn't mean that you couldn't help somebody move. It'd be nice if we could say stuff like that, we don't want to do that

because I'm too busy worshiping. Sometimes you may be, need to say no. But what the New Testament shows us is, listen, when you go do the good works that you do, perhaps helping someone move, you're to do it not merely as a good work, but you are to do the action as an active expression of worship. You are devoted to worship in everything. Whether you eat or drink, do all for the glory of God. So everything's to be captured up into worship but this changes how you see yourself. I am here completely and exclusively to worship God.

Now the beauty of this is, man, all men were made exclusively and completely for the worship of God. Every single human being, that's why they were made. It's in the fabric of their being. Though as sinners, we come to this world separated from God, hostile to him, disobedient because we've been conceived in sin, sin nature is passed on to us, we have an aversion to God, no man seeks God, Romans 3:10 and following, no man is righteous, not one. So we don't want to do what we were created to do anymore. It doesn't change the fact that we were created for worship. This is why sinful people all over the world cannot help but worship. Even the atheist worships. He has to come up with ways of explaining things, and he says stuff like, life found a way. Life found a way. So he deifies life. He worships man. Man's intelligence. He must worship. This is why people get together and watch other people do really hard things, like watch ball games. I mean, I love to watch ball games, don't get me wrong. Ted Tripp brought this up, I heard him speak a couple years ago when he did a conference for us, and he said it's unique to men and human beings that we like to watch other people do things well and applaud and praise them. God made us this way. He says if you were to go up into Alaska and see a, you know, go by one of those rivers and see some bears trying to get salmon. You know, the salmon are making their way up, and so the bears, the grizzlies are all there gathered to get, you don't see them over to the side watching, just sitting watching. "Man, look at Big Brown go! Great job! That's awesome! Man, I wish I could do it like that!" No, they're out there doing it themselves and trying to take away the fish from Big Brown. They're not interested in praising anybody else. But human beings, we are. We're wired for worship. And there's a good thing about praising jobs that are well done. It's part of who we are, if we keep everything centered where it needs to be, that all things come from him. Every good gift is from God.

And so we're created for worship. Well then, he's saying, "Now that you've been brought back into My kingdom, into My family, you now have the ability to do what you were created to do. So devote yourself to that. That's why you're here." So, we're one people who belong to God, that's who you are. Why you're here? To be devoted exclusively and completely to worship. Third point, know what you're to do. I mean, a priest worships, the temple's devoted to worship. A priest worships, but what does he do to worship? The text tells us, verse 5, "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." We are to offer up spiritual sacrifices. No more physical sacrifices now that Christ has come. In fact, you turn over back toward the front of your Bible, pass the book of James to Hebrews 10. The glory of what Jesus has done for us. Hebrews 10:11. The author of Hebrews is making clear that Jesus has put an end to the need for sacrifices. No more animals need to die now that Christ has come. Look what he says in Hebrews 10:11. He's

talking about the, he's writing and Hebrews is written to Jewish believers, Hebrew believers. He's especially explaining to them, "Listen, the temple has become obsolete. Jesus is the temple and He's satisfied everything required." He says in verse 11, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." The blood of bulls and goats could never really cleanse us is what he's saying. It was a type. It was a picture of what needed to happen. "But He," verse 12, that is Christ, "but He having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." He offered one sacrifice for all time. There was only one sacrifice that needed to happen. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was the one sacrifice for all time that took away the sins of everyone who would ever believe for all time. He sat down. The work is finished. So there need be no more sacrifices. Verse 14, "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." Everything he has done is everything that is necessary to perfect you and me for all time. It is done. I encourage you to read the book of Hebrews 9:11, 14, also talks about that same thing in a beautiful way but we're going to move on.

So we're to offer not physical sacrifices, but spiritual sacrifices. What are spiritual sacrifices? What does that mean? There are a number of places the New Testament talks about this, but two in particular that stand out that I want us to look at to answer this question of what are you to do, offer spiritual sacrifices, and the first passage is Romans 12:1. Very familiar passage. If you've been a believer long or you've been around the word long, you probably remember or you've heard this passage. Romans 12:1, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." Paul uses this idea, this image, to help the Roman Christians understand how they are to live. It's interesting. It's the hinge of the book of Romans. I like to say it's a hinge because the first 11 chapters of Romans are about theology and doctrine, and they tell you about what God has done for us in Christ, what God has done, and then chapter 12 is a hinge because from here on, 12 to 16, is going to say what we now need to do in light of what God has done for us in Christ. So it's the practical. Theology, first 11 chapters, practical, last five chapters, and the hinge is this verse, particularly I think these two verses, Romans 12:1 and 2. But how do you take theology and turn it into practical living? The hinge that brings them together is worship. You see all of life is worship. You see that your purpose is to worship God. And worshiping God, he says right here, is offering spiritual sacrifices to him, to offer your body as a living and holy sacrifice.

One of the spiritual sacrifices, or one of the ways we think about it, is to offer yourself to God on a daily basis, not to earn anything. You can add nothing to the finished work of Christ. You never need to think you can. That is displeasing to God in the highest order. We can add nothing to what Jesus has done but in light of the fact that he's done everything necessary now as an expression of worship and gratitude, not payment, no, as worship and gratitude, as an expression of love, we can lay down our lives for his glory. That's what he's talking about. You offer your bodies. You present your bodies as a living, ongoing, holy sacrifice. It's a continual process. Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians when he says, "I die daily." The Christian life is a life of self-denial and death to self. Like I said, we bring only our sin to Jesus. He saves us but on the other side of him saving us now, we are called to be holy and the way we do it is we continually die

to ourselves through our union with Christ, understanding his power, that his death and resurrection is how we die. You put to death the deeds of the body, the Scripture says.

So you want to do something, you feel a sinful urge of some kind, and you look to Christ, you go to him and say, "Lord Jesus, in Your death I die. This sin no longer reigns in me. I don't have to do it because of what You've done. I trust in the efficacy of Your death now to give me victory. I lay that aside. I'm going to walk in the opposite. I'm putting off and putting on," Ephesians 4:22 to 24, "I put off the old man, put on the new man. And I'm doing it by union with Christ. I now have the power to walk in righteousness because Your resurrection life is available to me through union with You." And so that's a spiritual sacrifice.

Now think about this, this means that growing in holiness, putting sin to death more and more and more, which is what we're called to do, think about the sins you struggle with. What are the sins you struggle most with? You and I are called to die to those on a daily basis, to lay it on the altar and through the power of the death of Christ, to experience freedom, to turn from that and to walk in righteousness. But what I want you to get is, this is so important, we have so many ways we get tripped up in the Christian life, one of the ways we get tripped up in the Christian life is we begin to think that sanctification, growing in holiness, putting off of sin, is really self-improvement. I mean, it is improving yourself, but that's not the reason you should be doing it. The world wants self-improvement and they're pretty good at it. They can do a lot of stuff. They can improve themselves through natural means. But the Christian life is not a call to self-improvement, it's a call to perpetual worship. So the motivation of why you're laying it down is critically important. It's not so you can feel better about yourself. It's not so that you can even feel less dirty and unclean because of sin. And that's a benefit that comes out of it, praise God. It's wonderful to walk in more and more holiness, but that's not the motivation. The godly motivation is worship. "I lay this down because Jesus has poured out His blood for me. He has loved me with a perfect love, and receiving His love, I just want to love Him back and lay it down." That is where the power comes in sanctification and you must get that right. It's so critical for us to do that.

So this idea of offering your body, that's what we're called to do on a daily basis. This is why obedience is worship. And I love how the Old Testament shows this. The whole Bible is the picture of God's salvation, his saving work. You find churches at times who emphasize the New Testament and never preach from the Old Testament and that's a glaring weakness and hindrance. It's like fighting with one arm tied behind your back. How foolish is that?

Look with me at 1 Samuel 15. 1 Samuel 15. You have to understand how the Old Testament is being interpreted correctly. You've got to see it in light of the big picture. The Old Testament is basically saying we need Jesus. It's anticipating Jesus every page. And the New Testament is announcing Jesus. That's how the Bible fits together. It's all anticipating Christ, and it's announcing Christ. So it's all about Christ. But 1 Samuel 15, the familiar story of Saul's disobedience when he makes a sacrifice before the time he was supposed to. Samuel had given him clear direction, "Wait till I come. I will make the

sacrifice. It's my role, not your role as the king. I'm the one to make the sacrifice." Saul goes ahead and makes the sacrifice and Samuel tells him, "This is why you're going to lose the kingdom because you will not obey the voice of the Lord." And he says in verse 22, Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king."

To obey is better than sacrifice. You see, God wasn't so interested. I mean, the sacrifices, he puts a lot of time into sacrifices. You read Leviticus chapters 1 to 6, read through Numbers, you're going to see all kinds of talk about sacrifices. Sacrifices were to be done precisely according to his blueprint. Great specificity of detail in the Old Covenant. But what we're learning even here in the days of Samuel is that what God really wants from you is not merely the offering of the blood of a goat or a lamb, even a priceless valuable ox. It's not that, he wants your heart. He wants you to have a desire to obey him. You see, he wants you to be dying to self and trusting in him. That's what he was saying even in this Old Testament passage. And David was a man after God's own heart, who was different than Saul, who heeded the word of the Lord and whose heart was changed by faith in Christ, looking ahead to the salvation of Jesus, trusting in the gift of his righteousness, and he then had a heart to obey.

So you offer sacrifices by obeying God, and you obey him out of a desire to worship him. That's what Romans 12:1 says. Now let's look at another passage. We're still asking, what are you to do? What does it look like to offer sacrifices? Romans 12:1 says it means to die to self. Look at Hebrews, back toward 1 Peter. You get back to Hebrews 13:15 and 16. Here, the author of Hebrews is coming to the end of his epistle. He's just been talking about Jesus in verses 11 to 14 and he said, look, he's writing to Jews who are being ostracized and hated and rejected, disowned because of their faith in the Jewish Messiah. He's writing to Hebrew Christians, and he's basically telling them, "Hold on. Jesus is the One." And he says, he reminds them that Jesus was sent outside the camp. He was crucified outside of Jerusalem, outside the camp. That's what happens to those who bear the reproach of God, bearing sin. And because of that, we're saved. And he says now as Christians, what's going to happen to you and me is we're at times going to be having to be treated as outside the camp. The world is going to reject us and put us out. And he says in verse 13 of chapter 13, "So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come." Now look what he says next, "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

He talks about four types of spiritual sacrifice here. He says that a sacrifice of praise, we have that song we sang just a week or two ago, we bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord. This is what he's talking about. To praise God, to worship God in our circumstance is to bring a sacrifice. That is, it's an act of worship. We are bringing something that brings pleasure to God. When you read the Old Testament pictures of the sacrifices, one of the images is that they would offer a burnt offering, and it was a

soothing aroma to God and he talks about how wonderful. It's a phrase repeated over and over and over again, particularly in Leviticus and Numbers, a soothing aroma. And so what he's saying, he's trying to communicate to us in a way we can understand.

Think about how wonderful it is to smell something wonderful. It is amazing how our olfactory nerves, you know, the ability to smell, how discerning we are. I mean, that's one of the horrible things about COVID was it took your taste and smell. You had it, and you realized that suddenly, "I can't smell." I was holding a bottle of alcohol. I knew I had had COVID, but I didn't know how bad it was. I was holding a bottle of alcohol, and I was doing something with it, and I realized I don't smell the alcohol. And I just put it right up there, and I couldn't smell it. I thought, that is serious right there. Yeah, I have lost my sense of smell for that period of time. Praise the Lord it came back. But anyway, so God is speaking to us in a way that says, "Look, I made you to have senses, and I want you to understand, think of the most wonderful smell that you can bring to mind, that is what it's like when My people offer Me worship. It delights My heart."

So this is what we're to do and he's saying it's a sacrifice when we praise him, particularly in times where it's hard to praise him, the circumstances are difficult and trying. I think that's why it flows out of that context I just showed you in Hebrews 13, bear his reproach outside the city. Let's offer up a sacrifice of praise. When you're having to go through the loss of the blessings of this world, and yet you still are worshiping God, that is delightful to your Father. And you can offer him that. So this means when you're going through a trial, it's an extraordinary opportunity for you to bless and serve your Savior.

He loves it when his people worship him and offer sacrifices of praise. In fact, I think this next phrase adds to this, and he says back in Hebrews 13:15, "Through Him then," through Christ, it has to be through Jesus, not on our own, "Through Him let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." This is one place where the NAS doesn't get it right. It really shouldn't say "give thanks to His name." Literally, it says "confess His name." Say the same thing as, the word homo logeo, homo, same, logeo, speak, to speak the same thing, to say the same thing that God says about his name, to confess his name.

So you're offering the sacrifice of praise, and that is, he clarifies, what is that praise? It's the fruit of lips that confess his name and I think what he's talking about, again, with the context in mind, he's saying, look, when you're going through difficulty, and you're tempted by the way things are going to doubt God's goodness, if God loves me, why is this happening, isn't it amazing how easily that question comes to our hearts? How quickly, sin in us. But when you're going through something like that, and you praise him, and you come to the point of confessing his name, that is, now it's not just saying the name of God. The name in Scripture means his character, his essential nature. And so what you're saying, he's saying, you're going through difficulty, you're offering a sacrifice of praise, and you are saying about God what is true about God. You are saying the same thing as God says about himself. You're saying he is wise, he is good, he knows what he's doing. And in fact, I think the reason he uses the word translated "give thanks," it's actually the word "confess," is it also has the idea of to say something publicly, to say it freely. So he's saying you're going through difficulty, you're going through persecution,

you're going through all kinds of calamity, whatever it is, you praise God, and you say the same thing God says about him, that he is good, and you say it publicly. You're trusting the Lord in the presence of unbelievers, in the presence of other believers. You're giving God glory. This is a sacrifice of praise. This is a wonderful sacrifice that ascends as a soothing aroma to God.

He says also the next verse, and not neglecting doing of good, and not neglecting sharing. Don't neglect just doing things, you've got to do practical things. Like I said, go help that person move when they call you. Don't say, "I'm a priest, I can't help you move." Anyway, those of you who were listening earlier, you know what I'm talking about. So, don't neglect doing good, don't neglect sharing, to give to others in need, particularly of the household of faith, but other unbelievers as well, but particularly the household of faith. To be sharing and doing good to one another, this is an offering of praise to God as well. That's what he says, "for with such sacrifices God is pleased." And I think particularly to do good and to share, even when you're in pain, that is a beautiful and glorious sacrifice. It only can be done through Christ. That's why those first two words are so important in verse 15, "Through Him then." You can't do it on your own. You have to depend upon Christ, your union with him. "Lord, I don't know why this is happening, help me, but I know You're good."

And this is why, listen, it's so important, the word of God tells you how to offer your sacrifice. One of the things you'll see if you go back and read Leviticus, is there's great specificity about everything to do with a sacrifice. It's got to be exactly the way, you've got to do exactly this, and it's all kinds of detail, more than you want. When you're reading, you're like, "Really, I'm so... I'm just not really enjoying this passage. Lord, why so much detail?" But it's there for a reason. He's saying, "Look, when you approach Me, you must approach Me the way I tell you to approach Me." Not according to your own heart, your own desires, you don't make it up. That's not the way the Christian life is lived. That's not the way God is drawn near to. You cannot draw near to him your own way. That's the story of Cain and Abel. Cain tried to come his own way, Abel came the right way. God says to Cain, "Cain, why is your countenance so sad? Just do the right thing and you will be received." Cain got angry, killed his brother. That's the way it is. Man wants to make his own way to God, but God makes clear, you don't make your own way to God, you come God's way, or you don't come at all. And so all of those passages in the Old Testament saying, this is exactly how the sacrifice is to be done.

Now, you and I find ourselves in circumstances where we need help. In fact, I'm moving on to point number 4: know how you are to do it. Know how you are to do it. It's really with the help of the word, with the help of one another, and the word of God. And what I'm getting at is this: you and I are going to find ourselves in circumstances day to day, and the issue is, why are you here? I didn't expect this to happen. Who am I? I'm a priest. I'm devoted to worship. I'm here, I'm to be devoted to worship. What am I to do? Offer sacrifices. What does that look like right now? That's the how and we need the word of God, and we need the help of one another to instruct us. The question that should come to us, no matter what the circumstance we find ourselves in, it's not going to be the first thing, because we find ourselves in painful circumstances, the pain is so great that we can't think about anything else for a while, but this is the question that should come to us

at some point is: what does worship look like in this circumstance? What does true worship look like in this kind of path? And you need help to figure that out. You need the word, and you need other believers. Sometimes you can figure it out on your own as you look in the word, and sometimes you're going to need other believers. The more painful and difficult the circumstance, the more confusing, the more you need other believers. But the issue is still, no matter what it is, the issue is, I'm called to worship.

So what does it look like? How can I worship God in this particular situation? Let's think of a couple of things. There's so many things we could do here, but let's just think of two. If you experience some kind of sudden tragedy, what we would call a tragedy, sudden loss, it could be losing a dear loved one suddenly, it could be an accident that takes away something valuable to yourself, maybe your ability, all kinds of things can happen to us. Well, what are we to do? Well, we know that the Bible tells us when somebody goes through loss, we're to mourn with those who mourn. We're to mourn losses. We're to mourn pain. We're to care about that. We're not just to put bumper sticker like Band-Aids on, you know, all things work together for good. No, we're not to be like that. We're to be real people who come and serve our brothers and sisters. And we're to be like Job's friends were really right for the first seven days they were there. Remember, they went to see him. For seven days, they did not say a word. They sat with him. That is mind-blowing but that was exactly what they needed to do. They should have just kept on doing that same thing because once they started opening their mouths, that's when they got in trouble. No, they should have known the word better and spoken the word rightly to him.

Sudden loss. What does that look like? Well, the word helps me and the passage I just mentioned, Job's a passage that should come to mind. And maybe you remember it yourself or maybe, you know, as someone mourns with you and then they're trying now, they've been there with you, they're showing how much they love you and they're, "Hey, what do you think God's doing in this right now? How does the Lord want to be your strength in this?" You come along and you ask a question like that. The Lord loves to put us in circumstances where we know how much we need him and then he reveals his glory. You look as you read the Old Testament, you see this. God will put Abraham in a circumstance that he can't figure out and then he'll show his glory and Abraham will say something and give God a name. Like Genesis 22, Jehovah-Jireh. He had never called him that before he was called to offer up Isaac. He went through that turmoil, that agony, then he sees God answer and be everything that he needs in that circumstance and he calls God, "the Lord will provide." He came to know God in a new way.

So part of what it is, is hey, the Lord wants to make himself known to you in this circumstance and you don't just come up like, that's not the first thing you say, but at some point, we have to help each other. "How's the Lord helping you? Are you able to see Him in this or do you just feel like you're in the dark?" Job said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." And he fell down and worshiped. That was a godly man responding to an unspeakable tragedy.

You know, I mentioned the passages that are quoted in our passage back in 1 Peter and I want to take you to one of them today. Psalm 118:22. I mentioned that I think the context

of these passages is instructive and I want you to see verse 22 that Peter quotes in our passage in 1 Peter 2. Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone." That's the verse he quotes. He quotes it to show how the Jews have rejected the Messiah. But I think he's, like I said last time, the context of these verses bleed into 1 Peter 2, especially knowing what we know about the circumstances those people were in. "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone." What a tragedy! The thing they were waiting for and they've rejected it. This is unimaginable tragedy. Look at the next verse, "This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes." The sovereignty of God even over the rejection of Christ, and what that tells you is that whenever tragedy strikes, it's not happened by accident. It's exactly what God has willed to happen. It is measured perfectly and if you're in Christ, it is brought to you as a gift. A painful gift that you didn't want to receive but if you will receive it the right way, you'll say what the psalmist says, "This is the LORD's doing. And it is marvelous in our eyes." It's become so beautiful that we can't describe it. We can only marvel at it.

I think someone who did this with their personal tragedy and loss is Joni Eareckson Tada. I encourage you to look at some of her testimonies online. Read some of her books. Amazing lady. She became a quadriplegic in an instant when she was 17 years old, diving into a pool. Quadriplegic, not able to use her arms and legs. Now some 50, 52, 53 years later, she is faithfully loving Jesus. She said on the anniversary last year, maybe it was her 50th anniversary, I can't remember, and her testimony was that, "If I could go back and change that, I would not change it because I have come to know Jesus in a way through this horrible path I never would have sought. I have come to know Jesus in a way that I would not have known Him. And it has been so wonderful." That's the God that we serve. He loves to do that.

So we have to help each other but she didn't get there overnight. You read her testimony, it took a while for her to get there. It was hard. She had believers speaking to her, helping her because, you see, we are a priesthood and when someone goes through tragedy in our midst, you know what our job is? Our job is help them worship. Help them worship. Hold up their arms like Aaron and Hur did. Hold up their arms so they can praise God. Now I said at first it's going to be mourning with those who mourn but our job is to worship. I need you to hold up my arms when I'm in a circumstance like that. You need me to hold up yours. We need to do that for one another. No matter what the circumstance, the Lord needs to be worshiped.

Let me tell you just real quickly, I want to do a lot more on this and I may be able to work it into another sermon soon, but I'm going to give you some homework and I'm going to tell you what it says and I'm going to tell you the point. Isaiah 3:1 to 5; Isaiah 8:5 to 15. Isaiah 8:14 is one of the other verses he quotes in this passage. So I'm giving you a little bit of context of Isaiah. 3:1 to 5; 8:5 to 15. And the idea is when you look at Isaiah, what you see is a political chaos in Judah, the southern kingdom, cultural decline, moral decay, economic collapse. You see leaders who are leading in the most foolish ways and what you see when you read those passages is God is doing it. God is doing it. I mean read it. Read 19. Isaiah 19, he talks about he's doing the same thing to Egypt. He's made Egypt ruled over by fools and it's the Lord who is doing it. Now listen, it's terrible to be in a situation like that. It's terrible to see cultural decline. It's terrible to see moral

chaos. It's terrible to see spiritual darkness descending, isn't it? Yes, there's a place to mourn but you know what our business is above mourning or at least equal to it? It is to worship God in this moment. That's the work.

What does that look like? You read a passage like that and it starts instructing you. It tells you God is doing this. He is revealing his wrath against sin. He's unveiling his holy hatred of sin. He's giving people, us, this culture, what we have asked for. We've said, "Leave me alone." That's what the culture has said. Not us as Christians. The culture has said that. And God is saying, "Your will be done. I'm leaving you alone. I'm giving you what you have asked for and My holy wrath is being unveiled." And so what we need to do, part of what we need to be doing regularly, is meditating upon these truths and spending time worshiping God for his faithfulness to do exactly what he said he would do when people turned their backs on him. And we should worship him even as still we mourn, we hurt for people that are being caught up in so much darkness, spiritual oppression, yes, we hurt for them so we have these two hearts at one time but we must also worship God for being so great and wise.

And one of the things you see if you read Isaiah 19, make sure you read chapter 19, because it talks about, in that passage, that the Lord strikes Egypt, but he brings about a revival in Egypt. He makes all these terrible things happen to Egypt so that they can get saved and what God is doing is not just unveiling his wrath, when he strikes, he also heals. He wounds so that he can bind up. And if we make that our heart, then what we are doing as we walk through this world, we're not downcast and discouraged and overwhelmed, we are worshiping our great God and we become more and more winsome by the moment when we're doing that. That's why people ask you for a reason for the hope that is within you. "How can you be so happy?" Because I know the one who is doing all of this and it is marvelous in our eyes.

We need to know who we are, why we're here, what we're to do and how we're to do it, and we need to help each other do that. If we do that, we are being the people of God and the kingdom of God is advancing mightily. When you and I worship, whatever opportunity God gives you, this week, this year, next year, let's be ready to not expect to rise to the occasion but to fall back on our training. My calling is to worship. Our calling is to worship. Let's figure it out together for he's worthy.

Let's pray.

Our Father, how grateful we are for the glorious salvation that You've given to us in Jesus Christ. You are the all-wise God. You have all power. You reign victorious over Your world. When Your enemies rage against You, You laugh. The nations are a drop in the bucket. You've installed your King upon Mount Zion and He will reign forever and ever. Lord, give Your people, give us more, open the eyes of our hearts that we can really understand these things and it will be so second nature that we will do these things. Help us. Forgive us for our preoccupation with the things of the world. Forgive us for our forgetfulness to even remember why we're here, who we are. Lord Jesus, make us Your own more and more and more. Take away everything in us that is not of You. Help us by Your death, Your resurrection to kill it and to walk in righteousness. And may You make

the light of the glory of Christ brighter and brighter and brighter in the midst of our times. Thank You for the privilege it is to be alive today as a follower of Jesus. May we live that way. Pray this in Your name. Amen.