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Your Father: Judge of the Universe Part 3

Matthew 14 gives the account of Christ walking on the water. The context is quite significant: After feeding the 5,000 and knowing the crowds were seeking to “take Him by force, to make Him king” (John 6:14-15), Jesus sent His disciples to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in a boat. It was roughly 6 to 9 o’clock at night. Christ then dispersed the crowds and went up on a mountain to pray... all night! In the meantime, the disciples were on the Sea of Galilee fighting for their lives in a massive storm; this lasted for no less than nine hours!

It was during the fourth watch of the night (3:00 to 6:00 am), that Christ came to His exhausted disciples — NOT on a boat BUT walking on the water! The disciples initially thought He was a ghost. Yet upon Christ assuring them as to His identity, they calmed down. The account ends in Mark with these words:

Mark 6:50b-52, “And He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were greatly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves*, but their heart was hardened.”

The implication is that if the disciples had gained insight as to the true identity of their Lord on account of the feeding the 5,000, they would NOT have responded to Christ’s walking on water the way they did! Rather than being terrified, they would have been comforted and encouraged regardless of the weather conditions on the Sea of Galilee!

When we come to a proper view of God, the trials, struggles, and difficulties of this life are contextualized such that we see them in their proper light. For example, Paul wrote, speaking of the intense struggles that he and his fellow Christians were enduring in their service of Christ in 2 Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 4:17-18a, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison [based on the language, I assure you that there was nothing ‘momentary’ or ‘light’ about the trials Paul was facing when he wrote this. So how could he say this? The answer is found in v. 18...] while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen...”

Family of God! Gaze upon the Lord and the things of this life will become small! We see it in Job. After Job struggled for 40 chapters with the trials and difficulties of this life, God revealed Himself to Job in a way that made all of his struggles seem as if they were nothing! Job wrote this:

Job 42:5-6, “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees Thee; therefore I retract [speaking of his 40-chapter argument], and I repent in dust and ashes.”

Recall the words of A. W. Tozer,

The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved of ten thousand temporal problems, for he sees at once that these have to do with matters which at the most cannot concern him for very long; but even if the multiple burdens of time may be lifted from him, the one mighty single burden of eternity begins to press down upon him with a weight more crushing than all the woes of the world piled one upon another. That mighty burden is his obligation to God. (Holy, 1920, pp. 10-11)

And that raises the question of the hour: If in our life today we could live in light of the glory of Christ, what difference would that make? We need NOT speculate, for Peter answers that

question. In an effort to encourage and so embolden his persecuted brethren, Peter wrote this epistle. Having addressed many of the blessings that are ours in Christ both in the present as well as the future, Peter transitioned into a discussion of the Last Judgment and the difference that event will have on those whose Father is God.

What is the difference? Rather than lamenting their trials and difficulties, the child of God is emboldened! For THE point of this day will be the honor and glory of Christ that was manifested through us in our living on this earth. Yes, we will be judged based on our deeds which undoubtedly will demonstrate that, though saved, we were no more moral or upright than the unbeliever (Paul recognized this when he called himself “the chief of sinners” in 1 Timothy 1:15). But that should NOT concern us for God’s purpose in the Last Judgment again is NOT to demonstrate our moral superiority, BUT to proclaim the glories of His grace as it forgave, strengthened, encouraged, and emboldened us again and again throughout our lives (cf. Ephesians 1:6)!

Now practically speaking, what difference should the knowledge of this have made in the lives of Peter’s persecuted brethren? And what difference ought this to make in our lives today? This is the focus of v. 21 and Peter’s final words in this section. When THE Judge of the Universe is Your Father, notice: The Practical Result in our lives will be a Godward look of dependence.

1 Peter 1:21a, “Who through Him are believers in God...”

The word for “believer” is an adjective describing what a person becomes when God opens their eyes to behold His Person (He is God), His Plan (which in the context is to bring all men before Himself as Judge), and His Work (He is the Redeemer of some). When a sinner is confronted with this reality, they either run FROM God at every moment in their lives or they run TO God at every moment in their lives! It is the latter which is described in Scripture as “trust” or “belief.”

In fact, the word for “belief” here, *πιστός* (*pistos*), speaks NOT so much to what you profess as true, BUT that upon which you rely day in and day out! Christian faith does NOT say to the believer, “What doctrine do you profess?” BUT “How will you live: in reliance upon self or God?” This is what the book of James is all about. James reminds a group of fence-sitting Jews who in their prosperity were bantering around the prospect that Jesus was the Messiah:

James 2:19-20, “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?”

Consider the issue of one in temporal need:

James 2:15-16, “If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them

what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?"

So, don't miss it! One of the first responses that a Christian will have to the knowledge that their Father is the Judge of the Universe (and so on that Last Day they will be a trophy of His grace) will be the rejection of self-trust and so a clinging to God NOT only for their justification, BUT for everything in this life!

That is why a description of a Christian in the Bible is a "believer"! When Paul thought of Abraham, what came to mind?

Galatians 3:9, "So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer."

In other words, as Paul thought of this man the one word that came to mind that summarizes all of his life was/is "believer." We see it when Paul thought collectively of the Christians in a region of the Roman Empire, notice what came to mind- speaking to the believers in Thessalonica:

1 Thessalonians 1:7, "...you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia."

Again, what is it that should characterize you as a Christian? Notice it is NOT our morality (though we wouldn't downplay that). RATHER it is our trust... our Godward Look of Dependence! And so, in our passage when Peter described three responses on the part of the Christian to the Doctrine of the Last Judgment, notice the first that came to mind...

1 Peter 1:21a, "[through Christ we are] believers in God..."

What is involved in this practical belief? It starts with a recognition of your spiritual bankruptcy and therefore your inability to do any good before God!

Luke 18:13-14a, "But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other..."

In fact, Paul teaches us what constitutes a "believer":

Romans 3:22b-24, "...for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

When it comes to this pericope, v. 23 is pretty simple and straight forward. What is NOT straight forward is v. 24, "being justified as a gift..." How does this relate to v. 23? Next to each other the verses seem disjointed. It turns out that v. 24 is a participial phrase modifying the "all" of v. 23. When translated with this awareness, we read, "For there is no distinction,

FOR ALL- being justified as a gift by His grace...- HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD.”

From this we conclude that if you are a Christian your most fundamental understanding of self is that you are a sinner, and therefore bankrupt, and so unable to offer anything to God! Do you understand what this means? Though morality is important (what we do), that does NOT define us as Christians. At the end of the day, we are ones who rely upon Christ for God’s acceptance and approval! Yet it doesn’t end here! This distrust of self is transformed by God’s grace into a life of Christ-trust and therefore Christ-dependence which no longer defends, denies, or blame-shifts. For the first time in our lives we own up to our inability (not that of others) and so stand before God and man on the basis of Christ! This therefore becomes our *modus operandi*; we are believers!

From this I want you to see that the essence of Christianity is living vicariously through Christ! Hear this! The happy Christian is NOT

- The wealthy Christian.
- The self-satisfied Christian.
- The Christian with a great home life.
- The Christian with the well-paying job.

The happy Christian is the one whose greatest joy and delight is the Person, Work, and Providential Care of Christ!

With that, notice a second consequence of knowing that the Judge of the universe is your Father. In involves the fulfillment of our highest end.

1 Peter 1:21, “Who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory...”

There is little question that ultimately what is in mind by this statement is the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ; that is what comes to mind in Scripture when the resurrection of Christ is referenced.

Ephesians 1:20b-21, “...[God] raised Him from the dead [and notice therefore what God did as a result], and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.”

We see it in Hebrews.

Hebrews 2:9a, “But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor...”

Again, when Christ’s resurrection is mentioned in the Bible, not very far away will be a

statement of God honoring His Son as a result. Perhaps the most well-known example of this is found in Philippians.

Philippians. 2:8b-11, "...He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him [this exaltation began with Christ's resurrection] and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus [we are now talking about the Last Judgment] every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

So most certainly when Peter in our passage said that God "...raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory" Peter had in mind the glory that Christ will receive beginning at the Last Judgment and beyond!

That having been said, it is imperative that we NOT divorce v. 21 from its context — for Peter very clearly intended v. 21 to be the climax of vv. 17-20. Accordingly, what in this context is "the glory" that God will give to His Son at the Last Judgment? It is what we have been discussing the past couple of weeks.

As every man, woman, and child that has ever lived- including the Christian- is going to stand before the Judgment seat of Christ, ALL will render account for the things they have thought, desired, said, or done (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10). That is ahead of each and every one of us!

Now while at first this might seem scary for us as Christians, yet, as we have seen, it is far from scary: The Last Judgment is a great and glorious day in which the world of man will glorify God on account of you and me; as such, it is NOT to be lamented by the believer, BUT anticipated! Again as sinners, we tend to think of the Last Judgment as revolving around us (sort of like a wedding where everyone has come to see the bride and groom; they are center stage)! Yet that is NOT the purpose of that day. We most certainly will NOT be center stage! The purpose of that day is a demonstration of the contrast of the sinner without God verses the sinner with God! Accordingly, it is NOT about demonstrating the moral superiority of the believer; RATHER it is about demonstrating the transforming grace of Christ! Again, recall Paul's words explaining why God saved him.

1 Timothy 1:16, "And yet for this reason I found mercy [it was NOT to make Paul happy or because God couldn't conceive a world without Paul; RATHER it was...], in order that in me as the foremost [of sinners], Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life."

This in a nutshell is what the Last Judgment is all about when it comes to the believer! What therefore ought to be our longing and passion every moment of our lives? That on the Day of Judgment the world might look at what we do today or this week- specifically our trust when we fall, our hope when others let us down- and glorify God! Recall Paul's words:

Galatians 1:22-24, "And I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in

Christ; but only, they kept hearing, 'He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.' [on the Last Day it won't be what is heard, BUT what is seen as our lives are flashed before the world!] And they were glorifying God because of me."

This is what the Last Judgment is all about when it comes to the believer!

Is this NOT our highest end? Were we NOT created and saved in order that God might be honored and glorified through us? Indeed, we were (cf. Genesis 1:31; Isaiah 43:6, 21)! As that is the case allow the prospect of the Last Judgment to lead you to a life of reverence, love, and sobriety. And when we fail (and we will), may our response NOT be that of the unbeliever who resorts to blame-shifting, excuses, or moralism in the hopes of making up for our sin. RATHER, may our response be to proclaim loudly and boldly that unlike the nations, we have a Savior in whom we trust!

You do that, and You Will Be Fulfilling your Highest End in real time! Notice a third consequence that comes from knowing that the Judge of the Universe is your Father. It results in a Godward oriented life.

1 Peter 1:21c, "Who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that [or 'with the result that'] your faith and hope are in God."

In the context of persecution, it is NOT a surprise that Peter has already talked about "faith and hope" repeatedly in the first 21 verses of this letter. With all that we have seen therefore it is natural to wonder what else could be said in this regard. Yet, Peter is not finished. In fact, he is going to return to these themes again and again throughout this epistle before he wraps it up.

As that is the case, the addition of "in God" is what makes the exhortation in v. 21 stand out. As Christians, it is easy to be found trusting and hoping in so many things. We can place our trust in a man, a government, an organization, a church, a spouse, a parent, or most commonly ourselves. We can hope in the future, our bank account, a sweat providence, or a favorable diagnosis. Yet all of these things are horizontal and therefore earthly. Accordingly, Peter here called his persecuted brethren to direct both their hope and faith TOWARD ONE BEING: GOD!

As referenced in the introduction, this will have a radical impact in our lives! Trusting and hoping in God will

- Determine what you call a tragedy.
- Dictate how you handle unmet expectations when it comes to the things of this life.
- Determine what you do when you are wronged or when things don't go your way.

That you might see this, I want you to consider with me the difference that having ones "faith and hope centered in God" made for Peter. During Christ's three-year public ministry Peter

was one of the first disciples to follow Christ as well as one of the most obnoxious. Frequently we read of Peter rebelling against Christ, correcting the Lord, fearing man, withdrawing, overstepping, and much, much more. And so, in the upper room when Christ announced that all of the disciples would flee because of him, what did Peter say?

Matthew 26:33b, “...*Even* though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.”

In other words, “Yea though you walk through the valley of death, Lord Jesus, do not fear; I will be with you!” Yet just a couple of hours later, Peter is watching from afar in Caiaphas’ courtyard as Jesus was being questioned by the High Priest. Warming himself by a fire with a group of men and women around him, Peter was asked if he was a follower of Christ, and three times he denied it. We pick it up in Matthew 26 and the third accusation:

Matthew 26:73-74, “And a little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, ‘Surely you too are *one* of them; for the way you talk gives you away.’ Then he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know the man!’ And immediately a cock crowed.”

This is Peter living in the flesh where his faith and hope were directed to self, “I will never fall away!”

Now fast forward a couple months. Peter has now seen the risen Savior and everything in his world was turned upside down: fear has been replaced with boldness; impetuosity with deliberate trust; sorrow with joy; fleeing with standing; anxiety with contentment; and anger with love! We are now with Peter after boldly preaching the resurrected Christ. Peter is brought before the Supreme Court of Judaism (these were the most powerful, popular, and educated theologians of the day). Notice the exchange:

Acts 4:18-20, “And when they [the Sanhedrin] had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John [yes John, the one who ran through the streets of Jerusalem naked on account of fear upon the arrest of Christ, Mark 14:51-52] answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard.’”

Then a little later in Acts Peter and John were brought back before the Sanhedrin for continuing to preach. And what was their reply this time?

Acts 5:29b-31a, “...we must obey God rather than men. [notice the resolve] The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior...”

John MacArthur, commenting on the transformation of Peter, wrote this:

“Peter was secure in Christ, and he knew it. He had seen the risen Christ, so he knew

Christ had conquered death. He knew that whatever earthly trials came his way, they were merely temporary. The trials, though often painful and always distasteful, were nothing compared to the hope of eternal glory (cf. Romans 8:18). The genuineness of true faith, he knew, was infinitely more precious than any perishing earthly riches, because his faith would redound to the praise and glory of Christ at His appearing. That hope is what gave Peter such courage. (MacArthur, 2017)

It is this faith and hope that can and must drive you in your walk this day! It did for the many who originally received this epistle. With their eyes fixed on the glory of Christ and their hope centered squarely on His second coming beginning with the Last Judgment, they "...performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, [and] quenched the power of fire" (Hebrews 11:33-34). Such is the result of a Godward oriented life!

So do NOT downplay the Last Judgment. We are going through it! In fact, we should want nothing less! Therefore, in preparation for this day, understand that each moment of your life today will be paraded before the world to demonstrate NOT your moral superiority, BUT your life of faith, hope, and trust in God! That is what is on the line every moment of our lives!