

# 1 Peter 1:1-2 The Love You Dream About

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*1 Peter*

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**Bible Text:** 1 Peter 1:1-2

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Today we will be studying the book of 1 Peter. It is in your bulletin if you want to read along with me from there.

Chapter one verses one and two. And as a general rule we do more than two verses, but for this particular sermon two is enough, probably too much. So 1 Peter chapter one verses one and two. Hear the Word of the Lord.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect, exiles of the dispersion and Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.<sup>1</sup>

We are beginning a letter today and we are not even getting past the salutation. And the letter is written to friends in a church, a group of churches. And it is written with the attitude that a coach speaks to his players with.

A friend of mine was a point guard for his basketball team. They are playing their next town over rivals of Clarksdale, Mississippi and Cleveland, Mississippi if you are dying to know and they are playing in Cleveland. And since it was such a huge rivalry for the game, they were playing at Delta State University in the gym and this was during the late 70s when Delta State had a number one girl's basketball team in the country. They still to this day have the only female ever drafted by an NBA team played at Delta State. And they won four national championships and so the girl's, the ladies' basketball team was playing right after this high school team.

So the gym was packed, thousands of people, because the game had gone into triple overtime. And my friend had gotten fouled with two seconds left to go and the score was tied. And the opposing coach called a time out to kind of freak him out and make him think about free throws. And his coach called everybody over and he said, "Listen. I don't want any rebounders on our side of the court. All of you go and play defense because as soon as Paul hits these free throws, they are going to try a long pass into the court to try to score and tie the game back up. [?]"

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 1:1-2.

“Coach, don’t we need rebounders in case we miss?”

And the coach grabbed my friend. He said, “Listen. You are not my starting point guard because I think you miss free throws. You are going to hit those free throws. That is what I have trained you to do. That is what I have coached you to do and that is what you are going to do.”

Peter writes with that kind of confidence to his people. By the way, he hit the free throws.

Peter writes with that kind of confidence to his people. He says, “Great trials and suffering are coming. Make no mistake. A furnace, a fiery furnace of trial is coming.” He says that three times during the letter.

But he doesn’t write with a panicked fear. He doesn’t write to say, “And be sure you follow my instructions perfectly so that you will survive the furnace.”

He writes [?]. “You are going to survive. Your faith is going to shine forth like pure gold. I know that. Let me explain to you, let me remind you how to make it shine forth. But I know it is going to shine forth.”

And we know that about the character of furnaces, don’t we? We know that a furnace... something going into a furnace is going to come out one of two ways. If it is not metal, if it is not strong metal, it is going to come out of the furnace as [?]. But if it is metal and pure it is going to come out purified, radiant and beautiful. The gold will have everything that is not gold melted away and only the gold will survive.

And that is how Peter says Christians are going to come out of the furnace. And the book is written with the message of: This is how to make your gold shine in the furnace. And we see that. We have seen that even in our church. This last Easter we took a little time to celebrate how the resurrected Christ has been glorified in the lives of people in our church, gave people a chance to respond and one mom came up to me and she was just in tears talking about how much... how thankful she is for Redeemer Presbyterian Church and how it has been such a blessing to her family.

And as an ordained teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America, I can authoritatively tell you that she is doing great and Redeemer has had nothing to do with it. We deserve zero credit whatsoever. Her life over the last three years has been a fiery trial, there is no question. But her faith is pure and this trial has done nothing more than prove that her faith has brought the gold out and made it easier to see and that gold is now being shared with her children as they are embracing [?] proving further the genuineness of her faith. That is what the fiery trial does. It shows what you are like.

Peter writes to all of us who are in exile and says, “Your faith is going to be strong in the furnace. I know it.”

How does he know? He knows because, first of all, even in the address, even in the salutation of this letter he knows your faith will be strong in the furnace because it is from God. Your faith is designed, it is eternal, it is handed down to you from God himself and it will not be destroyed by something earthly.

He tells us three things in this [?] address, it is a hilarious address. It would be like me sending a, you know, an email to Mitch, you know, “To Mitchell, elect by God, chosen by the Spirit, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, sprinkled with the blood of Christ unto obedience to Christ. Please don’t forget to turn out the lights in the office when you leave.”

Because the entire... the address is everything. And he writes, “To those of us who are in exile...” And he says, “Your faith will shine in the furnace because you have been chosen by the Father according to his foreknowledge. Your faith is going to shine in the furnace because you have been sanctified, set apart by the Holy Spirit and you are going to shine in the furnace because you have been set apart and chosen to be cleansed with the blood of Christ unto obedience [?].”

Now these are important doctrines. They are weighty doctrines. We are going to talk about some very theologically packed words like election, foreknowledge, sanctification, atonement, kind of all the long ones are going to be out there today. And I want you to understand that, first of all, it is ok for me to preach this sermon now because Calvinism is cool again according to *Time* magazine. So I am not going to be apologetic. But I am not going to be... I don’t want to be arrogant and hard headed about it.

If this is the first time you are hearing these things I want you to know that I understand that these are hard doctrines to get your mind around. They are emotional doctrines to get your mind around and it is going to take you a while and we want to [?] around some [?] in our church. You don’t have to... everybody in here who considers themselves to be people who have embraced the doctrine of election, we all know it is [?] the year. We are going to give you more than five minutes, ok? So if you don’t come out of this sermon believing everything I say, just no, that nobody in this room believes everything I say. I am used to that. And we are going to give you time. We are going to give you time.

So just... for... all I would ask you to do is to listen and go home if it really piques your interest, if it touches your curiosity, go home and read the Bible. The temptation for all of us in our culture is to go read a book to find somebody to tell us what to think. So if you are kind of inclined towards Calvinism you are going to go read some R C Sproul and [?]. And if you are inclined against Calvinism you are going to go read some Adrian Rogers and show that it can’t be true.

And I am going to ask you: don’t read anybody, but the Bible. Read the Bible and ask the Lord to show you what is true. Ask the Lord to show you what is true. And if you are in some way confident that what I am about to say is untrue, please tell me. I am wrong

about a lot of things. I am definitely wrong about a lot of things. Ask my wife. This may be one of them and I would be delighted to have that conversation with you so I can...

Now that being said the first thing I want us to do... we are going to see three things today. We are going to see that Christians, those who are in Christ have been elected, they have been selected. We have been chosen out by the Father according to his foreknowledge. We have been sanctified—that means set apart.

Now those of you who have been Christian have kind of learned long theological words, when you hear the word sanctified you think of that process by which you become more obedient and righteous. That is not the way the word is used today. Sanctified means to be set apart. If a pot was to be given to the temple and used in the temple, that became a sanctified pot. It was to only be used for temple duty. So we have been sanctified by that, set apart by the Spirit, chosen by the Spirit and we have been cleansed by the blood of Christ. Those are the three things I want us to [?]

First of all, I want us to see that the Father has elected us according to his foreknowledge. Paul addresses this letter to Christians, to all those who have been chosen by God. And what he is saying is Christians are loved by the Father. If you are a follower of Christ, you are a follower of Christ because God has taken the initiative with you. He has set his love upon you. And he has done whatever was necessary to bring you to himself. The Father calls, the Bible calls this setting apart by the Father, election.

The frustrating thing is this. [?] Well, if that's true then blank. If that is true, then why did he choose me and not somebody else? If that is true then there is... does what I do matter? If that is true then why should we do evangelism?

We have all these questions about election. And the Bible pretty much answers none of them. The Bible assumes election. It illustrates election. It applies election and it kind of leaves it there for us to take or to leave.

First I want you to see the Bible illustrates election. All through the Bible, you read the Old Testament, you actually read the stories and separate them from all the kind of glamorous, Bible school type stuff from when you are a child. You read about these people. You see something. You see over and over again God is choosing bad people. He chooses bad people. Sometimes he chooses... he has to choose between one and the other and he chooses. He has to choose between one and the other and he chooses the worst of the two.

First, clearly in the issue of Jacob and his brother Esau. God chooses Jacob and not Esau and Jacob was clearly the worst of the two brothers. He was a liar. He was a cheat. He was a deceiver. And he didn't change until years after God chose him.

God shows the initiative throughout the Bible. The clearest... the first clear case, the case of Abraham. God comes to Abraham when he is worshipping idols in Ur of the Chaldees. He comes... Abraham is a bad person. He is a coward. He has to take his wife

into Egypt. His wife is attractive. The Egyptians come up to him and basically says, “Your wife is pretty.”

Abraham, being the godly man that he is says, “Oh, she is not my wife. Take her. She is yours. Do with you as you will.”

[?] He just hands his wife over to wickedness. God has to protect her.

Later God comes to Abraham and sets apart... sets him apart with his covenant and says, “I am going to make my covenant with you and with your children.” And in the very next chapter his wife comes to him and says, “Hey, I am not having any children. Why don’t you sleep with the kitchen maid? Let’s have some children that way.”

And Abraham says, “Oh, ok. She is young. You are old. I will do it.”

That is what happens. Read the Bible. It is bad. Abraham is a bad person and God chooses him.

The Bible illustrates election completely apart from our righteousness. The Bible assumes election. Over and over again when we are kind of study this word, this concept of predestination and election we want a nice full treatise and the Bible just doesn’t give it to us. It just kind of throws it out here and there.

John chapter 10, Jesus is teaching about him being the good shepherd, protecting and laying down his life for the sheep. Some of the people don’t believe and he looks at them and he says, “You don’t believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep hear my voice and follow me.”

He does not say, “You are not one of my sheep because you haven’t believed me,” the exact opposite. “You don’t believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep... if you are my sheep you would know my voice. You would follow me.”

And that is kind of it. That is all he says. He just... thank you. We need more. And he doesn’t give us.

1 Thessalonians one Paul talks, again, another address and he says to the people in Thessalonica, “Brothers, loved by God, we know that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you not only in Word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. We know God has chosen you. How do we know that? Because the gospel came to you in power.”

How do we know? We just know because God blesses.

Acts chapter 13. Luke is writing of Paul preaching to the Gentile and he says, “When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as

many as were appointed to eternal life believed.”<sup>2</sup> The exact opposite of what we expect that verse to say. We expect the verse to say, “And as many as believed were appointed to eternal life.” That is precisely not what the verse says. The text says, “All those who were appointed to eternal life believed.”

The Bible assumes election. It illustrates election and applies election. It applies election by saying things like: Don’t get too proud. The text is misread to us during the worship, during singing.

What is he saying? He is saying, “Don’t get proud thinking I am great. I am better than everybody else and that is why God chose me.” God could have done better, but he chose you. He chose you because he loves you. That is why he chose you.

Jesus applies election by saying, “Don’t be afraid. Your security does not rest upon you. God didn’t start liking you when you started doing right. Your security is in God’s love for you. He says, “By all that God gives to me will come to me and no one will snatch them from my hand.” It is applied election. “God has given you to me. That is why he has come to me. Nobody is going to take you away from me, confidence. Your salvation will prove you are as gold. I know it because God gave you.”

The Bible assumes election, it illustrates election, it applies election and it teaches us about election and there are two things I want you to see that it teaches. Well, mainly one and then some application.

And the thing that the Bible teaches us about election is that it flows from God’s foreknowledge.

Now, those of us who disagree with this doctrine as we all did at one point. We say, “Aha, there it is. See, election is dependent upon God’s foreknowledge. That means God looked into the future and saw who was going to choose him and he chose us first.”

That is precisely not what it means. That would take the meaning out of every verse that refers about God’s foreknowledge. It can’t mean that. Look at the way God uses foreknowledge in other texts.

In 1 Peter 1:20 God says Jesus was foreknown, the eternal Son of God was foreknown from all eternity. Does that mean God looked into the future and said, “Well, that guy Jesus, he is going to be good. I think I will make him my eternal Son.” [?] It has to mean something else.

And in Romans eight verse 27, you know, everybody loves Romans 8:28. I certainly do. God is working all things together for the good of those who love him, but verse 27 and 26 tells us who it is that loves God. And he says this. He says, “Everyone that God foreknew he justified.” Every single one, every single person that God foreknew, he justified. So does that mean that God could only look into the future and know

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 13:48.

Christians, that now that he is no longer in the future, but in the present he is looking around and seeing all these unbelievers who haven't been justified and go, "Wait a minute, where did they come from?"

He didn't mean that. The word foreknowledge has to mean something else and we know when we read the Bible that the word knowledge is a word of intimacy. Adam went in to Eve's tent. She bore a son. He knew Eve and she bore a son. That clearly means more than Adam knew Eve was in there and she bore a son. They had intimate knowledge of each other. They were intimate with each other and that is what the Bible is teaching. It is teaching that God has had an intimate relationship with us since before the world even existed. He knows us intimately. He loves us intimately.

That is why Psalm 139 says, "Your knowledge is too wonderful for me. I cannot stand it. I can't stand how much you love me. I can't even receive it."

His love for us is unrestrained. And so he changes our heart and he opens our eyes. His love for us is so great that he has ordained every event of world history so that you would exist so that he could love you. He has loved you since before the creation of the world and he has ordered world history to get you here so he can love you. His love is so powerful that he gave his own Son to remove the only impediment to his love which was your sin. His love for you is long. His love for you is eternal. His love for you is unstoppable. That is what election means.

He did not start loving you when you made a right decision and he is not going to stop loving you when you make a bad one.

Is that [?] satisfies your [?] most heartfelt [?] kind of love you have got [?].

That is the kind of love that [?] love song writers have been writing [?].

Think of the worst love songs of all time, the cheesiest love song of all time, longer than there have been stars up in the heaven, I have been in love with you. That is a real 70s song. I didn't make that up. That is such a cheesy line. Why would you even bother saying it?

That is just dumb. You have not been in love with anybody longer than there has been stars up in the heavens. You are not that old. That is dumb. Why even bother to write it? You bothered to write it because you want that. You want to be loved so long, so deep [?]. The good news is that [?] that is what God says about us in Ephesians chapter one, "From before the foundation of the world he has chosen us in Christ." That is how he loves us.

Now think about it. Is the love that God has for his people going to be such that people are going to hear about it and they would say, "Oh, God started loving you when you chose him. Oh, that's great. But that is nothing compared to the love of these song writers. These song writers, they really understand love. God's love is kind of weak.

This is hard enough. Your soul knows, but your brain won't let you believe it. God's love for you is eternal. God's love for you elicits true repentance.

Critics, those who don't understand election or don't believe in God's electing love will say, "Well, if that is true, then why would I ever repent? I mean, you can just do whatever you want to. God loves you anyway."

I would encourage you [?]. When I sin—and I do, often—and Bianca, right, catches me or realizes it and she is affected by it and sees my sin as affecting the children, she has two different ways—she has many different ways she comes to me—two of the most common are this. One way she comes to me is like this. She rolls her eyes and says, "Really? We're not over this yet?"

And without really saying the word she sends out the message of, "Don't you think I am getting tired of this?"

And that kind of rebuke makes me want to go and hide and get mad at her in some weird way that [?].

The other way she comes to me is she comes, puts her arms around me and says, "I love you and I am always going to love you and I really wish you would be the man that I love instead of being this little twit [?]."

Which do you think you do... you must prove and real repentance? Which... which repentance can even be trusted? If the only reason you quit sinning is so that you will quit being punished, was it really repentance?

"I haven't stolen anything in weeks."

[?] given you anything to steal. If you are in jail it is kind of hard.

True repentance can only come from love. We know that. Why do we know that? Our mind tells us that unconditional grace would only make me feel free to sin all I want and yet our soul knows better. Our soul knows that only unconditional love can make me change at all. Your soul longs to respond to love, but your mind tells you [?].

Which environment produces the healthiest kind of obedience and righteousness? [?] oldest son had a math test this week and he was stressed out about it, stressed out about it on the way to school. I could see that he was stressed out about it. I could hear the way he was stressed about it. And so I looked at him and I said as we were driving into the school parking lot, I said, "You know, if you fail this test, you won't be my son anymore."

He rolled his eyes.



I said, “You know it is true. You are not going to be my son if you fail this test. I am not going to have a failure for a son.”

He said, “Dad, I know you love me no matter what I make. Enough.”

I mean, don’t you think that is part of the way I should raise my children? I mean, wouldn’t that be healthier if we tell them, “You make the right decisions, you can be my son. You make the wrong decisions, you are out.”

Isn’t that the way we should raise them?

You know, even children know the only healthy way to bring up a child is if that child knows that he is loved so much that no matter what he does he is still a child, he is still accepted. Your soul knows it. The souls of your children know it, but your mind won’t let you believe that God loves you that way.

What the Bible teaches is that you are God’s child because God loves you and God loves you because you are his child. And it is a circle that has no beginning and has no end and it frustrates your brain, but it satisfies your soul and nothing else satisfies your soul as the love that you know that you have to have that you are afraid to assume [?]. That is the way God loves. God loves his people because he loves them and he doesn’t leave them where they are, but he sends his spirit to them to set them apart. You have been elected by God according to his foreknowledge. You have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit goes to work on his people and distinguishes them from the world. He makes us holy and different from the world in precisely the way it keeps us from in any way being self righteous. He makes us holy without allowing us to have any of the credit.

So self righteousness is completely cut off.

There is a story of Saint Francis of Assisi. Saint Francis led a great and a very important revival movement in the Middle Ages and one of his friends was kind of mad at him for becoming so important and I, you know, kind of like friends tease each other and he said, “Francis, why you? You are not very articulate. Honestly, I know a lot of people—myself included—who are smarter than you. You are small. You are unimpressive. Why did God choose you to change the entire church in the world?”

Francis started smiling and then he started giggling and then that silly monk started to belly laugh. And he said, “I think God wanted to pick somebody so silly, so unimpressive that if anything good came from him, it was clearly from God.”

And that is what God does with us. He chooses us and he makes us different. He sets us apart. He sets you apart and that is exactly what you want. You want so desperately to be set apart, to be chosen. And yet to be chosen in a way that doesn’t say, “Look at me. I am the best football player. I was chosen first.”

You are chosen, you are set apart, you are different because God loves you. [?]

Everybody in here is out of the seventh grade by now remembers who gross it was walking into the sixth and seven cafeteria wondering who was going to [?], who is going to choose. Everybody who has ever been to a dance wondering if they were going to get to dance knows how gross it feels to wonder who is going to choose?

And every one of us grew up—even the guys—loving the story of Cinderella where she so desperately want the most important person in the entire kingdom to choose you. And what this text teaches us is [?]. He has chosen you. And he takes you through obedience to Christ, through the obedience. He picks you using your choices, not just [?]. We are Christians. We are not Greek fatalists. Greek fatalists said, “My destiny is my destiny. I cannot change it no matter what I do.”

That is a common theme that comes up in every movie that involves the future. Every movie involving the future from *Terminator* to *Back to the Future* to this TV show that is going to come out in a few weeks about everybody blacking out at the same second, so it sounds really cool. They all play with the idea of destiny. Do our decisions determine our destiny or is it just decided for us? And the Bible’s answer to that question is: Your decision determines your destiny. God chose you, therefore you responded to the gospel. God appointed you to eternal life. Therefore you believed. He uses your decision to effect your destiny that he has already set about.

You can think about it until your brain explodes, but trust me, that is the truth the Bible gives to you. And you knew that already.

There is a story of Charles Spurgeon walking in, visiting a member of his church who was terribly sick, terribly depressed and had quit taking his medicine. And Charles Spurgeon said, “Why have you quit taking your medicine?”

He said, “It is terrible. It makes me sick. And I figure God knows whether I am going to live or die and my future is in his hands so if God wants me to live, I will live. If God wants me to die I will die and my medicine has nothing to do with it.”

And pastor Spurgeon looked at him and said, “Well, I have got a Word from the Lord for you. If you take your medicine it is his will for you to live and if you refuse to take your medicine, it is God’s will for you to die.”

[?]

You wear your seatbelt. You eat. You don’t routinely point guns to your head and pull the trigger just to see if today is the day God wanted you to die. You know that God uses [?]. He uses your decision to receive Christ. If you take him, then he is for you.

And yet, even though God knows our decisions, we know he does things behind our backs, too. Every one of us can remember somebody that spent time in your life that you

didn't deserve for them to spend time in your life. Everybody here remembers things that you wanted to do that were wrong and you didn't get to.

When I was in high school or especially when I was on a camping trip, the camping trip took place in three hotel rooms and I wanted to get out. I was at death's door. Nobody came and picked me up. I sat home so mad [?] and honestly one of the things that cemented decision to not live in that [?]. Nobody came back from that camping trip sober [?] nobody. And I wanted. And through no fault of my own, I didn't get there because the Holy Spirit was at work in my inconsiderate brain.

[?]

He works through our decisions. He works around behind our backs and through it all he tells us we are not the sovereign one in the relationship.

It is important for you to understand that there is a mentality that says, "Well, if this election stuff is true it doesn't matter how holy I am." And I would just tell you that I think the opposite is the case. If it were all up to you how much Jesus you could take, then it would be kind of like a recipe, wouldn't it?

I want to know Jesus to get me into heaven, enough to make me socially acceptable, not enough Jesus to make me miss out on any fun, not enough Jesus to make my kids in the nut, and certainly not enough Jesus to make me publicly embarrassed if ever I [?] doing something wrong.

And God tells us, "No, you don't get [?]. You don't [?]."

He is the sovereign one in the relationship. You are either in or out. You don't get to decide for yourself how much you get. He is the one making the decision. Your choices only reveal whether you are his child or not. You don't get to pick how much you get. He is the sovereign one in the relationship and he has sovereignly chosen to pick the ones he loves. He has chosen to pick those in Christ. He has chosen to pick us and he cleanses us through the blood of his Son. He cleanses us through the blood of his Son as we will be sprinkled by his blood, a picture of Moses sprinkling the entire nation of Israel in a symbolic gestures that you have been.... You are different. You have been covered.

He says in the text itself says what? It says, "For obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood."<sup>3</sup> It is a picture of the atonement.

Now the atonement, again, is a long word, but it is a great word. It has three words in it. At, one, ment. Ment means nothing. Throw that out. But it means at one. We are put back together. This is a picture of our relationship that has been broken, no longer one and because of the sacrifice has been made there has been reconciliation and we are back at oneness, we are back together. And you know implicitly to the core of your being,

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 1:2.

you know every time a sin breaks a relationship there has to be a sacrifice of at oneness. And it has got to be appropriate.

If you are in a fight, you are in an argument with your spouse, you have got to be careful because you—more than anybody else in the world—know how to hurt the feelings of your spouse. You know exactly what to say to really cut them. You see, you do.

Now, if your wife is smart she does what sin does. You break yourself off from it. You put emotional distance between herself and you. That is what sin does. That breaks us from the person we are sinned against.

The dumb thing to do is to stand back, right? That doesn't help. Sometimes they break you [?] the relationship off. You are separation. The only thing that will fix a separation that is caused by words is a sacrifice of words.

Right? The exact opposite of what men want to do. We want to come in and go, "Hey, it was my stream? I think the game is on. Let's go on like it never happened."

No. No. You sinned with a word and I want to hear a sacrifice of words that I am sorry. I should not have said that. That was a hurtful thing to say because I am a bad person. Sacrifice of words.

Think of it in smaller things. The one [?] in a crowd. They have sinned against you. The sin of inconsideration. What do you expect? You expect a sacrifice of consideration. That is why we say, "Excuse me. I am sorry. Your presence is worth more than that."

Sacrifice of consideration to bring the relationship back to reconciliation.

If the sin is grievous and trust has been broken, then nothing except a sacrifice of trustworthiness can build the relationship back up. And it is simply false to assume that we can have the relationship back and pretend like nothing ever happened without trust being built back up.

When we think that God is better than that. God doesn't need a sacrifice of at oneness. God just accepts a sincere apology. So shouldn't we just accept a sincere apology? We spend all of our time staring into the person's eyes saying, "Are they sincere?"

I want you to understand this most important thing I will ever say. God has not accepted you because of a sincere apology. He did not suspend the law of the universe that sacrifice and atonement must be made. God made the sacrifice himself because you couldn't make it. The glory of God's love is not that he decided to wink at sin and go, "Oh, no big deal. You are sincere."

The glory of God's love is that he gave his Son. He gave the sacrifice for you. That is the glory of God. That is the glory that you have [?] brought into. That is the love that [?]

fast upon you, sacrificial love. It is deep love. It is a love that changes you. And if that love is for you, then you will accept it.

Will you [?] Will you respond? God has given you the sacrifice. He has put it in your lap. He said, "Just give it back to me. Here is what I need to be made one with you. I need God himself to be crucified on your behalf. I have done it for you.

Some of you have heard this before, but I think the purest picture of the gospel takes place that first Christmas when you decide that you don't want to give your mommy a drawn picture for Christmas anymore. You want to be like all the grown ups and you want to give a purchased gift.

I remember it so well. There was a few problems with me buying a gift for mommy. I didn't have any money. I didn't know what she wanted. I didn't know how to wrap a gift. I didn't know how to drive to the store and pick out a gift. I wasn't old enough to drive.

There was a few problems.

So you started dropping hints. Mom figures it out. She actually pays me one week for doing the chores that I am supposed to do. She mentions, somehow, off hand that you really wanted to get just a little bit less than the money she gave. She mentions that she needs to do some Christmas shopping in the store where that gift can be bought. She lets me be alone so I can buy the gift, take it up to the counter, get it, get it put in the back. She drives me back home. She lets me play around trying to wrap it. It was a complete and utter disaster. She lets me bring to her a box and say, "Wrap it, but don't look at what is in it."

She wraps the gift. She wraps it and puts it under the tree.

Christmas morning finally comes and I go get the gift that she bought, that she picked out, that she drove me to pick up, that she wrapped. And I give it to her. She unwraps it.

[?]

The payment that he made and he asks us [?]. I will accept this gift for your atonement, the gift that I gave you. [?]

Please pray with me.

*Our Father, we thank you for loving us with the love that we desperately, at the core of our being, in the absolute soul of our existence, we know that we need to be loved like that. I pray that you would give us the grace to [?]see that blood of Christ [?] we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*