

1 Peter 1:17 – Part HH

1Pe 1:17 (NKJV) **And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like silver or gold*, from your aimless conduct *received by tradition from your fathers*, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.**

This morning we want to look at [1 Peter 1:17-19](#) which is just one sentence. The key verb in this sentence is the word “**conduct**” (“**live**” – NIV) simply because once again, it is in the very unusual aorist tense imperative mood. We have already seen that that Greek construction of the verb is very, very strong and governs and controls the other verbs associated with it. Obviously, and this should be more than apparent to anyone with any discernment, if we are going to “**call on**” God the Father for His aid and help, then how we live should have some level of meaningful impact and bearing on how He may respond to our pleas and requests. I know that God is gracious and forgiving, but I think that it would be fairly presumptuous on a believer’s part to think that they can just constantly ignore God, disregard His biblical direction for their life, and pay no attention whatsoever to how they are living relative to His Word, then expect Him to answer every prayer the way they want it answered. That probably just borders on spiritual arrogance. Unfortunately, that is the expectation that many believers have of God when things are not working out the way that want them to work out. The whole tenor of this letter is that these believers will be subjected to various trials and setbacks that are often what Peter defines as “**fiery**”. Certainly God understands our frailties, failings, and difficult moments, and He knows exactly how to work through those with us. However, that does not mean that we can just presume on God’s goodness in the face of our personal neglect of His Word.

In v18, Peter uses a very important word – “**knowing**”. In the Christian life, there simply are certain vital and critical truths that every believer needs to know and fully embrace. If these particular believers that Peter is writing to can see something of how their salvation was actually obtained, then it will help them in the struggles that they inevitably are going to face. So, in this verse, Peter begins to deal with the actual cost of redemption which he says in v19 is the “**precious blood of Christ**”. It should be obvious that salvation was obtained at an enormous cost that is virtually impossible to legitimately assess. We can say all of the right words about what Christ did on our behalf and how He gave His life sacrificially, but I seriously doubt that any believer fully recognizes the magnitude of that sacrifice. Salvation certainly was not obtained by some corrupt earthly means like money or good works. Just look at what Peter says about every believer’s life before salvation. He says that it was “**aimless**” and ultimately without any significant or meaningful direction.

Now, we want to begin by looking at the word “**call**” in v17, but first we have to look at the word “**if**”. This is really a very critical word that will carry a lot of weight as to how we approach the rest of the sentence. In this particular use of the word it can be interpreted one of two ways. If you read the NIV, it uses the word “**Since**” which seems to delete the hypothetical nature of the word “**if**” from the passage. The word “**Since**” introduces the idea of calling on the Father as an already fulfilled condition. If that were the case, then we could use the word “**because**” or “**in view of the fact**”. The reason that it is probably translated as “**Since**” in the NIV is because the translators felt that the word “**if**” makes it sound

like these believers may or may not actually call on the Father. By using the word “**Since**”, the NIV is saying that the believers are calling on God because He is their Father. It is like a child that is making an appeal to their earthly father. They are making the appeal to him “**because**” or “**since**” or “**in view of the fact**” that he is their father. From a very practical perspective, there is nothing wrong with that view. As genuine believers, none of us feel compelled to call on God because He is some kind of cosmic god who is very impersonal and indifferent about us. To the contrary, we call on God because He is our heavenly Father who cares for us more than anyone ever has, and in that sense what the translators are suggesting is correct.

However, and this is important, it seems that the overwhelming majority of the various translations use the word “**if**” - and for good reason. It is because in the overall context of what Peter is addressing, he actually wants to make what he is addressing “hypothetical” to his readers. It is his way of provoking and challenging them to make an honest assessment as to whether or not they genuinely “**call on the Father**”. The problem that many Christians have is that they call on God as a last resort and not as a priority of their life. The “**if**” of the sentence is what Peter uses to make this obvious. So if the word “**Since**” is used, it completely changes the entire direction of the sentence. It is as if he knew that many of the believers were not really calling out to the Father, so he kind of confronts that area of their life. It seems more than obvious that the overall context has to govern the interpretation. In this sentence Peter talks about how God impartially judges according to everyone’s work and how believers should live out their lives in reverence, awe, and respect for who God truly is.

Without trying to sound demanding of everyone, every day of our life should have some strategic moment when we take time out of our busy schedule, out of the hectic and tiring lifestyle that so many of us live, and just simply spend some time in worship of our great God. The more that a believer is willing to do this, the greater will be their understanding and appreciation of how great God really is. He is worthy of all praise and all adoration, and it is only fitting that those who have benefited so much from His salvation should take the time to honor Him and call on Him in worship. All of us are always fighting against our schedule, fighting against personal priorities, and fighting against the seemingly urgent things that always want to crowd out our time with God. The parasites of our time are always there and they are always competing against that special time that only God deserves.

So, what does it mean to “**call on the Father**”? The verb “**call**” is in the middle voice which means that those believers who are calling on God are actually being impacted by what they are doing. In the New Testament, this verb is always used in the middle voice and therefore we could translate it as to call upon for aid and help in one’s own behalf – calling on God for yourself.¹ I.e., it means to call on God to help us personally. Probably the most well-known use of the verb is [Romans 10:13](#) that says,

Ro 10:13 (NKJV) For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

Obviously in that verse, the calling is something that the “**whoever**” is doing for themselves. The individual comes to a place in their life where they recognize their need to be saved, so they call on the “**name of Lord**” as the only One who is actually capable of saving them. It is the deepest personal request that a person could ever make of God – that He would save them and deliver them from judgment and destruction. So, clearly, in [1 Peter 1:17](#) it is not generally the idea of praying for someone else, but rather specifically praying for ourselves during a time of need, even though it certainly does not preclude

praying for other people. However, it is primarily the idea of invoking the Lord for personal help in our lives. The precious part of this verse is that we as genuine believers fully understand and appreciate that God is actually our Father, and because He is our Father, He is someone who can be fully trusted to address our requests in the best way. None of us ever give our children everything that they may ask for simply because we know that their requests may be harmful to them.

The Greek word for “**call**” is “*epikaleo*” and it is the most important word translated in the Old Testament for calling on the Lord and worshipping Him. What does not immediately come out in the New Testament is that the word carries with it the special characteristic of embracing personal confession as a characteristic of calling on our Father. The idea in the Old Testament that is actually carried forth in the New Testament is that very often when this word is used that it is primarily concerned with calling on God to worship Him much more than just asking Him to do something for us. Obviously, it is perfectly okay to do both, but certainly one of the highest acts of worship that believers can manifest is that of just calling on God in an act of worship. I am personally convinced of two distinct things regarding this. First, the individuals who regularly and sincerely call on God in worship are those believers who really trust their heavenly Father. They are convinced of His goodness, of His faithfulness, and of His sovereign power over their life. They know that God is already deeply aware of all that will happen in their life and that He is never caught by surprise at what may happen to them. This is exactly why multipole times in the New Testament we are told not to worry and fret over everything that happens to us, and the reason is because God is much greater than any problem that we may face. Secondly, the more that we do call on God as an act of worship, the less we will feel compelled to always be asking Him to meet all of our personal and particular needs. There is nothing wrong with that at all, but the more you really trust someone who is caring for you, the less inclined you are to always be trying to compel them to help you simply because you are fully convinced that they already have your best interest at heart. If something were to happen to me personally, I am sure that my wife would care for me better than anyone else ever would. Why do I say that? Simple. It is because my wife loves me more than anyone else and she has fully demonstrated for over 46 years of marriage that she has always had my best interest at heart. Well, the same is true of our heavenly Father. He knows what we need before we even ask. Listen to these two simple verses in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus taught. [Matthew 6:8](#) and [Matthew 7:11](#) say,

Mt 6:8 (NKJV) Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

Mt 7:11 (NKJV) If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

[James 1:5](#) says,

Jas 1:5 (NKJV) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

ENDNOTES

¹ Zodiates, *epikalo*, 628.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Revised Edition, 1993. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1992.