

# Following the Lamb

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Date: 06 September 2020

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning. My name is Paul Ling. I was born in Kuching and I was raised here. But in 2014, I answered God's call to full-time ministry and went to Chicago at Moody Bible Institute to first pursue my bachelor's and later my master's at the seminary. I came back last year around July and through a series of events, God led me on the path of church planning and connected me to Gospel City Network. And it's also through Gospel City Network that I found out about KAC. I've been attending KAC for the last few months and I'm really thankful for this opportunity to bring the word to you. So let us prepare our hearts as we hear the preaching of God's word.

John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* is a family saga that dramatically re-describes the biblical story of Cain and Abel. Set in Salinas Valley, California, the story revolves around a man and his struggle to break free from patterns of sin in his family. His father was a war veteran, plagued with psychological wounds, having random anger outbreaks and emotional abuse. As a result, Adam Trask, our protagonist, spends most of his early life wandering around the country and committing crimes.

Just as he was about to get his life together, Adam falls irrationally in love with a woman whom the author describes as having a malformed soul. Evil, cunning, and delights in destroying others.

Against her wish, Adam's wife delivers twin boys and leaves home. Sin and brokenness continue to plague Adam's family as we watch his two little boys go from innocent to ambitious, selfless to jealous, and kind-hearted to spiteful. Ultimately, the elder child's rage led to a series of events that eventually killed his own brother.

*East of Eden* remains one of my favorite novels because throughout my read, I found myself cheering for new characters, hoping that one of them might actually overcome traceable trends of sin.

[ 3 : 0 1 ] Yet time and time again, even if some characters might come closer to the truth than others, none of them could break free. Every single character eventually gives in to the same sins.

At first, I found myself disappointed at the ending because no one emerges victorious. But friends, the reality is that this story of John Steinbeck's award-winning novel is not so different from our own.

In our own walk with Christ, we see and we are confronted by our sins at every waking moment. We see in ourselves the same patterns of anger, lust, insecurity, and entitlement that plagues our parents and our original family.

At the end of each day, as we approach God in praise of confession, we face the truth that try as we may, we will never escape from this weekly flesh of ours.

Loose and prone to temptations, vulnerable and weak. This morning, we will examine closely what it means for us to grow in Christ and to be more like Him, despite our limitations and our weaknesses.

[ 4 : 3 6 ] More specifically, we will view and see how sanctification can only begin and in fact can only take place with a paradigm shift.



So we hope by preparing our minds for action. We hope by being sober-minded. Now, the word sober is definitely interesting.

While we tend to associate it with drunkenness, in the context here, there seems to be more than just freedom from alcohol.

In fact, if we just think about the word sober, it means to be sensible and rational. So here, Peter cautions not just against physical drunkenness, but against spiritual or mental intoxication from lies spread by enemies of the gospel.

[ 11 : 24 ] These lies, these very same lies, continue to threaten us today. We see in chapter 5 that the devil is like a roaring lion, embracing every opportunity to devour us and tell us lies.

You will never measure up. You're not worthy of God's love. Or, on the contrary, you've done a pretty good job.

You know what? God understands. You deserve a break. Come. Come to me. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

In these circumstances, against his attack, the hope that we will be redeemed, the hope of the eternal reward, will outshine any promise that the devil can give to us.

but in another sense holding on remaining vigilant in the christian hope is part of a larger purpose a larger purpose that peter identifies in verses 14 to 16 as the call to holiness he begins by saying in verse 14 as obedient children do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance reminding us that the basis of christian sanctification is obedience towards the one who has called us peter then quotes in verse 16 from levičius yahweh's call towards his people you shall be holy for i am holy appearing three times in levičius 11 to 20 a section of the book known as the holiness code peter quotes this verse to tell us that god's character is consistent the same god who called israel towards holiness extends the call to christians to be different for both parties worship the same yahweh a holy righteous god now notice in levičius there are especially in this section of the book there are a lot of cleanliness laws but peter does not cite or he even bind christians to any specific law instead the author applies the holiness code by identifying its underlying concept you see back then israel observed the mosaic law in order to set themselves apart from pagan nations in the old testament to be holy meant to be different from those who do not know god similarly christians today must not worship the idols of this world instead we must consecrate our hearts towards worshiping and serving yahweh alone in fact that's the summary of the first three verses set your mind on the eternal reward and work as hard as you can to improve and strive for holiness in other words practice holiness in hope of our future inheritance now that certainly sounds like a good ending to a sermon right keep in mind our prize in heaven but for now improve as much as we can to be like god amen brothers and sisters it would be a tragedy in fact it would be disastrous if our understanding of the christian life is only like a self-improvement program that guarantees a good return in the end we are missing a great deal of what it means to follow jesus if we view holiness like a salesman who's trying to hit his quota of the month because if it is truly as verse 16 says we shall be holy for god is holy and that god himself is the standard of holiness then we will never measure up one mistake is all it takes for us to fail god church that is why peter does not end his

[ 16 : 21 ] teaching here because while verses 13 to 16 demonstrate that the christian hope can serve as adequate encouragement even motivation for christians to persevere and pursue holiness under difficult circumstances that is not enough because practicing holiness in hope of our future inheritance has to go hand in hand with another important truth which leads us to point number two fear god in light of our costly redemption fear god in light of our costly redemption verses 17 to 20 form one long sentence in greek and as one commentator notes encompasses quote the whole of the import of the christian faith verse 17 and if you call on him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile now right at the get-go peter establishes an important caveat an important truth which is even though christians are all children of god everyone will be judged by god according to the same standards in other words god shows no bias or favoritism back in verse 14 we are given the command to be to give up our former lifestyle to give up these sins and this these sins these sins are not immediately identified in the context but if we look at chapter 4 we see that it's talking about sensuality passions drunkenness orgies drinking parties lawless idolatry and debauchery but sanctification is not just a passive avoidance of sin peter demonstrates that sanctification is an active choice towards holiness so in verse 14 he tells us that all of you be holy but verse 17 you will be judged according to the same standards god shows no bias no favoritism and that for any christian to continue in sin in the pagan lifestyles of sinful desires is for him to face god's judgment at the end as obedient children do not be conformed and if you call on him as father who judges impartially obey friends obey the god who has called us in his likeness that is the basis of christian obedience at the same time it talks about conducting yourselves with fear and friends i think so often in the church we have ignored or for worse overlook the importance of the fear of god now many of us can cite proverbs 1 7 verbatim word for word but have we really taken the time to think about what it means to fear god living under the new testament covenant covenant of grace have we so quickly overlooked the fact that we serve a god who hates

sin god and sin are fundamentally incompatible one cannot exist alongside the other under these type of circumstances when everything about us and inside us directly opposes god's being how are we to worship and serve god in fear and reverence knowing that god is a father who judges impartially does that not create a fearful situation where all our mistakes are scrutinized where one wrong step could end up costing our lives let's read on verse 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the feudal ways inherited from your forefathers not with perishable things such as silver or gold now translated as ransom in the

ESV but redeemed in the NIV this word is used in the Greco-Roman culture to describe the granting of a slave and releasing of a slave into freedom after depositing a certain sum in the treasury of a god or goddess the money would then be transferred via the temple's treasury to the slave owner with the thought that the god or goddess was buying the slave essentially granting him freedom well here god paid the price to release us from specifically feudal waste inherited from our forefathers now what does that phrase mean in the immediate context this refers to heritage now Peter's audience took pride in their ancestors and their way of life believing that dear worldview was correct and prestigious guaranteeing success in life but scripture is abundantly clear that anyone who lives his life outside of

God without God will find himself lost in the world because he does not know his origin nor his destiny and perhaps the section of the Bible that deals the most with the futility of life is none other than the book of Ecclesiastes where the wise teacher sought satisfaction from money status sex and power yet he ultimately found life to be empty and meaningless church the truth is without God's saving power you and I would also worship the world we would attribute our values we would try to validate our self worth through our performance our studies our income our reputation without knowing that none of that can actually give us true delight because everything in this world will be over and in fact so mesmerized are we by the world and so centered are we on ourselves so high is the price for our redemption that verse 18 tells us even silver or gold cannot buy us back now in 2017

I bought a used 2008 Mazda 6 with about 200,000 kilometers on it for 4,000 US dollars now that sounds like a lot of mileage but when I saw the car it was clear that the previous owner took good care of it now unfortunately for this car fate would suffer for the worst at its next owner over the course of the next three months my car would suffer a series of scratches and bumps now admittedly some from me learning how to drive from the other side of the road and through horrendous blizzards and storms but some were from simple carelessness now I soon moved to a neighborhood a new neighborhood where around the block from where I live there was a car wash that would polish and clean your car for an incredibly affordable price as long as you went at certain hours of the day so

[ 25 : 30 ] I thought to myself my car might be a little bit beat up but who's to say it doesn't deserve a good service so once a month I would treat my car by sending it to the shop and I still remember how satisfied and proud I was at driving my little Mazda right after its service yet deep down I knew that within 24 to 48 hours my car would be dirty again no matter how much I pay how expensive the polishing equipment I use nothing can erase its scratches for good brothers and sisters there is nothing nothing you can do that can erase the stains of sins in our heart according to the text even the most sought after the most prestigious and valuable material such as silver or gold cannot redeem us a man can get all the education he has can earn all the money he is able to can contribute as much as he can towards society but he will still stand before

God condemn it's because nothing in this world lasts forever everything is perishable yet for forgiveness to happen someone has to pay the price in any transgression either the offender makes up for his mistakes or the offended forgives at his cost verse 19 tells us that on the cross the forgiveness God's forgiveness was paid for by the precious blood of Christ like that of a lamb without blemish or spot this imagery of the blood and the lamb immediately recalls the mosaic covenant where under the law throughout Exodus and Leviticus we see multiple demands that the animals used for sacrifice to be without blemish now

Peter's point is that even though those animals were without defect Jesus was not just perfect spiritually physically Jesus was the perfect spiritual sacrifice he is the perfect Passover lamb the sinless suffering servant and the complete sacrifice that replaces the atonement system of the Old Testament more importantly this sacrificial act of God is not a spontaneous act we read in verse 20 he was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God so before the creation of the world the trinity existed in perfect union and fellowship knowing and enjoying one another even then yes all the way back then the incarnation of the son as well as his subsequent death and resurrection had already been planned when the right time came

God revealed Christ to the world so that all who place their faith in him might be saved friends we must not overlook the shift in pronouns in these last few verses notice how verses 13 to 18 is filled with you your doubling down on the importance for us to pursue holiness but verses 19 to 21 places the emphasis on Christ instead the basis of Christian obedience is not our own effort for if it was up to us to resist sin and pursue holy lives we would fail at the very next second instead Christ's triumph over death and resurrection is the basis of our faith and hope Jesus saves us

Jesus sustains us and it is none other than Jesus who empowers us to walk and to grow to be more like him church that is why we fear God we fear God not because he has placed such immense expectations on our shoulders such that we crumble before the pressure of living to please him we fear God because knowing that we cannot pay for the price he came down to us in the form of a baby in a manger walked the path of Golgotha was crucified buried and rose again and he himself God made up and paid the hefty price for our salvation we fear God in light of our costly redemption at the in the at the final chapter of east of eden the bedridden adam trash is presented with an opportunity to forgive his child his elder child who in his rage killed his own brother now approaches his unconscious father on his deathbed bearing the weight of guilt and rejection this teenage boy requests forgiveness and blessing heading towards death's door adam summonses all his energy to barely even raise his hand yet at the final moment before his last breath he utters the word tim shul and he slept tim show a word first appearing in genesis 4 7 is a powerful god given command that dominates this novel and is repeated multiple times throughout the book in the bible right after cain killed abel yahweh appears to cain and says why are you angry and why has your face fallen if you do well will you not be accepted and if you do not do well sin is crouching at the door its desire is for you but you must rule over it tim shall originally translated as you must rule or you must master represents god's empowerment and desire for man to overcome inner forces of sin on his deathbed adam blesses his child with this word with this hebrew word so that he can break free from the cycles of sin and conquer sin friends while the world might attribute human willpower and choice to the key to be a good person 1 peter chapter 1 13 to 21 reminds us that it is only in christ where we have our faith and our hope in fact it is precisely this hebrew word that i have tattooed here on my right forearm as a visual reminder of the victory i have in christ for in my lowest moments tim shul tim shul for in christ my position is that of a victorious man tim shul for in christ the enemy and his lies no longer control

[ 34 : 22 ] me tim shul for in christ i have the power to resist sin and choose to walk a holy life brothers and sisters what is your default posture towards holiness maybe for you holiness seems like an impossible task maybe you find yourselves performing well nine out of ten days but the one day where you fail the one day where you argue rudely with a coworker the one day where you erupt in anger towards your spouse and your children the one day where you give in to pornography completely crushes you you feel as if you are no longer worthy of being called god's child but thanks be to god for first peter we are reminded that in christ we have freedom that following the lamb was never about our own endeavor practice holiness in hope of our future reward and inheritance fear god in light of our costly redemption practice holiness knowing that one day all of this will be over and we will be reunited with the saints in heaven fear god knowing that in christ the price has been paid for we have all that we can to live a holy and righteous life worthy of the master's praise amen