

Live in Fear

I Peter 1:17-21

“And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”

We live in a world that, for the most part, likes the idea of a god. Generally, this idea of god is rather vague. God is some greater being. God is usually defined by love and characterized by concern. God is to be called upon to help and comfort in times of trials and troubles. I find it interesting that in our godless culture, so many routinely call for prayer or offer prayer in times of distress and tragedy. This idea of god that our culture is so fond of is not the true God. It is not the God of the Bible. This is a comfy, cuddly, cushy god born out of idolatry. This idea of god is a god of their own making and is truly no god at all.

But remember, that's the world out there. We are not called to pass judgment on the lost. That's God's responsibility, not ours. We should have compassion on those who are blinded by sin and living under the wrath of God.

As Christians, we are called to examine ourselves. We must be careful to guard our hearts from accepting the idolatry of the world, from changing the holy God into a helpful token. Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, uses some strong language in our text this morning. Language we might struggle with. Look at what Peter says in our text.

In I Peter 1:17 the Bible tells us to “pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” We are to live in fear of God. Keep in mind that this passage was written specifically to Christians.

As I studied this passage, I thought, “Maybe we use this word ‘fear’ is used differently now than the way it is used in this passage.” I looked the word up. In Greek it is the word “phobos.” It means “alarm, fright, to be exceedingly afraid, terrified.” This greek word is where we get our English word “phobia.” Pass your life in alarm, in fright, in being exceedingly afraid, in terror. Why does the Bible say this to us, to Christians?

We often minimize the command that was just given earlier in this chapter, in verse 15, “Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” I think the reason why we minimize this command to be holy is because we have adopted some of the world's ideas about God. We see that bad theology is very quickly followed by bad living.

There are three things in this passage that ground us in Biblical truth and make clear to us why we should live in fear. First, this passage teaches about Who God is. Second, this passage teaches about what has been done for us as Christians. When we understand these two things, we will understand why God tells us to live in fear.

I. Who God is, as revealed in this passage.

Verse 17 begins by referring to God as “Father.” This is an endearing term. There may be some here that did not have good earthly fathers. Maybe the memories of your earthly father are painful memories. The Bible never refers to God our Father in a negative way. It is always good. This is an endearing term. God is close to us, His children. He is not far off. He is near.

This has already been taught several times in this chapter. In verses 3 Peter told us that we have been “begotten again.” In Christ, we have been born again. When, by the abundant grace of God, we entered into salvation, we were born in righteousness. Not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is the reality of our second birth. In verse 4 Peter told us that we have an “inheritance . . . reserved in heaven.” When we are born again, we become children of God: adopted sons and daughters. As adopted children, we have an inheritance. We become joint heirs with Christ. In verse 14, Peter referenced this reality once again, speaking about our responsibility as children of God to live holy lives.

This relationship is now mentioned again here in v. 17. This time it is in reference to accountability. We are called to live holy lives as Christians. We are reminded that God our Father will hold us accountable.

Verse 17 also refers to God's position as judge. We are told that God is impartial in His judgment. God judges "without respect of persons" (I Peter 1:17). No one gets a free pass from God. God doesn't care if you are a Jew or a Gentile when it comes to judgment. God doesn't care if you are a Yankee or a southerner. I'm even willing to venture out on a limb here and say that God doesn't care if you are a southern Baptist or an independent Baptist. No one gets special treatment from God in judgment.

Think about how important this doctrine of God's impartial judgment was to the early church. What was happening in the early church had never happened before. Jews and Gentiles were coming together to worship God on equal ground. This caused some rather serious problems early on. Some Jewish Christians were convinced that the Jews had special standing before God the Father. This had to be addressed more than once. Paul even had to confront Peter about this issue. The reality is that God is impartial in His judgment.

Think about how important this doctrine of God's impartial judgment is to the church in America today. Some people are full of hate. Others may not hate, but they have a cool indifference to people who are different from them. Maybe it is

the color of their skin. Maybe it is the country they are from or the language they speak. Maybe it is social standing. Maybe it is the size of their bank account.

Let's all lay hold of the truth this verse teaches. God judgment will not be influenced. God won't be influenced by the color of your skin. God won't be influenced by your nationality or what language you speak. God won't be influenced by your social standing. God won't be influenced by the size of your bank account. God is impartial in His judgment.

Not only is God impartial in His judgment, but He is also universal in His judgment. Verse 17 goes on to say that God "judgeth all men." God will judge each one of us. No one will escape the judgment of God.

All men will have to stand before God and give an account of their lives. You might be here this morning and you are not a Christian. You might think, "I don't believe that." I respect that. You can believe what you want and there is nothing I can do to change your mind.

But remember, what what you believe doesn't change the truth. Daniel Moynihan once said, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts." The Bible doesn't say that only Christians will stand before God and give an account. The Bible doesn't say that God only has the power to bring some men before Him for judgment. No, the judgment of God is universal. All men. Every one.

Maybe you are here this morning and as a Christian you think, “I am safe from the judgment of God. God won’t judge my works because I am under the blood of Christ.” Friend, that is dangerous and ungodly way of thinking. As a Christian you are free from the wrath of God, but you are not free from the judgment of God. Don’t confuse one for the other. Don’t be like those Paul warned of in I Corinthians 3:15 who wasted their lives. People who had the foundation of the Gospel and wasted it. They built a life of worthless and sinful works and in the day of God’s judgment it will all be burned up. Saved, yes, but saved by fire. What a tragedy. Don’t think you will escape God’s judgment. God’s judgment is universal.

Verse 17 also teaches that God judges according to every man’s works. We will all stand before God on an individual basis. You won’t be responsible for anyone else’s works, good or bad. God will judge you based on your works.

And remember, God is holy. This passage is very closely tied to the verses that come before. Back just one verse, in I Peter 1:16, we are reminded that God is holy. God is the definition of holy. God is the standard of holy. No matter how good we are, no matter how far along we feel like we are in the Christian walk, we cannot even begin grasp the absolute holiness of God.

The Bible tells us to live in fear. This command is grounded in theology. First, this passage teaches about Who God is: He is our father, He will hold us

accountable. He is our Judge, He will judge all men impartially. He is Holy, He is perfect, without fault. Next this passage teaches about Jesus Christ.

I. Who Jesus Christ is, as revealed in this passage.

First, we are reminded that His blood is precious. I Peter 1:19 says, “the precious blood of Christ.” What makes a thing precious? We call certain metals “precious metals.” We call certain rocks, “precious stones.” We call people “precious.” We call memories “precious.” Why? What makes something precious?

Some things we call precious because they are rare, like certain metals and stones. Some things we call precious because they are irreplaceable, like people and memories.

I Peter 1:19 calls the blood of Jesus Christ “precious.” His blood is precious like nothing else is precious. His blood is rare. There is only one Jesus Christ. There will never be another. The world is full of people who think they are god, but only One ever truly was God. He willingly shed His blood, His precious blood, for you and I. His blood is also irreplaceable. If you were to be persecuted, arrested because of false accusations, beaten, and then crucified; your blood wouldn't be able to cover your sins and it wouldn't be able to cover my sins. Your blood can't redeem anyone. My blood can't redeem anyone. Forgiveness from sin and redemption can only be found in the blood of one man: the man Christ Jesus. His blood is irreplaceable. His blood is precious.

Next, we are taught that Jesus was foreordained before the foundation of the world. I Peter 1:20a, “Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world.” When Paul was in Athens the philosophers there asked him about the “new doctrine” he taught (Acts 17:19). It may have been new to those philosophers, but the gospel is nothing new. It wasn’t new 2000 years ago when Jesus walked on the earth as a man. It was established before the foundation of the world.

God, because of Who He is, knew that man would need redemption. Nothing takes God by surprise. God doesn’t exist within the constraints of time. We look back on the past and guess about the future. God doesn’t look back on the past and guess about the future. He sees it all. Everything is laid out before Him. God knew mankind would need redemption and Jesus Christ, God the Son, volunteered to fulfill the will of God the Father. It is not chance that brought the good news of salvation to mankind. Jesus didn’t decide one day that he was tired of being a carpenter and was going to take up preaching. Jesus Christ, the son of God, was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

This passage goes on to teach that Jesus has been made manifest in this last times. I Peter 1:20b, “But was manifest in these last times for you.” We are living in the last times. Biblically speaking, the last times is the period of time between Christ’s ascension and Christ’s return. The days we live in are the last times.

In these last times Jesus Christ has been made manifest. Strong’s concordance defines the word here for manifest as, “to render apparent.”

Redemption through the precious blood of Jesus Christ has been God's plan from before the foundation of the world. But in these last times, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been made manifest. Jesus Christ has been clearly revealed for us.

Next, this passage reminds us of Christ's resurrection. I Peter 1:21a, "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead." The resurrection is key to Christian doctrine. When Jesus Christ made the perfect sacrifice for sin, he broke the power of sin. He defeated death. Because Jesus Christ was the perfect sacrifice, totally sinless, death had no claim on him. Death could not hold Him. By dying, Jesus once and for all defeated death. Because of His perfect sacrifice Jesus Christ was able to raise from the dead. His resurrection is the proof that his sacrifice was perfect and acceptable to God the Father. This is why the resurrection is so vital to Christian doctrine.

As you study the New Testament you see the resurrection brought up over and over and over again. We are coming up on a time of year when we traditionally celebrate the Lord's resurrection. I would encourage you, don't be distracted with how the world naively celebrates this time of year, but instead spend some time in the Word of God, studying the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ's resurrection is the proof of all the claims He made and all the doctrine He taught.

Finally, this passage teaches that Jesus was glorified by God. I Peter 1:21b, "And gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." Jesus received glory from God the Father. This is a fulfillment of prophecy. Look back just a few

verses to I Peter 1:11. The prophets prophesied of the glory that would follow Christ's suffering. Jesus came. He suffered and died. He was resurrected. He received glory from God the Father.

The Bible tells us to live in fear. This command is grounded in theology. First, this passage teaches about Who God is: He is our father, He is our Judge, and He is Holy. Next this passage teaches about Jesus Christ: His blood precious, irreplaceable, the only way for redemption. He was foreordained, the gospel of Jesus Christ is no new teaching. It was established before the world. Jesus is made manifest in these last days, the gospel of Christ has been made clear. Jesus was raised from the dead. This is the proof of His perfect sacrifice. He received glory from God the Father, fulfilling prophecy. Finally, this passage teaches what has been done for Christians.

I. What has been done for us as Christians.

First, we have been redeemed (v. 18-19). Redeemed means "to ransom; to buy back." We have been ransomed, bought back; but bought back from what? Verse 18 says: "from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." "Vain" means empty or worthless. "Conversation," as it is used here, means behavior or lifestyle. That's how we were living before we were saved by

the grace of God. We were trying the best we knew how. Just like our parents before us. But it was a worthless attempt to live a life of meaning.

How have we been redeemed? Again, look at verse 18, “Not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold.” We do not think of gold and silver as corruptible things. Some people give their lives to chasing gold and silver and the things they can buy. If we are not careful, we will give our lives to chasing such corruptible things. Gold and silver cannot redeem us. No amount of gold can buy forgiveness for even one sin. No amount of silver can add one moment to your life. We have not been redeemed by these things, corruptible things, like silver and gold.

But rather, with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We have already talked about how precious the blood of Jesus Christ is. Now consider this: God the Father demanded it and God the Son freely gave it to redeem you. That is an incredible truth from Scripture. If you are here this morning and you are not saved, turn from your vain conversation, turn from an empty and worthless lifestyle, turn from the pursuit of corruptible things, recognize your sin and fall before the cross of Jesus Christ. Only through the precious blood of Jesus Christ can you receive redemption.

Next, we see from this passage that Christ has been made manifest for us. We have already talked about how Christ has been made manifest in these last days, but look again at verse 20. The Bible says, Christ has been made manifest “in

these last times for you.” You hold a treasure in your hands that is beyond value: the written word of God that reveals Jesus Christ so clearly. You, Christian, have a treasure in your heart that is worth more than a billion universes: Christ has been made manifest, by the grace of God, for you. Compared to this, nothing else matters. Understand what this means, that Christ has been made manifest for you, and understand your responsibility because of this great truth. You are a steward of this treasure. Don’t squander the grace of God.

Finally, we see that Christ has opened the way to God the Father for us (v. 21). There is no other way to God the Father. We can only come through Jesus Christ, God the Son. In Christ we have a foundation for faith and hope. Not a false faith and hope, built upon “vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers.” But rather, true faith and hope. Faith and hope that will last and endure. Not because of something we have done, but because of what God has done for us as Christians.

This precious passage teaches about Who God is. He is our Father: He will hold us accountable. He is our Judge: He will judge all men impartially. He is Holy: He is perfect, without fault.

This passage teaches about Jesus Christ: His blood precious, irreplaceable, and the only way for redemption. He was foreordained. The gospel of Jesus Christ is no new teaching. It was established before the world. Jesus is made manifest in these last days, the gospel of Christ has been made clear. Jesus was raised from the

dead. This is the proof of His perfect sacrifice. He received glory from God the Father, fulfilling prophecy.

This passage teaches about what has been done for you, Christian: You have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has been made manifest for you. Jesus Christ has opened the way to God the Father for you.

When we consider all these things, what should our response be? Fear. I Peter 1:17, “Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” The passage that we have looked at this morning comes right after a passage commanding us to live holy lives. When we make light of that command or when we think little of it, we show that we have forgotten. We have forgotten who God the Father is, we have forgotten who Jesus Christ is, and we have forgotten what God has done for us.

It has been said, “The fear of God is a reverence of God for Who He is, and a deep respect for God because of what He can do.” Don’t come before the Lord God flippantly. Don’t come lightly. Come with fear: a deep reverence and respect for God. Consider Who God the Father is, consider Who Jesus Christ is, and consider what has been done for you as a Christian.