

Vain Traditions – First Peter 1:18-19

I. Introduction:

- A. In keeping with my Canadian blood, I feel like I owe you an apology, but as a Christian evangelist, I feel otherwise.
1. I want to return to the subject of redemption this morning.
 2. Last week, in two messages, we looked at redemption through the *“precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”* That was Peter’s **positive statement**.
 3. This morning, I’d feel led of the Lord to consider his **negative statement**.
 4. *“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.”*
 5. I thought about skipping over this and moving on, but the Lord wouldn’t let me feel comfortable about it.
 6. So we return to the subject of redemption, and I am not making any apologies for it.
- B. Let me refresh your memories about the definition of *“redemption.”*
1. It basically means: *“to buy out of the marketplace.”*
 2. I have read that one of the Greek words translated *“redemption”* is rooted in *“agora,”* the Greek market.
 - a. The *“agora”* was where Grecian women bought their groceries, cloth and other essentials.
 - b. There were also other agoras where slaves were bought and sold.
 3. Four times the basic Greek word bears the prefix *“ex”* which means *“from.”*
 4. With that *“extra”* ingredient, the meaning becomes something that is **bought OUT** of the market, **carried OUT** of the market, and **never brought back** to that market.
 5. Such is the meaning of the word, and the people of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia and Asia knew it well.
 6. But God’s apostles use the word to speak of deliverance, freedom – redemption – from sin and its effects.
- C. Perhaps the words of the poet in **Psalm 49** might help to illustrate redemption.
1. **Verse 10:** For God *“seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.*
 2. *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.*
 3. *Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.*
 4. *This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.*
 5. *Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.”*
- D. Death and the grave are somewhat like prison cells to which all the children of Adam are sentenced.
1. We are sinners, and the wages of sin is death, both physical and spiritual.
 2. Paul says, *“in Adam all die,”* and all of us will be buried, or otherwise consumed, by death.
 3. But notice the psalm’s **fifteenth verse**, *“But God will **REDEEM** my soul from the power of the **GRAVE**: for he shall receive me. Selah.”*
- E. We have a wonderful illustration of redemption here.
1. The deliverance of a sinful soul from the sentence of the broken law of God is as radical as the resurrection of Lazarus from his grave after three days of corruption.
 2. Lazarus had become the **property of death**, but Jesus released him.
 3. Lazarus’ sister said that he was **unfit to emerge** from the grave, but the grace of God made him fit.
 4. Lazarus’ body had become **offensive** to others, but Christ restored his health along with his life.
 5. And like **Lazarus in his flesh**, Lazarus in his **spirit**, was also redeemed from **eternal death** in what we generally call *“salvation.”*
 6. He was *“redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ,”* just as were the people to whom Peter was writing.

- F. Having dealt with that last week, the question which we are addressing today involves some of the **mistakes people make** in thinking about redemption.
1. As sinners, you and I don't get to decide how, or with what, we are going to be redeemed.
 2. Just as Lazarus couldn't purchase his own redemption from the grave, neither can we.
 3. However, that is exactly what people have been trying to do since the days of Cain and Abel.
 4. And here Peter brings up three false redemptions; three redemptive failures, which we need to consider.
 5. They basically cover all of man's futile efforts at humanistic salvation.

II. Peter says, we are not redeemed with **CORRUPTIBLE** things.

- A. What is it to be "**corruptible?**"
1. What is it when we say that someone, like a politician, is corrupt?
 2. Something is corruptible when it can become **decayed**; when it can **rot** or **putrefy**.
 3. Something is corruptible when it can **deteriorate**, **disintegrate** or **decompose**.
 4. So obviously, any living thing can be said to be corruptible. It can die and decompose, like Lazarus.
 5. And science tells us that anything which is not a root element can be deduced to its basic elements.
- B. But aren't gold and silver basic elements? Yes they are.
1. They are numbers 47 and 79 on the Periodic Table of the Elements.
 2. And yet, Peter says that even gold and silver are corruptible.
 3. But Radium and Plutonium are also elements, but they are prone to decay; they naturally deteriorate.
 4. I'm not smart enough to go into detail about it, but if the Holy Spirit says silver and gold are corruptible elements then they are.
 5. And when God is ready to reduce them to nothing but electrons and neutrons, they will disappear.
- C. Peter tells us in his second epistle, "**The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the **ELEMENTS** shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.**"
1. **Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of person ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.**
 2. **Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the **ELEMENTS** shall melt with fervent heat."**
 3. It doesn't matter how incorruptible we might think something is, if it is of this world, it is corruptible.
 4. The fire which the Lord will use to cleanse this world will be hotter than man's science has yet created.
- D. Getting back to our text, Peter tells us that nothing can redeem us from the wrath of God.
1. And nothing can itself escape the wrath and power of God.
 2. That means, no amount of **generous donations** to worthy **causes** can redeem us from our slavery to sin.
 3. Our gold, silver, paper money and even bit coin can never redeem us from the authority of God's law.
 4. If you could build a **glorious temple** honoring your religion, that building and the expense you put into it, could not secure your soul from the penalty of the law.
 5. It doesn't matter how many **religious icons** and **statues** you have around your house, these things will one day be burned up, and therefore they are useless in your redemption.
 6. By the standards of the world, **24 karat gold**, or even gold that is "**five nines**" fine, are not sufficient to meet your spiritual needs before the infinitely holy God.
 7. Peter tells us that no corruptible thing can redeem us.
 8. The born-again Christian knows that to be true, but there are multitudes of people who have not come to understand that, and therefore they still trying to buy their way to heaven.

III. Peter also tells us that **VAIN things** are useless in our redemption.

A. *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with... your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.”*

1. The word **“conversation”** is one which we who use the King James Bible must constantly define.
2. And it is something which I will happily continue to do, because I have no intention of giving up my Bible.
3. In the Bible the word **“conversation”** means **more** than just **casual talk** between friends.
 - a. The Greek word speaks of someone’s **manner of life**; his **conduct**; his **entire life-style**.
 - b. And this was the meaning of the word in the 17th Century when our Bible was translated.
4. Consider a couple of scriptures, asking yourself if they describe mere dialogue or discussion.
 - a. **Galatians 1:13** – *“For ye have heard **OF my conversation** in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.”*
 - b. Was it Paul’s talk which persecuted God’s church?
 - c. No, he did it with his entire life and all he that he had.
 - d. **Ephesians 4:22** – *“Put off concerning the **former conversation** the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.”*
 - e. Are new Christians only to stop talking dirty, or are they to stop living in ungodliness?

B. Peter says, *“Ye know that ye were not redeemed with... your **VAIN** conversation received by tradition from your fathers.”*

1. The word **“vain”** should be a little more familiar to everyone. It means **“empty”** or **“useless.”**
2. Something which is vain is **“devoid of force, truth, success”** or **“positive results.”**

C. *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with... your **VAIN CONVERSATION** received by tradition from your fathers.”*

1. This scripture attacks the religious person at the epicenter of his theology.
2. How many millions of people believe that living a relatively moral lifestyle will purchase their souls from the effects of their periodic moral failures?
 - a. Hundreds of millions?
 - b. People living under the umbrella of Christendom, Hinduism, Islam and a hundred other world religions?
3. But there is nothing in any person’s manner of life that can redeem his soul from the penalty of his sins.
 - a. A **prayerful life** is not capable of saving a soul.
 - b. A **straight life-style** as opposed to a homosexual life-style cannot save a soul in and of itself.
 - c. A **generous** and **hospitable life** is not a redeeming life.
 - d. The life of a fire fighter, EMT, trauma surgeon, or police officer cannot save the souls of those people.
 - e. Even to be a preacher of the gospel cannot in itself save the man.
4. All of our lives, when spent without the eternal son of God are vain, because they are short and vaporous, like a puff of morning fog.
5. They are **“devoid of force, truth, success”** or **“positive results.”**

D. No matter what lifestyle a person lives, the way of life cannot overcome the charges God’s law has against us.

1. No lifestyle can redeem us from the wrath of Almighty God.
2. As Jesus said to the highly religious and moral Nicodemus, *“Ye must be born again.”*

IV. Peter also refers to the failure of **TRADITIONAL things**.

A. *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed ... by tradition from your fathers.”*

1. In Jesus’ day there was a religious group which was the epitome of all three of these points.
2. They carried out the tiniest religious things like tithing on mint leaves and grains of salt, thinking that such corruptible things bought them favor with God.
3. They based their life-style on traditions which they received from their fathers.

- B. I'm sure Peter was present when a group of these Pharisees came down from Jerusalem to confront Jesus.
1. Please turn to **Mark 7** and let's read about Christ's attitude toward the Jews and their traditions.
 2. *"Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.*
 - a. *And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.*
 - b. *For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.*
 - c. *And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.*
 3. *Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?*
 4. *He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*
 - a. *Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*
 - b. *For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.*
- C. This conversation sheds light on Peter's statement in a couple of different ways.
1. First, the Lord Jesus **condemns** the **traditions** of men when they **clash** with the **truth of God**.
 2. He says that traditions tend to take people's hearts further from the Lord.
 3. And then He uses the word "**vain**" as Peter did, but in a slightly different way.
 4. *"In vain do they worship (God), teaching for doctrines the (traditions and) commandments of men."*
- D. There is a great deal of tradition among men, often trailing various religions behind them.
1. For example, some Baptists have fought with other Baptists over the tradition of washing feet.
 2. Doesn't that come very close to the tradition of the Pharisees about washing of hands?
 3. In days gone by some Baptists wouldn't fellowship with other Baptists if they didn't ceremonially lay their hands on the heads of people recently baptized.
 4. They didn't consider them properly baptized if hands were not applied.
 5. But where in the Bible do we read of laying on hands in regard to baptism?
- E. And speaking of baptism, most Protestants sprinkle water on their babies and call it "**baptism**."
1. From where did that come? Its origin is not in the Bible.
 2. It came from tradition received from their Catholic fathers.
 3. The only baptism we see in the Bible was by immersion, and only believers were baptized.
 4. It is by tradition and the doctrines of men that babies are baptized and received into the various denominations of their parents.
 5. Many of those man-made religions go on to declare that if those babies are not christened with the sprinkling of water, they are not, or they cannot be, saved.
 6. Paul says, *"Beware let any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8).*
- F. Peter adds, *"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."*
1. Peter's readers may not have understood the truth... they may not have known them... when they were still practicing those traditions and using those corruptible things in their fathers' religions.
 2. But the grace of God had been poured out on them, and they were made new creatures in Christ.
 3. And with new hearts and regenerated minds, they had been taught to see, *"they were redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ."*

V. Conclusion

- A. This morning, I am going to ask you once again: *“With what has your soul been redeemed?”*
1. Are you following the **tradition** that **membership** in one of God’s churches provides you with a shelter from the judgment of God?
 2. Are you trusting you the **formula of prayer** that some Baptist evangelist once shared with you?
a. “Jesus, I acknowledge that I am a sinner. Come into my heart and save me.”
 3. It is the tradition of many, received from fathers, grandmothers and great-great grandmothers, that to **live a moral life** is the ransom required to save a dead soul.
 4. Peter, the apostle of God, tells us **that only the blood of Christ Jesus** can purchase us from the slave market of sin.
 5. Only the sacrifice of Christ, His death on the cross, can save us.
- B. What is it you are trusting today to redeem you?
1. The **Book of Revelation** tells us that the saints in Heaven acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ *“loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”*
 2. If you are trusting anything but Jesus’ blood and sacrifice on the cross, then you have not been redeemed.
 3. If you are not redeemed, then you are still under the judgment of God for your sin, facing eternity in the Lake of Fire.
 4. Peter’s friends knew the difference.
 5. *“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.”*