

LIVING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD

1 Peter 1:17-21

Intro: Let me encourage all of you again to be reading 1 Peter. I know that many of you have your own scheduled Bible reading, and I would not want to interfere with that, but I think that most of us can use some time that otherwise would be wasted to read, and re-read, this delightful first epistle of Peter. You can read it aloud and prayerfully and thoughtfully in twenty or twenty-five minutes. And you will find that the more you read it with the Lord's blessing, the more you will understand it, and the more you will profit spiritually from it.

The more I read this epistle, the more I see how greatly concerned the Apostle Peter was about the people to whom he was writing. They were probably a very large number of people who knew the Lord, but who had been driven from their homes and scattered throughout the Roman Empire because of their faith in Christ. Peter wanted them to understand the meaning of their trials so they could get the most benefit from them. He also warned them against the tendency to meet wrong with wrong. This would only raise the possibility that they would be charged with wrongdoing – a charge that was not acceptable for people who know the Lord.

The more I read this epistle, the more impressed I am with it. You might call it *a manual for suffering Christians*, and yet so much of it applies to our lives regardless of what our circumstances might be.

If you were here last Sunday, you know that Peter began to make some practical applications of his teaching in verse 13, and it all had to do with hoping “to the end for the grace that” would be “brought” to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13). That is, they were to form the habit of looking forward to what would happen to them when the Lord Jesus would come back. And the main way in which they were to show that they were looking forward to the coming of the Lord was by their intention to be holy as the Lord is holy. He called them “obedient children.” not necessarily because that is what they were, but because that is what they needed to be. Their lives needed to be characterized by obedience to the Word of God because there can be no holiness without obeying the Word of God. And, if they were to be holy, this would mean that there had to be a break with the kind of living they did before they were saved.

Now when we put all of this together, we can see that looking expectantly for the coming of the Lord, is one of the greatest incentives we can have for holy living. None of us would want the Lord to find us compromising with sin in any way when He returns. So to avoid that possibility, we need

to concentrate on being a holy people.

In the passage before us today, 1 Peter 1:17-21, the Apostle Peter added another exhortation to the one in the latter part of verse 13. This second main exhortation is in the latter part of verse 17: “Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” We will come back to that exhortation in just a moment, but I want you to see that these two commandments seem to be at the heart of what the Apostle Peter was instructing the people to do. Of course the other commands that are given in connection with these two commands are important because they would help those early Christians to know how they were to do what Peter said that they should do. And these verses, of course, serve the same purpose for us.

In verse 14 the Apostle Peter addressed his readers as “obedient children.” And by this he meant “obedient children” *of God!* They were members of God’s family, born into that family by the new birth. Now in this section that we are considering he began by recognizing in another way that they were in the family of God. Please look at verse 17. Here we have:

I. A CHILD OF GOD DEFINED AS ONE WHO CALLS ON THE FATHER (1 Pet. 1:17).

A sentence which begins with an “if” is called *a conditional sentence*. For example, we can say, “If it rains, we will get wet when we go to our cars.” But we will only get wet if it rains. So the condition is, *if it rains*. If it doesn’t rain, we won’t have to worry about getting wet.

When you take such an idea to 1 Peter 1:17, it seems as though Peter was saying to his readers that there were some who called upon the Father, and others who did not. But in this case, the Greeks had a way of using “if” to indicate that Peter was assuming that his readers did call on the Father. The Greek language is a very wonderful language because it is capable of so many different shades of meaning.

In this case, Peter did use a Greek word for “if” which he followed with a present tense of the verb, so that those who know the Greek language would immediately see that Peter was not questioning anyone’s faith in Christ, but he was assuming that they did know the Lord. And so the proper translation of this verse is what is given in the NIV translation where instead of the word “if,” the translators have used the word “since.” So this is the way it reads:

Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear (1 Pet. 1:17, NIV).

So the word “if” assumes that his readers do call on the Father, and therefore the “if” becomes “since.” He was not doubting their salvation, he was assuming that they really knew the Lord. And so Peter was addressing himself to those who are believing in Christ for salvation.

But what does it mean that *we call upon the Father*? We have called upon Him to save us. We call upon Him daily, or we should, in order to have fellowship with Him. We call upon Him to meet our needs, and the needs of those for whom we pray. We call upon Him in thanksgiving and worship. Our lives consist of calling upon God Who is our heavenly Father. We look to Him for guidance and blessing every day we live. It is another distinctive characteristic of Christians that they call upon the Lord. We are a people who pray.

But let me make a second point from our text, and this is the main point in what Peter was saying in these verses. Let me give it the title:

II. HOW SHOULD THEY THEN LIVE? (1 Pet. 1:17).

Our KJV text says very correctly, “Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” The NIV translates it, “Live your lives as strangers in reverent fear.” He was reminding them again that they were strangers in this world, and that they were not to live like the people of the world live, but they were to live in the fear of the Lord.

That statement to “pass the time of your sojourning here in fear” does not mean that we are to live in fear of what God might do to us, like we would fear a Caesar or some other wicked tyrant, but, in the words of Charles Simeon who lived in the last century, to fear the Lord to live with “a holy fear of offending Him, and a tender concern to please Him in all things” (Simeon, Charles, *Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible*, Vol. 20, p.165). I think that is an excellent definition of what it means to fear the Lord.

Several years ago when I was teaching at Multnomah, we had the privilege of having Pastor J. B. Rowell in our home. He was the pastor of the Central Baptist Church in Victoria, B. C., and was lecturing at Multnomah. That was the occasion of his visit with us although I had known Dr. Rowell in my teen years when he had visited my parents in Tacoma. Dr. Rowell was also a college classmate of Dr. Mitchell when both of them were students at Brandon College, in Brandon, Ontario. At breakfast one morning, Dr. Rowell quoted a poem which made a real impression on us. Lucille asked him where we could get a copy of it, and he told us that the only place he knew where it was, was in his memory. But he gave us a

copy of it. After we began Trinity, I used this poem in a message, and I think it was Dr. Lockwood who found some music to go with it. We have it in our hymnals as insert “C.” Please take your hymnal, and let me read it to you. It also gives us a wonderful explanation of what it means to fear the Lord. (Read.)

And you know that Mr. Jerry Bridges’ latest book is on this subject, *The Joy of Fearing God*. I heartily recommend that you read it if you have not already done so.

So this is the way we are to live, reverently seeking to please the Lord in all that we do, and seeking by His grace to avoid anything that would displease Him. *This is the main exhortation of these verses we are considering today.* And how important it is that all of us who know the Lord make sure that this is the way we are living today and throughout the rest of our pilgrimage in this world.

In the remainder of this passage we have:

III. THREE MAJOR REASONS WHY WE SHOULD LIVE IN THIS WORLD FEARING GOD.

The first is in verse 17:

A. Because God is not only our Father, but He is our Judge (1 Pet. 1:17).

Peter said here that the Lord will judge “every man’s work.” And He will do this without any respect for what our position has been in this life. I am not going to get any special treatment because I have been a pastor. In fact, James says that the Lord might be a little more demanding of me because I have been a teacher of the Word.

But what is our work? You know, the majority of Christians never teach a class or preach a sermon. So our works cannot be limited to those things, as important as they are. No, our works have to do not only with our service, but with the way we have trusted the Lord, the way we have obeyed Him, and the way we have persevered in our trials.

I asked Mr. Harvey Frisco to read to us from 2 Corinthians 5 today because that is the passage where we have the verses,

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;

that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:9-10). That word “bad” can mean *wicked*, or *morally bad*, but it can also mean *worthless, of no account*. We are not going to be judged as to whether or not we are saved. When we stand before the Lord, that will have been settled. But we are going to be judged according to our works. And this is one of the major reasons that we need to “pass the time of our sojourning here in” the fear of the Lord.

But let me give you Peter’s second reason as to why we should live in the fear of the Lord, fearful of displeasing Him and always wanting to do what pleases Him. It is this:

B. Because God our Father has redeemed us by “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:18-21a).

God has redeemed us for Himself by the payment of a ransom. He has delivered us from our sins, and set us free to love Him and to live for Him and to serve Him.

And it was not by silver or gold, that which by the world’s standards is the most valuable. Our need was far greater than that which all of the money could meet. Nothing short of the infinitely “precious blood of Christ” could be sufficient to save us from not only the power of our sins, but also from the final penalty that will fall upon those “who know not God,” and who do not “obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:8).

Evidently there was among the Jews the idea that salvation could be purchased with “silver and gold.” Do you remember the story of the young man who came to the Lord asking what he needed to do in order to be saved. The Lord spoke to him about the commandments, and the young man said that he had kept all of them from his youth. Then the Lord told him to sell all that he had, give the money to the poor, and then follow Him. The young man then went away grieved because he had great wealth, and did not want to part with it. Then this conversation followed between the Lord and His disciples:

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you,
That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go
through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the
kingdom of God.

25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed,
saying, Who then can be saved? (Matt. 19:23-25).

Even the disciples were not clear on how a person could be saved, and

they seemed to indicate by their question that if a rich man could not be saved by buying his salvation, then there was no hope for anyone else.

The Apostle Peter called this “your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.” In other words, what the fathers had passed on to their sons was a false doctrine of salvation. Any other doctrine of salvation beside the true Gospel of the grace of God, minimizes sin, and can never save anyone. The Jews should have known better because all of their sacrifices taught them that salvation was through the sacrifice of animals who were without blemish, and they all pointed to “the Lamb of God Who” would take “away the sins of the world” (John 1:29).

The Jews might have claimed antiquity for their doctrine, but Peter went on in this passage to show that the true doctrine of salvation was older than the world because it “was foreordained before the foundation of the world” that Christ should come as a Man, without sin, and lay down His life as a sacrifice for all who would ever be saved. And it was not by works of any human being but by faith in God Who had given His Son as the Savior of men.

So we are not our own. We have been bought with a price. We belong to the Lord, and that is the reason that we are to live our lives in the fear of the Lord, doing what pleases Him, and refusing to do that which is displeasing to Him.

But there is one short, but very important phrase left in our text, and this gives us the third reason why we are to “pass the time of our sojourning here in fear,” in the fear of the Lord. And this is it:

C. That our faith and hope might be in God (1 Pet. 1:21b).

If our salvation were dependent upon what we did, or upon money that we paid, then our “faith and hope” would be in ourselves, but not in God, and not in Christ.

But perhaps Peter had more in mind that just how we are saved initially. He could also have been thinking about the way we live because this is the emphasis in verse 17. So it behooves each one of us to ask ourselves, Does my life show that I am trusting God? And does my life also show that my real hope in this life is the prospect I have that someday I will be with the Lord. It is easy to say that we are trusting the Lord, and that we are looking for His return, but our lives may be showing that we are all involved in the world and its ways rather than in seeking to please God.

Concl: The big tragedy about all that has taken place in Washington in recent days is that as far as most of the politicians in government are concerned, “there is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:18). And one of the biggest lies that is being told is that “it is all over.” It isn’t over! Our politicians do not realize that they are the ministers of God, not of the people! The key to their success is not the popular support of a sinful nation. Nothing can succeed when God is not pleased. I don’t know how it will come, but I know that there is a price, a great price, to be paid for the failure of our President and our Senators and our nation to go their own way, and not even to be concerned about the will of God.

But regardless of how our leaders have gone, we as the Lord’s people must remain true to Him and to His Word. He is the One Who determines what is right and what is wrong, and those who violate His will are going to pay for it both now and hereafter. It is not a matter for us to be proud about, but we have every reason to be keenly thankful to God that we are numbered among those who “call on the Father.” We belong to Him because He has saved us by the blood of His Son, the precious blood of His Son. This world is not our home. We are strangers and foreigners here. We are on our way to heaven. Let us live to please God, to walk in His ways, and to seek in all that we do to glorify Him, and to love Him with all of our heart and soul and strength and mind.