

Conduct Yourselves with Fear

1 Peter 1:17-21

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Phil Sasser

I. Introduction

A. Opening Remarks. Transition to reader

B. Text: 1 Peter 1:1-21

¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action,¹³ and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

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, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ 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.

C. Illustration: Yehiel De-Nur

D. FCF: Yehiel De-Nur really grasped a tremendous truth. Apart from Christ and his work on the cross there is no end to the evil that each of us could commit. And even Christians can fall into grievous sins which can destroy our lives and others' lives and bring reproach on the gospel. Peter is writing his letter to people just like you and I. Prone to wander, Lord I feel, prone to leave the God I love. We feel the pull of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

E. In 1 Peter 1:1-21 The Holy Spirit gives us the truth that will keep us from such evil. Knowing that we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, we should walk out our faith in the fear of the Lord and in the knowledge of his wonderful plan and provision for us that has secured an eternal hope that is sure.

F. Transition:

1. The setting: Exiles – Strangers to the world, in a way that Peter is instructing us. to the world. As Jesus said we are to be in the world, but not of the world.
2. In verses 3-12 Peter begins by reminding us that we have been born again to a living hope; and the inheritance we have waiting for us in heaven. And then the inexpressible joy we have as believers because of this wonderful salvation that was prophesied in ages past and came to pass in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
3. Last week we began to see the implications of our great salvation in the way we live our lives in light of this great hope we have. In verses 13-16 there are two imperatives written to us. The

first is in vs 13 “Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” The imperishable, undefiled, and unfading inheritance kept for us in heaven. The second imperative is “do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.” We’ll see Peter develop that more in our text for today. And the third imperative carries the freight for all of the commandments in 1 Peter. In verse 15 he says “be holy in all your conduct.” Be Holy. Since God is Holy, he calls us to be holy in all that we do. Today we will get another imperative set within some wonderful indicatives. He could have just said Be Holy because I said so. But with the imperatives he reasons with, telling us how and why we should be holy. And those reasons include some wonderfully reflections back on what he has already done for us and they include wonderful promises of that he has for us both now and in the future.

I have 4 points that I think the text makes:

1. Our Father, the Judge (verse 17) Reason #1
2. The Imperative (verse 17)
3. We were Redeemed (verses 18-19) Reason #2
4. We’re a Part of God’s Great Plan (Verses 20-21) Reason #3

II. Our Father, the Impartial Judge.

A. Text: 1 Peter 1:17

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,

B. They Call on God as Father.

1. Peter begins with an assumption, that they, the elect exiles in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia, and for that matter every Christian in any age, calls God Father. He assumes this because in was Jesus himself who said when you pray address God the Father. He gave us a model prayer: Our Father who is in heaven, may your name be kept holy. That was not a common practice when Jesus had come on the scene.
2. And what a wonderful privilege it is to be able to call the God of all the universe, Father. In Galatians 4 that “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “**Abba!** Father!” We’ve not only been forgiven of all of our sins and been given the righteousness of Christ and if that was all got it would be wonderful beyond belief. But on top of all of that we’ve been adopted into God’s family. We are sons and daughters of God. We have an unmatched inheritance from our Heavenly Father. So, Peter has a good reason to believe that Christians reading his letter do call God, Father.
3. But with that wonderful privilege, there is a danger that they will allow their familiarity with their Father to think that he doesn’t care how they act. Our heavenly father is not like earthly fathers in many ways. He doesn’t look the other way when I sin.

C. Peter reminds his readers that the God that they address as Father is also their **judge** who will judge them impartially according to their deeds

1. We will all appear before God on the Day of Judgment. It is certain. It will come. In his second letter, Peter talks about the Day of Judgment 3 or 4 times. The Apostle Paul says this in Romans chapter 2:

“For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.”

2. Resist the temptation to believe that the Day of Judgment is only for unbelievers. It won't just be the unsaved who will appear before the judgment throne, it will be everyone who has ever lived. We will be judged according to our deeds. And we will be rewarded on the basis of those deeds. As our Confession of Faith states in Section 35.3

Christ desires us to be certain that there will be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin, and for the greater comfort of the godly in their adversity. He also desires to keep the day unknown to men, so that they may shake off all fleshly security and be always watchful, because they do not know at what hour the Lord will come and may ever be prepared to say, “Come Lord Jesus. Come quickly. Amen.”

3. Those who are in Christ will not suffer the wrath of God because Jesus bore all of our sins on the cross. But there will be a difference in rewards depending on how we've lived our lives.
4. Peter was reminding his readers of these truths so that they didn't think that God doesn't care. He does.
5. That brings us to his second point.

III. The Imperative (Verse 17): Conduct yourselves with fear.

A. Text:

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.

B. The commandment to fear God to believers.

1. What do you think the Holy Spirit through Peter means when he commands us to conduct ourselves with fear? Are we to fear people or fear our circumstances? Well, actually Peter says no, don't do that. In Chapter 3 and verse 6 he commands wives not to fear anything that is frightening, so it's not their circumstances. And in Chapter 3 verse 14 Peter tells all of them not to fear the people that might persecute them, so it's not fear of man. That is roundly condemned throughout the Bible. The fear that Peter is speaking of is the fear of God. And Peter expressly says that in Chapter 2 verse 17:

“Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.” 1 Peter 2:17

2. So, then, I think we can properly conclude that “conducting ourselves in fear throughout the time of our exile is referring to the fear of God. We are commanded to fear God. “But Phil”, you say, “doesn’t Romans 8 say that we did not “receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” And that is absolutely true. We are not to have a fear born out of a spirit of slavery, that is, not relating to God as an all-powerful, terrifying, slave master. But we are called to have a fear God that is appropriate for a child of our Heavenly Father.
3. It used to be that Christians were called “God-fearing” people. But in this day and age God is only seen as a benevolent old man who may be ignored with impunity. And even in the church, the notion that God is to be feared has fallen on hard times. Or that it is an OT mentality and isn’t for the Christian. It should be clear that the fruit of such thinking is terrible. The Bible is clear, from Genesis to Revelation, that everyone should fear God. Especially Christians

C. What does he mean by “fear?”

1. Fear can mean terror, reverence, awe.
2. As it relates to the vast majority of OT and NT uses of the word as it applies to God’s covenantal people, the best definition I think is “reverential awe”. Every Christian should relate to God with reverential awe.

Illustration of fearful, reverential awe.

3. But there seems to be more in Peter’s words that just reverential awe. Here, I think he has in mind more of what I will call Paternal fear. We have related, but different, fear of God because he is our Heavenly Father and as such will discipline us. It’s the fear of discipline. God disciplines his children. He’s not a doting Father like I am as a grandfather. He says this in Hebrews Chapter 12:

“In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reprov'd by him.

⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:4-11

I had a father, who I greatly respected and loved, who believed in corporal punishment. It was of immense benefit to me that he spanked me. I realize that there may be some here or watching on-line that had unreasonable fathers who were cruel and the punishment was not a godly

discipline. Please don't see God's discipline through that lens. But see it as that of a loving father.

In C.S. Lewis' "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" there is a moment of revelation when Susan is talking to Mr. Beaver and Susan asks if Aslan the Lion is safe.

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver ... "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you." — C.S. Lewis, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

That's the way see God our Father. He's dangerous, but he's good. And that's the way we should view God's discipline.

See it through the lens of scripture. God doesn't discipline us out of anger. God's discipline is to produce holiness in our lives. Isn't that what he just said in 1 Peter 1: 15-16. He wants us to be holy. And to do that we need to change.

God is into behavioral modification. He has an agenda for every one of us. Change! He wants us to change our thinking (that was last week. Preparing your minds for action. Sober-minded, not given to our former passions, etc.). He wants us to change our behavior. What we do or do not do. He wants us to stop doing some things and to start doing other things. He wants our conduct to change. And I know right now some of you are thinking of someone else who needs to change. Stop doing that! God wants you to change. God wants me to change. It's for each of us. And if you are experiencing the discipline of the Lord, and we all do, remember that he will only put as much pressure on you and take only so long as it takes for you to change. It's up to you. We think that God wants to affirm us in everything. People think God not only loves them (which is true) but that he loves everything about them and he doesn't. If that hurts your feelings, well, read your Bible. God has an agenda for you, and even old men like me, change. NOW. If you don't you can count on your father's discipline.

Illustration: Phil and lighting matches in the garage.

God will discipline you if you continue in sin. Do you have a category for that? Are you aware of things that have "happened" to that was the discipline of your Heavenly Father?

God wants us to be Holy. He wants us to change. And throughout 1 Peter, and actually, throughout the entire Bible, he will be telling us what to change and how to do it. Just after this section he will start giving change orders.

We should fear the Lord!

The fear of the Lor means saying Amen to what God has said and what God has commanded.

D. The fear of the Lord is good thing. (See Handout)

1. Some Scriptures on the fear of the Lord:

Psalms 19:9 "the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever."

Psalms 25:14 "The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant."

Proverbs 1:29-31 “Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord,³⁰ would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof,³¹ therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.”

Prov. 8:13a “The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.”

2 Cor. 7:1 “Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.”

Eccl. 12:13 “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

[The fear of God is] “that indefinable mixture of reverence, fear, pleasure, joy and awe which fills our hearts when we realize who God is and what He has done for us.” – Sinclair Ferguson, *Grow in Grace*, p. 36

“At the same time our fear of God must be a settled state of mind—an attitude of awe, reverence, honor, and adoration, a fixed mental outlook that isn’t dependent on feelings that come and go. The right feelings over time will of course shape our attitude. If we make it a practice to think great thoughts about God...we will develop a sustained attitude of the fear of God. Whether we think of a complex set of emotions or an attitude, however, the important thing is that this mix is to be *determinative*. The emotions and attitude should determine the way we relate to God—the way we obey Him, trust Him and worship Him. Properly fearing God is more than just a feeling or attitude—it’s a feeling or attitude *that changes our lives*. – Jerry Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God*, pp. 30-31

2. One of the names of God is FEAR; “The Fear of Isaac”. You’ll find that in Genesis 31
3. One of the characteristics of the Messiah is that he would fear the Lord.

Isaiah 11:2-3a “And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.”

4. The fear of the Lord promises many blessings. (Proverbs) Go over these with your children this month.
5. And the failure to fear the Lord promises disaster. (Ex.28)
6. It’s a NT concept: Philippians 2:12

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

God’s agenda is change. It’s holiness.

7. Make a commitment to grow in the fear of the Lord. (Recommend books). Bridges has an entire chapter on how to grow in the fear of the Lord.
8. We all need a greater conviction to fear the Lord.

IV. We Were Ransomed (Verses 18-19)

A. Text: Verse 18-19

knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

B. We've been ransomed. What does it mean to be ransomed?

1. The ESV uses ransom here. The NIV, the New American Standard, and the KJV translates the word redeemed. And that's good if you know what redeemed means. It has come to, in evangelical circles, to almost be synonymous with saved. But it has a theological technical meaning.
2. Ransom means to purchase someone's freedom by paying a ransom price, usually money. In the first century AD it meant the price for a slave to buy his freedom. You paid the money, you got set free.

C. Ransomed from what? Well, we've been redeemed from several things: the curse of the law because of our sin, the bondage of the Devil (and by the way, no ransom was paid to the Devil, I don't care what Carmen taught you). God was the only one whose wrath needed to be appeased and it was.

1. Peter is clear what he means that we were ransomed from look at verse 18: from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers. The word translated futile carries with it the notion of vanity. If you read Ecclesiasticus and see vanity, that's it, according to the Septuagint. The NIV says "empty way of life". The KJV says vain conversation, but in 1611 conversation meant more than talking.
2. Peter is writing to Christians; the overwhelming majority of which were Gentiles. Their ancestors and the culture around them were pagan and idol worshippers. The lifestyle of Roman culture was characterized by debauchery. The Murals of Pompeii depict it. We may think that it's bad here, now, but take my word for it, it was worse then and there.
3. Last week Peter admonished us to reject the "passions of our former ignorance" (verse 14). Now he says reject the entire way of life of the culture around you.
4. Peter says you've been ransomed from that culture. Your forefathers culture. Many of you hearing this were perhaps raised in Christian homes and so you can't quite relate to the "forefathers" component. But many in this room can relate to it. Being raised in a home where atheism, agnosticism, debauchery and coming to Christ is an incredible change. And all of us must acknowledge that our culture is so ungodly. There is no fear of God in our culture.
5. Peter says you've been ransomed out of that. You're an alien in a strange culture. Don't go back to it. It is empty, meaningless and futile. That culture has no purpose except money, sex, and power. But you've been set free from its hold on you. You no longer have to obey those masters.

Whether It's Karl Marx, Thomas Jefferson, or Sigmund Freud, or Carl Sagan, or whomever. You are free from their hold on you.

- D. And what were you ransomed with? Look at the end of verse 18 and then verse 19: “not with perishable things such as silver or gold,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”
1. Peter picks the most valuable things in the world at that time, and still today I suppose, silver and gold. And he declares them perishable. Temporary. Subject to destruction. And most of all, meaningless to God. Your silver and gold could never pay the price to set you free.
 2. But there is a ransom price more valuable than anything: The “precious blood of Christ.” Just consider the value of the price of our redemption.
 - a. Something that has infinite value. Nothing physical or material has as much value as the blood of Jesus.
 - b. It is the blood of the Son of God.
 - c. The blood of any sinful man, including your own, could never pay the ransom. Nothing you could ever do can atone for your sins.
 - d. Something that has infinite endurance. Though it was shed 2000 years ago, it is still working. There is no expiration date on the blood of Jesus.
 3. So what Peter is saying here is “don't devalue the blood of Jesus by walking in the ways of the culture.” Hebrews says “don't trample it under foot by your sin.” If we continue to sin after being ransomed by the precious blood of Jesus, we devalue his blood. We're proclaiming that his blood didn't really free us from our former passions and futile ways, when, in fact, it did. We trash it.
 4. And in the O.T. when they sacrificed the lamb at Passover or on the Day of Atonement or any of the prescribed sacrifices, they had to sacrifice an animal that had no disease and no defect. It had to be the best that you had. Every time you read that in your Bible, remember that it was preparing God's people for the perfect one who would shed his perfect blood to redeem us from our sinful lives.
 5. But the animal sacrifices, themselves, could never pay the price for our ransom. They only pointed the way. They were a shadow of the real thing; the only thing; that could take away our sin and set us free from its power: The Blood of Jesus!

V. We Have a Sure Hope (Verses 20-21) Reason #3

A. Text:

²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ 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.

- B. Now we come to my fourth point, which is the third reason we should conduct ourselves in fear throughout the time of our exile. Which means until He comes or we go to be with him. It is because this is all a part of God's great plan of redemption. We have a sure hope. Read Verse 20.

C. Covenant of Redemption (Ransom and Redemption are interchangeable in this passage.)

1. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world not only means that Christ preexisted before his incarnation, it means that Christ bleeding to death on the cross was a part of God's eternal plan of Redemption. It was a part of an agreement within the Godhead that was made before the creation of the world. It's sometimes called the Covenant of Redemption. That the Eternal Son of God would become a human being (yet still being God in his divine nature). That he would offer himself as a sacrifice on the cross at the appointed time. That he would, in his sacrifice, make an offering that would satisfy the wrath of God in its entirety. That God would raise him from the dead by the Holy Spirit. And that he would bring forth a people that would bring glory to himself. That's where we come in: we are a part of the people of God. We who were once not a people, now are the people of God. And we live lives that glorify God. Lives that reflect the value of the blood of Jesus. But it was all a part of God's great plan of redemption. The Covenant of Redemption.

D. And this great plan with its great Savior was Made Manifest in the Last Times

In God's perfect timing. It had been in evidence and effect in previous administrations of the covenant of Grace, but all those pale in comparison to the New Covenant. Better, better, better.

1. The New Covenant with its better promises, better provisions, better priesthood with the greatest High Priest (who make perfect intercession), better covenant, better sacrifice (once and for all), and a kingdom that cannot be shaken.
2. And in the fullness of time he was made manifest

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

- E. He was made manifest for our sake. He died for us. His unworthy enemies. What love that he should love us, live for us, die for us, set us free from our chains of habits, and cultures, passions, and the influences in our lives.
- F. And not only that, it is because of Him that we are believers in God. Verse 21. He accomplished all of this and apart from the Holy Spirit, we would never have believed it. But we do. You know that he died for you.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. (1 Peter 1:8)

Why? It's through him that we are believers in God. Believing is a gift of grace. Unmerited, but obtained by the Holy Spirit.

- G. So that your faith and hope are in God. It is only through Christ Jesus alone that we can know God. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus said that no man can come to the Father except through

him. Peter said before the Sanhedrin: “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). But because of Jesus, we have hope. Not a maybe kind of hope, but a sure and steadfast hope. A hope that is secure. Secured by the greatness of our mediator and his sacrifice.