

# The Pilgrim's Life of Holy Fear

1 Peter 1:17–21

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## Introduction

<sup>17</sup>If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; <sup>18</sup>knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup>but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. <sup>20</sup>For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you <sup>21</sup>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.

Earthquakes. Hurricanes. Tornadoes. Fires. Each of these natural disasters present an imminent threat to human life. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated 90,000 square miles of territory from central Florida to eastern Texas. The deadliest tornado in U.S. history took place in March of 1925, and killed 695 people across Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana. A bit closer to home, it was just about two and a half years ago, in November of 2018, that the deadliest wildfire in California's history—the so-called “Camp Fire”—burned more than 153,000 acres (almost 240 square miles) of land, destroying more than 18,000 structures, and totally obliterating the entire towns of Concow and Paradise. Some of you lived through the 1994 Northridge Earthquake, the 6.7-magnitude quake whose epicenter was just a few miles west of here. Property damage was estimated to be up to 50 billion dollars, making it one of the costliest natural disasters in U.S. history.

And what happens as a result of these tragedies? Well, one result is that people living in areas prone to these natural disasters take considerable precautions to safeguard themselves against the effects of the next calamity. People in the Midwest build storm shelters, so that they can withstand the wrath of an F5 tornado. Houses in the southeast can be “hurricane-proofed” by several methods, including anchoring the roof through the walls into the foundation of the house. With the San Andreas Fault running directly through Frazier Park, Palmdale, and San Bernardino, many of you are familiar with the notion of building structures to be “earthquake-resistant”: steel plate walls systems, vibration control, and so on.

But when do these preventive measures—storm shelters, hurricane-proofing, earthquake-proofing—when do these take place? *Before* the next tragedy strikes. You never see someone trying to build a storm shelter in the middle of a Category 5 hurricane, or when an F5 tornado enters their neighborhood. Nobody with any sense waits for a house fire to start before they

begin building a fire escape. Why? Because in the moment that tragedy strikes, you don't have time to think clearly, to evaluate your options, and to construct systems of defense! The craziness of the moment simply won't allow it. You need to be so prepared for disaster that the moment you detect it, second-nature kicks in and you follow the plan. You've got a fire-escape route. You've got the storm shelter well-stocked. Whatever it is.

Well, the same thing is true, friends, of Christian suffering. I don't believe it's possible to overstate how important it is to have a rock-solid theology of suffering before you enter into it, because in the midst of some exceedingly painful trial, the craziness of the moment hardly ever allows for cool contemplation and sound, reflective reasoning. The storm shelter of biblical truth that keeps you grounded in the midst of the hurricane of suffering can't be constructed in the middle of the storm. It needs to be set firmly in place ahead of time, so that it can serve as a sure and steadfast anchor in the midst of whatever turmoil we might experience. We need to be equipped to suffer well *before* that suffering comes upon us.

And without being a doomsayer, I want to suggest to you, brothers and sisters, that the hurricane is coming. It shouldn't take us by surprise, because the Lord Jesus warned us that the world that hated Him would hate His followers, John 15:20: "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." But the time is coming for us—for followers of Jesus in North America—to experience a level of opposition to the Gospel that we have not before. Could you ever have imagined that you'd live to see the government sue churches because they are gathering together on the Lord's Day in obedience to Christ's commands? Could you ever have imagined that you'd see a church building fenced off and padlocked by the government, and guarded by two hundred police officers preventing worshipers from entering? Could you ever have imagined that the governing authorities would put a pastor in jail for assembling with his congregation for Sunday worship?

I am convinced that the most serious calling and stewardship that pastors have today is to prepare their congregations to endure persecution in a way that honors Christ. Because if you think that craziness is staying up in Canada, you're wrong. It may not be here tomorrow. It may not be here next year. But friends, unless the Lord disposes otherwise by His providence, it's coming. In my lifetime. Are you ready to be locked out of church? Are you ready to face crippling fines that could result in the seizure of your property? Are you ready to go to jail, and be separated from your family, the way James Coates was? Are you ready to lose your job for refusing to bow to the cultural totalitarianism that demands that you call Richard "Rachel"? that demands that you live by the lies of the new paganism?

We need to be equipped to suffer well. We need to be equipped to stand firm in the face of persecution—to remain faithful in the midst of trials, because those trials are coming. And that is

because this world is not our home. In the opening verse of 1 Peter, Peter calls the believers he's writing to, "those who reside as aliens." The term speaks of "a temporary resident in a foreign place" (Grudem, 52), "those who do not have the rights of citizenship but are temporary foreign residents of an area" (Davids, 71). Peter will say in chapter 2 verse 11 that we are "aliens and strangers" in the world. Hebrews 11:13 says that believers in the promises of God "confess that they are strangers and exiles on the earth." Philippians 3:20 says, "Our citizenship is in heaven." And in 1 Peter 1:17, the beginning of our text this evening, Peter speaks of the believer's present life as "the time of your *stay* on earth." Do you hear how temporary that sounds? You're a sojourner, a pilgrim, a stranger journeying through the foreign land that is planet earth to the country of your true citizenship.

And so you should only expect suffering! It only makes sense that the world would hate those who are not its own. Remember what Jesus said to the disciples in John 15:19? "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you." You're a pilgrim. You're not of this world. You speak differently, you behave differently, you enjoy different things, you're unimpressed with the worldly lusts that so captivate their hearts, and they hate you because of it. What does Peter say in chapter 4 verse 4? "They are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you." A life lived according to the customs of the country of your citizenship indicts the sinful lifestyle of those who live according to their own lusts and pleasures, and it provokes them to hate you.

And then, besides a holy life, the world hates those who, like their Lord, testify of it, that its deeds are evil, John 7:7. The world cannot abide those who will stand up and testify that Richard is *not* Rachel; that marriage is *not* up for redefinition; that the child in the womb is *not* a clump of cells until the mother decides he's a person, but an image-bearer of Almighty God who alone determines personhood; that Christ is God, that He has lived and died and risen again, and that there is no name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved; that He is *the* Way, *the* Truth, and *the* Life, and no one comes to the Father but by Him. You testify of those things, and trouble is coming. That hurricane, that tornado, that earthquake is coming. And we need to be prepared ahead of time to weather that storm, to endure faithfully, to suffer well, to stand firm.

### Text Introduction and Context

And to do that, we have turned to 1 Peter, because it's in this letter that Peter writes to persecuted believers, who reside as aliens and strangers in the world, encouraging them to bear up under unjust suffering for Christ. And as you've seen, if you've followed our series over these past several Sunday nights, Peter begins in verses 3 through 12 by praising God for the privileges these persecuted pilgrims enjoy as a result of His grace at work in their lives. They have the sure

hope of an imperishable inheritance; they enjoy the assurance of a sincere faith tested and proven by trials; they are animated by a fervent love of and inexpressible joy in Christ; and they have the great privilege of seeing centuries of prophecy fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

And then in verse 13, Peter begins to outline how we as the beneficiaries of those privileges are to live in response to the grace of God that we have been given. And in verses 13 to 21, he issues three key imperatives. First, in verse 13, he calls them to **a life of steadfast hope**, when he says, “Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” “You will suffer well, dear pilgrims, when you set your minds entirely—not on the present troubles and distresses that you must face as strangers in a foreign land, but—on the unfathomable grace that you will enjoy when Christ returns.”

Secondly, in verse 15, he calls them to **a life of universal holiness**, saying, “But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.” “You will suffer well, dear pilgrims, when you commit yourselves to pursuing holiness, godliness, Christlikeness, in all of life.” Why? Well, because when persecution comes, the temptation is to yield! “Listen, I believe Jesus died for my sins and everything, but if I’m going to lose my job, if they’re going to take my house, if I could go to jail, if they try to kill me—maybe I don’t have to be so fanatical about this Christianity thing.” And you’re tempted to compromise. You’re tempted to blend in with the world so you don’t incur their wrath. But Peter says, “No, if you’re children of the holy God, so you also be holy as He is holy! Be like your Father!”

But there’s another reason why a life of holiness is essential to standing firm against persecution. And that is because: you will not suffer for a God whom you will not obey. You will not suffer for a God in wartime whom you will not obey in peacetime. You will not persevere in obedience to God unto the loss of your freedom, or the loss of your property, if you can’t obey in the secret place when all your obedience costs you is the false-pleasures of sin. Christians who care nothing for pursuing communion with Christ in disciplined prayer and Bible reading don’t go to jail for Christ. Christians who don’t devote themselves to the assembly of the saints and the ministry of the local church don’t joyfully accept the seizure of their property for the name of Christ. Christians who don’t find Christ satisfying enough that His glory severs the bonds of their lusts don’t lay down their lives for the Gospel. If you compromise when all discipleship costs you is the lusts of your flesh, you will not stand on conviction when following Jesus costs you your family. Those unconcerned with holiness do not stand in the day of real trial. And so you are called to **a life of universal holiness**.

But then as we come to our passage for this evening, verses 17 to 21, Peter issues a third imperative. Not only: hope in grace; not only: live in holiness. But he also calls them to **a life of**

**holy fear.** Look at verse 17: “If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, **conduct yourselves in fear** during the time of your stay on earth.”

## **The Fear of God**

And as you come to that third imperative, it seems a little counterintuitive, doesn’t it? We like the first command, to fix our hope completely on future grace. And, though our flesh resists the call to sanctification, we even get the second command, to be holy in all our behavior. But the command to live in fear? That grates against our contemporary sensibilities, even in the church. We’re happy to talk about our responsibility to love God, to worship God, even to obey God. But to fear God? No, isn’t the most oft-repeated command in the Bible, “Do *not* fear”? And doesn’t 1 John 4:18 say that perfect love casts out fear, and that the one who fears is not perfected in love? You would think that, in encouraging pilgrims who are strangers in a foreign land, Peter would tell them not to fear! “Don’t be afraid of your persecutors!”

But that’s actually exactly what he’s doing! He’s telling the believers that they don’t need to fear the wrath of those who would persecute them to such a degree that they should compromise their lives of holiness and faithfulness to Christ. No, instead of fearing man, Peter says, fear God. Peter is telling us that the way we battle the sinful fear of man is to replace that fear with a superior, holy fear of God. “Don’t fear displeasing man who can only kill the body, but afterwards can do nothing to the soul. No, fear displeasing God, who, though your Father, nevertheless judges each man’s work without partiality. He is the One to whom you will give an account after your flesh is destroyed and your body lies still in the grave.”

The fear of the Lord is a major theme in Scripture. “The fear of Yahweh,” says Proverbs 9:10, “is the beginning of wisdom.” Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge.” In Deuteronomy 10:12–13, Moses asks the question, “What does God want from us?” And he answers with a list of things headed by the fear of the Lord. Deuteronomy 10:12, “Now, Israel, what does Yahweh your God require from you, but to *fear* Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep Yahweh’s commandments.” And so you see that fearing Yahweh is entirely consistent with loving Him, and serving Him, and obeying Him. Psalm 34:9 says, “O fear Yahweh, you His saints; For to those who fear Him there is no want.” Those who fear the Lord lack nothing! So also is this fear consistent with joy. Psalm 2:11 says, “Serve Yahweh with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” And so if we have the notion that fearing God in the way Scripture commands is at odds with rejoicing in Him, the problem is with us. because Scripture sees them as entirely consistent.

You say, “But, ‘fearing God’—that’s just for the Old Testament believers, right? Don’t we get past that in the New Testament?” No. In Acts 9:31, as Luke gives the account of Saul’s

conversion and reception into the church, he says, “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on *in the fear of the Lord* and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.” So the fear of the Lord is not incompatible with peace, with edification, and with the comfort of the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 7:1: “Let us perfect holiness *in the fear of God*.” Colossians 3:22: Don’t do your work merely to please men, “but with sincerity of heart, *fearing* the Lord.” 1 Timothy 5:20: “Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be *fearful* of sinning.”

And it’s really that last sense—the notion of being fearful of sinning—that captures what Peter’s after in this command to conduct ourselves in fear. This is not the fear of the guilty, unforgiven sinner who is terrified at the thought of his deserved condemnation. Some of you need to feel that fear. Some of you who are here outside of Christ, a stranger to God’s grace, still enslaved to your sin, need to fear God that way. But not you who are in Christ, not you who have turned from sin and now trust in Him for righteousness. No, for the believer—who, 1 Peter 1:2, has been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God, sanctified by the Spirit, and sprinkled with the blood of Christ—that fear has been banished by Christ’s atonement for our sin on the cross. Instead, this is the fear of displeasing the God whom we love more than anyone and anything. The 17<sup>th</sup>-century Scottish preacher Robert Leighton put it this way. He said, “The fear here recommended is ... a holy self-suspicion and fear of offending God, which may not only consist with assured hope of salvation, and with faith, and love, and spiritual joy, but is their inseparable companion. ... The more a Christian believes, and loves, and rejoices in the love of God, the more unwilling surely he is to displease him, and if in danger of displeasing him, the more afraid of it” (163).

This is the fear of sinning against our Father, of incurring His just, fatherly displeasure, and experiencing His chastening. This is not a *servile* fear that keeps us in doubt of our salvation. This is a *filial* fear—the holy, reverent, awe-filled fear that a child has for his father—that desires to please God precisely because we are assured that we belong to Him as His children, because we love Him, and because we don’t want to dishonor Him. This kind of fear is the opposite of that kind of cowering terror that keeps us shaking in the corner. It’s a fear that obliterates all lower fears, and begets in us a rock-solid strength and courage to meet every trial or conflict that should come at the hands of a hostile world.

And in this passage, Peter gives the believer **three considerations** to meditate upon, to think over, to ruminate on—in order to feed this holy fear. If the pilgrim’s life in this hostile world is to be lived in the holy fear of God—a fear that will preserve us from compromise even in the midst of persecution—then these **three considerations** will help us cultivate that fear, so that when the trials do come, we will be prepared to suffer well.

## **I. The Prerogative of Your Father (v. 17)**

And that **first consideration**, we've seen a bit of already in verse 17. And that is, number one, **consider the prerogative of your Father**. Peter says, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth."

Peter begins with another great privilege we as believers enjoy. And that is: that we call upon God as our Father. The term "address" is *epikaleō*, literally "to call upon," and it speaks of the great honor that believers have to be able to pray to the King of the Universe. Of ourselves, we have no right to come into the presence of Almighty God. We have sinned against Him; we have broken His law; we have regarded His glory a light and trifling thing. We have preferred sin and unrighteousness more than His purity and holiness. We are rebels against this King. And not only do we deserve to be banished from His presence; we deserve the lot of traitors—a wretched end of punishment and damnation.

But that is not what we get! Why? Because of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ! Peter himself says in chapter 3 verse 18: "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, so that He might *bring us to God*." In Ephesians 2:18, Paul writes that through Christ we "have our *access* in one Spirit to the Father." We have access to the throne room of God! We have an audience with the King! We may *address* ourselves to Him—and go to Him with our cares and concerns and petitions and supplications—and He hears us.

And why does He hear us? Because we do not merely address the King, but we address the King as our Father. This righteous, sovereign God is not only kindly disposed to us as our King, but He is eager to receive us as our Father. We are not merely subjects of the King; we are children of our Father. It is one thing for a king to pardon a guilty criminal; but it is abundant grace for that king to then take that criminal into his own home, to provide for that criminal, to give him a seat at his dinner table, to give him the family name, to make him an heir of kingdom. That is what God has done for us through Christ. Romans chapter 8 verse 15 says, "You have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" We have been adopted into the family of God, such that our bond with Him gives us leave to cry out to Him in the most familiar of terms. And so Peter says, in chapter 1 verse 14, "As obedient children, be holy like your Father. Bear the family name well. If God is your Father, conduct yourselves in holiness in every aspect of your life."

But here in verse 17, he builds on that exhortation. And he says, notwithstanding the great privileges of being adopted sons and daughters as God—notwithstanding the great privilege of being able to call upon God as your Father—don't let familiarity breed contempt. **Consider the prerogative of your Father**—that the One you call out to is not only this accessible Father, but

is also an impartial Judge, who will not bend the rules of His holiness even for His beloved children. No, He judges impartially according to each man's work.

Now, it's true that, in the case of the believer, the final judgment against our sins has been rendered. Christ has borne our condemnation in His cross, and so we need not fear *eternal* punishment from God. But that does not mean that the Father winks at our sin. That does not mean that He cares nothing for the practical holiness which He calls us to walk in as obedient children. That does not mean that we cannot displease Him, or grieve Him, or invite His discipline and chastening by walking in unrighteousness. No, but what does Hebrews 12 say? "Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom he receives." Hebrews 12:7: "God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?"

And Peter is saying, "Your accessible Father is also an impartial judge of each one's work. He plays no favorites. He shows no partiality. He hates sin wherever He sees it. And if He sees it in His children, though His judicial wrath against it has been satisfied by the blood of Christ, He is nevertheless displeased by it. And precisely because He loves His children, He sends forth His hand of discipline to correct and chasten us. And friends, sometimes that hand of discipline stings, doesn't it? And so Peter is saying, conduct yourselves in fear of that discipline. Precisely because you don't want to displease your gracious Father, and precisely because you don't want to experience the unpleasantness of His fatherly discipline, order your lives in such a way that you won't displease Him and won't experience that discipline.

When the government attempts to usurp the headship of Christ over His church and tells Christians that we cannot gather in the name of Christ without adhering to certain guidelines, and that if we do we'll face fines and lawsuits, we can conduct ourselves in the fear of *Caesar*, or the fear of *money*, or the fear of *ease*, and we can compromise and avoid the consequences of persecution. Or, we can conduct ourselves in the fear of God, calling to mind that our Father judges each man's work impartially, and that Christ has commanded us to gather on the first day of the week to exalt His name, to exposit His Word, and to edify His people. Caesar says don't gather; Christ says gather. "Conducting ourselves in the fear of God" is, in that moment, to fear displeasing God more than we fear displeasing government, or the consequences that government can bring. You see, you can avoid persecution: all you have to do is compromise. But that compromise evidences a lack of faith in Christ. It evidences that you fear the consequences of man's wrath more than you fear the consequences of the Father's discipline.

So feed your fear, pilgrim! **Consider the prerogative of your Father.** Consider that He is not only Your accessible Father, but also your impartial Judge! Consider that pleasing Him is ten-thousand times more satisfying than pleasing man! Consider that displeasing Him is ten-thousand times more grievous than displeasing your persecutors. This way, when the time comes



that you have to choose between displeasing man and displeasing God, your fear of God will keep you from compromise.

## II. The Price of Your Redemption (vv. 18–19)

Well, that brings us to a **second consideration** that will bolster our fear of God and prepare us to stand firm in the midst of persecution and hostility. Number two: **consider the price of your redemption**. And we see that in verses 18 and 19. Peter writes, “Conduct yourselves in fear...; *knowing* that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”

First, notice that word *knowing* at the beginning of verse 18. “Conduct yourselves in fear, *knowing*.” That’s what grammarians call a “causal participle.” You could translate that: “Conduct yourselves in fear, *because you know*.” This means that if you’re going to obey this command to live in the holy fear of God, you need to know the truth! And you need to bring the truth to bear on your affections!

Well, what truth do we know that feeds this life of holy fear? It’s the truth that you were redeemed with the blood of Christ. That commentator we quoted earlier, Robert Leighton, wrote of this, “If you would increase much in holiness, and be strong against the temptations to sin, this is the only art of it; view much, and so seek to know much of the death of Jesus Christ” (180–81). “Knowing that you were redeemed.”

What does it mean to be redeemed? Well, the concept of redemption means to secure the release of a captive by the payment of a price. It means “to purchase someone’s freedom by paying a ransom” (Grudem, 88). The first extended instruction on the laws of redemption in Scripture come in Leviticus 25. When an Israelite had become so poor that he had to sell his property, or even sell himself into slavery, God’s law made provision for his family to redeem his property, or to redeem the man himself, out of slavery by the payment of a price.

By far, the most famous example of redemption in the Old Testament is the Lord’s deliverance of His people Israel out of their bondage of slavery in Egypt. Exodus 2:23 says that Israel sighed under the bondage of their masters, and that God heard their groaning, remembered His covenant with Abraham, and in Exodus 6:6 said, “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will *redeem* you.” And so redemption refers to the deliverance of slaves from bondage.

Well, in the same way, Scripture testifies that all mankind is born into the bondage of slavery—that we are so beholden to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life,

that we are properly said to be enslaved to our sin. Jesus says, in John 8:34, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” That is everyone. This is how God Himself speaks about who you are by nature: you are enslaved of sin. Your mind, your desires, your will—every aspect of your being is held captive by sin. And Scripture says that Christ has come to redeem His people from the bondage of their slavery. Galatians 4:4: “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might *redeem* those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” Christ has come to purchase us out of the slave-market of sin by the payment of the ransom price of His own life. to “give His life a *ransom* for many,” Mark 10:45.

And look at what Peter says we were redeemed from. Verse 18: “from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers.” This is how Peter describes a believer’s life before he comes to faith in Christ: it is futile, worthless, useless, vanity, empty, entirely meaningless. This is God’s estimation of your life outside of Christ and enslaved to sin!

It’s been documented that the prisoners of Nazi concentration camps would be forced to spend 14 hours a day lifting large, heavy rocks up from the ground and into a wheelbarrow, and loading up that wheelbarrow with as many rocks as it could hold, and then pushing that wheelbarrow to the other end of the yard and depositing the rocks there. All day long. Back and forth, back and forth. Backbreaking labor. And when the prisoners had finally moved all the rocks to that other end of the yard, their taskmasters would tell them, “Ok, now bring them all back again.” That is an illustration of a life of utter futility! And Peter says, “That is what life outside of Christ is!” It is absolutely fruitless. All of your exploits—all of your ambitions for fame, and money, and power; even all of your designs for the betterment of society and the promotion of human flourishing—apart from Christ, are nothing more than hoisting 50-pound boulders into a wheelbarrow from one end of the yard to the other. And back again. And back again.”

You say, “But this was my way of life! This is the way my family spent *their* lives! This is our *culture*! These are our values and traditions!” Doesn’t matter! Look at how Peter puts it: “your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers.” Peter’s audience belonged to a society in which deviation from ancestral traditions was tantamount to treason. They believed that such traditions were the foundation of a healthy and stable society. And he tells them, “That was all meaningless apart from Jesus.” “Peter! You can’t just say that about people’s culture!” “I just said it. Doesn’t matter who it is, or what culture it is. Outside of Christ, your way of life is futile!” Leighton writes, “The whole course of a man’s life out of Christ, is nothing but a continual trading in vanity, running a circle of toil and labour, and reaping no profit at all” (176).

And the point that Peter’s making is: Christ has redeemed you from that life, Christian! You were in bondage to sin, enslaved to a life of fruitlessness and vanity! And Christ the Son of God *broke* through the shackles of your slavery, and redeemed you from the bondage of sin and

death! So in the face of persecution, which tempts you to renounce Christianity—or at least, tempts you to stop living so consistently with your Christianity, to look more like your old self than the new man or woman you’ve been recreated in Christ to be—don’t buy it! Don’t retreat back to your old way of life! That life is meaningless, fruitless, empty! Christ has redeemed you from that life! Don’t throw away the liberty Christ purchased for you in the face of persecution! That would only be to return to your slavery!

And then Peter zeroes in on the cost of that redemption. We said that redemption is the purchase of a slave’s freedom by the payment of a ransom. Well, what was the ransom price? Verse 18: “Not with perishable things like silver or gold,” but, verse 19, “with *precious blood*, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of *Christ*.” Your ransom, Christian, wasn’t what the slave’s ransom was in Leviticus 25. It wasn’t silver or gold. Though those things may seem valuable to the world—indeed, though there is nothing more valuable to the world than silver or gold—silver and gold are perishable. They are corruptible. They will wear out. They’re just temporary. The most esteemed, highly-valued commodities among the world mean nothing in the spiritual sphere. Those things could not purchase your redemption. Yours was a slavery so unbreakable that the most precious metals and stones on earth could not suffice to release you. Psalm 49:7–8 says, “No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him—for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever.” You want to earn your redemption? You want to pay for your own sins? Give it up, forever! It will never be done!

But oh, the God-man, our elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ—*He* can give to God a ransom for the redemption of *His* brethren! Yes, the redemption of a soul is so costly that every man everywhere should despair of ever paying for his brother’s sins, let alone his own! But, oh, our Christ—our Kinsman-Redeemer—does not bring perishable things for the ransom price! He brings His own precious blood! Blood worth more than silver, more than gold, more than rubies, more than diamonds—for He brings the blood of a sinless substitute. Peter is picking upon the language of the Old Testament sacrifices which required the sacrificial lamb to be unblemished and without defect. And he says Christ was that perfectly suitable, unblemished, spotless Lamb of God. Only one who was without sin could redeem those liable to the penalty of sin. And only Jesus was just such a Lamb.

And more than the blood of a spotless Lamb, Jesus’ blood, Acts 20:28 says, was the blood of *God*. Paul tells the Ephesian elders “to shepherd the church of God, which He”—that is, God—“purchased with His own blood”! Dear people, God has no blood; God is spirit. But *Jesus* has blood, and Jesus is God, which means He is not only sinless man, but infinitely righteous God—possessed of the infinite merit and worth that God’s law requires of those who would be ransomed back into fellowship with Him! Christ’s blood, friends, is the blood of the God-man, which means His blood is precious. His blood avails perfectly for those for whom it is shed. And so Hebrews 9:11–12 says, “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to

come, He entered ... not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” This blood was so precious that it purchased eternal redemption for a multitude of sinners. And nobody else on the planet could bring a price to redeem *one* man! And the God-man redeems an innumerable multitude!

This was the price of your redemption, Christian! The blood of Christ! The blood of God the Son Himself! The blood of the One who never deserved to have *blood*, let alone to have His blood be shed! And Peter’s point is: if this was the cost of your redemption, can you treat this blood as such a contemptible thing, that you give no thought to living the very life of sin that this blood was shed to redeem you from? That is what you do when you sin, friend. Titus 2:14 says that Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. The purpose of redemption wasn’t only to free us from sin’s *penalty*; it was also to free us from sin’s power. And when you give yourself to the very lawless deeds that the blood of Christ was shed to free you from, you conduct yourself in a way that indicates that you do not believe that blood was precious. And everything in you ought to recoil from that! Every fiber of your soul should shrink from that thought in horror! In fear! And that’s Peter’s point. Conduct yourselves in fear, because you *know* how precious was the price of your redemption. Fear living your lives as if the ransom price of Christ’s blood was not precious.

Let me read you one more quote from Leighton, because I simply can’t resist. He writes, “Consider often at how high a rate we were redeemed from sin, and provide this answer for all the enticements of sin and the world: ‘Except you can offer my soul something beyond that price that was given for it on the cross, I cannot hearken to you’” (180–81). What an excellent thought! Dear brethren, can sin offer you something worth more than the blood that was shed for your redemption from sin? As you do battle with temptation, and your flesh presents to you the allure of sin, ask yourself, “What is my estimate of the blood of Christ? Is it worth more than the false-glory of what sin promises me? Or do I consider the blood of God to be a light, trifling thing?” Oh, what a strong weapon the believer’s estimation of the preciousness of the blood of Christ is against sin and temptation!

### **III. The Glory of Your Savior (vv. 20–21)**

Well, there’s a **third consideration** that will strengthen and support your holy fear of God during the time of your stay on earth. Not only the prerogative of your Father; not only the price of your redemption. But number three: consider **the glory of your Savior**. Look at verses 20 and 21. Peter mentions the name of Christ at the end of verse 19, and then just bursts out in praise: “For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these 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.”

This glorious redemption purchased by the precious blood of Christ—this was no afterthought. This was no accident. This was the gracious plan of God determined before the world began—that Christ would appear on the earth as the incarnate God-man, that He would live a perfect life in obedience to the law of God, that He would die to shed His precious blood to ransom His people from sin, and then would be raised from the dead and be seated in glory at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and thus become the sole source of faith and hope in the one true and living God to everyone who believes. This is eternity’s plan!

And friend, if you are here tonight outside of Christ, a stranger to the grace of Christ, still wallowing in the stench of your sin, bearing the burden of the penalty that you must pay, I would entreat you: here is a Christ, foreknown before the foundation of the world, appeared on earth to pay for sin, raised from the dead, and now presents Himself to you with open arms. Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls, who labor under the weary yoke of sin. Repent of sin. Confess your guilt. Put all your hope and your trust in this Savior to save you, and you will stand before God your Father in the righteousness of Christ.

And there are at least four aspects of **the glory of your Savior** that Peter celebrates in those two verses: (a) His predetermination: “He was foreknown before the foundation of the world;” (b) His incarnation: “But has appeared in these last times for your sake;” (c) His exaltation: God “has raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory;” and (d) His exclusivity: “through *Him* you are believers in God.”

And frankly, those four points could be a sermon series in themselves, and so we don’t have time tonight to give them the exposition they deserve. But perhaps I could zero in on just one of them before our time is gone. And that is that third one: His exaltation. God “has raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory.” Why does Peter call attention to this? Because it reminds the believers—it reminds us—that we trust in and follow a Christ who is not unacquainted with suffering. We do not have a never-suffering Savior! We have a Savior that was hated. We have a Savior that was spit on. We have a Savior that was mocked, and beaten, and killed in the most shameful way possible.

But that very same Savior was *raised* from the dead! He was highly exalted and given the name which is above every name. He was seated at the Father’s right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. Our Savior come *into* the world, but He was *from* and made *for* another world! He came into *this* world as a pilgrim, as a stranger, as an

exile in a foreign land, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. And His sufferings were infinitely greater than anything we could imagine experiencing ourselves. But He did not waver in faithfulness to His Father! He did not compromise. He conducted Himself in fear during the time of His stay on earth, because He knew it was only a temporary stay. He knew that *this* life was for giving away, not for treasuring and hoarding. He knew the *next* life was for rest and reward. And as a result of His faithful obedience, He was raised from the dead and exalted to heaven. “We’ll put you in jail! We’ll take away your things! We will kill you!” “You mean like you killed Him, who rose from the grave three days later?”

Dear brothers and sisters, that is not only our Savior; that’s our Forerunner! He has blazed the trail that He now calls us to walk, as suffering pilgrims on a journey to Heaven. And if we can fix our gaze on Gethsemane, and on Golgotha, and think of the depths of the dishonor He suffered in His life, and then, if we can raise our eyes to Heaven, and think of the heights of the glory He enjoys now, we will be able to deny ourselves, to take up our cross daily and die to self, and follow after Him! If we can, like Stephen, gaze intently into heaven, and, by the spiritual sight of faith see the glory of God, and see Jesus standing at the right hand of God, then even in our greatest of trials—even in a shower of stones like Stephen endured—we can be comforted that Christ, our Head, has been exalted to glory, and that we His body shall join Him before long. “Ours the cross,” yes. “Ours the grave,” yes. But “ours the skies,” as well, as the resurrection hymn says.

Do you see? The very worst that they can do is kill you! But you serve a Savior, who looked at Martha, weeping for her brother’s death, and said, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.” And then, by the power of His own voice, He raised Lazarus to life. And a time is coming, and now is, when all who hear the voice of the Son of God will come out of the tombs, and will be raised unto a resurrection, either of life or of judgment.

When your heart grabs a hold of this precious truth that no matter how miserable your persecutors attempt to make your life on this earth, that you will live *again*—that on the last day the One who raised Jesus from the dead will raise your decaying body to life again, will glorify it, and will reunite it with your soul to live again in the integrity of body and soul on the New Earth—when your heart grabs a hold of that: you become invincible! You live above the fear of death! You live above the fear of man! You live above the fear of what man can take from you in this life! And you conduct yourselves in the holy fear of God.

The hurricane is coming. *That’s* the storm shelter. Be faithful, dear friends. Consider the prerogative of your Father, that He judges impartially according to each man’s work. Consider the price of your redemption, the precious blood of Christ. Consider the glory of your Savior, predetermined, incarnate, exalted, and the exclusive source of faith and hope in God. Stand firm.