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Your Father: Judge of the Universe Part 2

David wrote:

Psalm 62:12b, "...Thou dost recompense a man according to his work."

Solomon said:

Ecclesiastes 12:14, "...God will bring every act to judgment... whether it is good or evil."

God told Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 17:10, "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds."

Christ taught the multitudes:

Matthew 12:36, "And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment." (cf. also Matthew 16:27)

Paul exhorted the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 4:5, "Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God."

We must ever understand that...

2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (cf. also Romans 14:10)

It was with this knowledge that Peter transitioned into the reality of the Last Judgment when it comes to believers. We have seen:

- God has appointed a day in which every individual that has ever lived will stand before His Judgment Seat, Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 10:42,
- At this time, all will give an accounting for what they did in the flesh with regard to their thoughts, words, and deeds, 1 Peter 4:4-5; Romans 14:10; Matthew 12:36-37; Proverbs 24:12, and
- This will include the child of God, 2 Corinthians 5:10; Galatians 6:7-9!

It is the latter reality that trips us up! If we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, then how is it that we will be judged according to our works?

Salvation is by faith alone; it is NOT by a faith that is alone. What we do is the greatest indicator of our faith. Accordingly, the Final Judgment will be based on our works NOT because our works are the ground of salvation, BUT because our works are its evidence!

The natural response as saved individuals is to focus on our works- which results in one of two errors:

- Either we gaze upon our lives, see our multiple sins, and fall into despair, questioning

our salvation.

- Or we resort to Sola Bootstrapia where once again we live as if our works become the basis of our acceptance before Christ.

Both extremes are unnecessary. The vast majority of Christians who will be judged in the Last Judgment at this moment are in Christ's presence worshipping and enjoying Him! From this we concluded that the Last Judgment CANNOT be about us! For believers it most certainly is NOT the time when God determines who will be in glory! And if it is NOT about us, then what it is about? As we saw last time, it ultimately is about God and His glory manifested through every one of us! Listen to the point of your salvation:

Ephesians 1:4b-6, "In love [God] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

This is so important! The Lord saved us NOT to make us happy, BUT to bring honor and glory to Himself! That is what Christianity is all about!

Accordingly, when it comes to the Last Judgment, we conclude that God wants His children to be judged on the same basis as the children of darkness NOT to demonstrate the moral superiority of the believer (as that would be a joke), BUT to demonstrate His/God's transforming grace! Recall Paul's words in 1 Timothy:

1 Timothy 1:15-17, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of* all. [Don't Miss It: when Paul compared himself NOT to his fellow Christians, BUT to all mankind, he considered himself to be the greatest sinner. In other words, he knew he wasn't morally superior to the non-believer! As that is the case, then what possibly could be gained at the Last Judgment when it came to God's evaluation of Paul? Look at v. 16...] And yet for this reason I found mercy, IN ORDER THAT in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. [And the result?] Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

One must see that this is—

- What our forgiveness is all about!
- The focus and end of all of God's providences in our lives.
- The ultimate objective when it comes to the Last Judgment.

God receiving the glory for His transforming grace in the lives of sinners. And so truly, on the Day of Judgment, the difference between God's people and Satan's will NOT be our morality, BUT our faith/dependence upon Christ!

Galatians 1 is an example of what will occur when you stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Galatians 1:22-24, “And I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, ‘He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.’ [In other words, they heard about how Christ transformed this wretched man into a servant of God!] And they were glorifying God because of me.”

This is what the Last Judgment is all about! And with this Peter transitions into The Response we ought to give in light of this glorious day — which brings us to our expected response to God’s role as judge of the universe.

1 Peter 1:17, “And if [or really ‘since’] you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves [or ‘in every facet of your living comport yourselves’] in fear during the time of your stay¹ *upon earth*.” - the exhortation here revolves around the disposition of “fear.”

Now in the Bible, there are many words translated as “fear.” For example:

- In 2 Timothy 1:7 we read of δειλία (*deilia*) which speaks of “the fear of cowardice.” Truly “God has not given us a spirit of cowardice.”
- In Mark 9:6 we read of ἔκφοβος (*ekphobos*) which speaks of “the emotion of terror”.
- In Acts 7:32 we read of ἔντρομος (*entromos*) which speaks of an intense fear leading to a literal “trembling.”
- In Lk. 3:14 we read of διασειω (*diaseiō*) which means “to shake violently,” “to intimidate,” or “to extort by violence or blackmail.”

None of these are the word used in our text; that word is φόβος (*phobos*)- where we get the word, “Phobia.” This is the most general as well as the most commonly used term translated as “fear” in the Bible. It can denote “terror” as in 1 Corinthians 2:3 where Paul spoke of his emotional state when he first came to Corinth to preach. However, when used of God’s people and their relationship with the Lord, it speaks NOT of terror but a godly sense of reverence. Solomon wrote of this fear:

Proverbs 28:14, “How blessed is the man who fears always...”

Solomon knew of the glories and the blessings that accompany a life lived with a holy fear of God! R. Leighton wrote of this word:

The fear here recommended is... not cowardice: it doth not debase, but elevates the mind; for it drowns all lower fears, and begets true fortitude and courage to encounter all dangers, for the sake of a good conscience and the obeying of God.” (Leighton, 1684, pp. 152-155)

And so we read of “fear” in the early church:

Acts 2:43, “And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.”

On account of the clash between God’s Kingdom and the Kingdom of Satan, we read this:

Acts 19:11, 17b, “And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul... and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.”

Paul exhorted the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 7:1, “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

That no doubt is why later Paul exhorted the Philippians this way:

Philippians 2:12b, “...work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”

This is a right and proper response when a finite being considers the God who both saved them and set them apart for His purpose and glory! In this regard, godly fear speaks of the combined response of reverence, sobriety, and love which, according to our verse this morning, ought to characterize the child of God “...during the time of their stay *upon earth*”- the idea here being “during the time of our exile”!²

What a strange exhortation! These exiles already were living in fear... fear of persecution, Rome, torture, and death! Accordingly, for Peter to exhort them to “live in fear” seems rather odd on the surface until we remember the words of Leighton above, “[godly fear] drowns all lower fears, and begets true fortitude and courage to encounter all dangers”! That is the point here!

Now the question is this: Why ought our lives to be characterized by this reverential awe?

That brings us to the basis of Peter’s exhortation which revolves around the wonderful things God has done for us in Christ. Yet as we proceed, we must NOT separate this command from the rest of v. 17 which gives two implicit reasons why we ought to conduct our lives with reverential fear. In this regard, notice the first implicit reason for living with reverential love for God: Because Christ is THE Judge of the Universe, we rightly and properly live with a sense of sobriety knowing that (1) all that we do today is done in His presence and that (2) someday we are going to stand before His throne and give an account for every thought, motive, word, or deed that we have done. Spurgeon wrote of this:

Ever remember that, as there is a God who is to judge every man, you are to be judged.
(Spurgeon, 2014, p. 1 Peter 1:17)

In this regard I remind you that the emotional response called for here is NOT that of terror of foreboding, BUT reverential love which results in a life of sobriety! But then secondly, we ought to live with reverential awe because of what is on the line at every moment in our lives: God's honor!

Like Paul, we understand that we are chosen vessels through whom God has willed to demonstrate to Satan, his demons, and the world "...His perfect patience..."- both now and in the future (1 Timothy 1:16)! Accordingly, our greatest longing is for all mankind to "glorify God because of us"! As such, we have an eternal perspective in all that we do — wanting the world to see that though as Christians we are NOT immune to sin (we in fact sin rather boldly at times), nevertheless our hope, confidence, and joy is the Lord! In this regard, living with a sense of reverential love which results in sobriety is quite appropriate!

Yet there is more. In vv. 18-20 Peter gives two explicit reasons why reverential love ought to characterize our living. Notice the first one is on account of the cost of our salvation.

1 Peter 1:18-19, "Knowing that you were not redeemed³ 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.*"

This is a powerful verse! It revolves around a comparison between that which is viewed as most precious in this world and that which Christ paid in order to redeem that which is most worthless against eternity. First, consider that which is viewed as most valuable in this life:

1 Peter 1:18, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold..."

I am not going to spend much time on this. Suffice it to say that regardless of what we as sinners might say or think, our actions betray us. Based on how we live and the things we are willing to do in order to achieve wealth, clearly the attaining of "silver and gold" is the most important thing in this life — hands down! That is why worldlings will say such things as these:

- *No one on their death bed regrets not spending more time in the office.*
- *You can't take it with you.*

Such things are said because most everyone lives as if they can. This is what the worldling and many of us are all about — the acquisition of silver and gold! And yet, from the perspective of the Kingdom of God, these things are incredibly worthless.

1 Peter 1:18, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold..."

This in part is what makes "silver and gold" such a stupid objective... they are "perishable" and so losable as well as corruptible! In fact, according to Money⁴ magazine, the wealth of 70%

of rich families today will NOT pass to the next generation? And the wealth of 90% of rich families today will be gone by the third generation? Amazing! Yet this ought NOT to be a surprise to any who know the word of God. Solomon put it this way:

Proverbs 23:4-5, “Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies *toward* the heavens.”

This is no doubt why Christ exhorted us this way:

Matthew 6:19, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.”

In this regard as you think of the cost of your salvation, know that it was NOT purchased with that which is deemed to be most valuable in this life (silver and gold) — for it is NOT costly enough as it is perishable. The cost of an eternal life must itself be eternal! But secondly, consider the value of the life from which God delivered us.

1 Peter 1:18, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers⁵.”

The word for “futile” is μάταιος (*mataios*) which is significant. It speaks of a worthlessness on account of something’s ill-effect which sums up the non-Christian life! Paul described it in Titus:

Titus 3:3, “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.”⁶

The life lived in sin truly is worthless. While the individual has value because he/she is made in the image of God, nevertheless the life lived NOT for God BUT for self is worse than dung (refuse at least can be used as fertilizer)! There is nothing good about a life lived for self! Yet, it was from this life Christ redeemed us.

1 Peter 1:18, “...you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life...”

Years ago, I brought out the trash and when I opened up the lid of one of the trash cans, I was greeted with the most disgusting sights and smells that I have ever witnessed. A large animal had died, and we placed its body in the trash on top of a bag earlier in the week. Four days later, during the heat of summer, I removed the lid and beheld something I’ll never forget, the carcass of the animal was so laden with maggots that they were pouring out of the animal. Evidently the body had burst, and its mushy insides were on the outside. And did I mention the stench? It was indescribable! In fact, after running away from the can, the smell lingered in my lungs for a long time. I could still taste it an hour later!

That, brothers and sisters, is the futile life we all inherit from Adam! Now get this: it was when we were in that condition that God set His love upon us! That is what Peter is talking about here. When God paid the purchase price for our salvation, we were in no way lovable or redeemable. Our lives, on account of our sin, were worthless/futile and so morally disgusting — which brings us to Peter’s third point: What Christ gave to purchase us out of the futility of life.⁷ Christ did not utilize the wealth of this world.

1 Peter 1:19, “[We were redeemed] with precious blood [it is of highest value], as of a lamb unblemished [ceremonially pure or clean] and spotless [morally pure], *the blood* of Christ.”

This reminds me of the Hebrew writer’s words:

Hebrews 9:11-12a, “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood...”

This is so shocking! And so, our redemption involves the most extreme elements. On the one hand there is our worthless life on account of sin which no one in his right mind would seek to attain even with such perishable things as silver and gold (how much gold would you give me for a maggot infested animal?). On the other hand, there is Christ who, for some reason, valued that which is un-valuable in this world and the next. And then while He could have gathered all the silver and gold of the universe- a ball that no doubt would be bigger than our galaxy- yet that wasn’t costly enough, for “the wages of any sin is death!” And so, Christ poured out His precious and spotless life because He valued you!⁸

So why ought we to live our lives with a sense of reverence, love, and sobriety? Because we are the blood-bought children of God!

Romans 5:7-8, “For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

In light of this, how can we NOT live our lives with a great sense of awe, love, and sobriety?!⁹ For we are mindful that all that we will do, experience, and enjoy this day was paid for by Christ!

Yet there is more! Notice the second explicit reason we ought to “conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *upon earth*...” is because of the sacrifice born for our salvation.

1 Peter 1:20, “For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.”

This is even more shocking than Peter's point in v. 19. Consider the language that "He was foreknown before the foundation of the world." To be "foreknown" is to be fore-loved, for that is the nuance of the word, προγιώσκω (*proginōskō*). It means to know beforehand. Yet as you know, the word used here for "know" (γινώσκω [*ginōskō*]) is the word used in the Bible to denote a deep, abiding love-relationship.

Genesis 4:1, "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain."

In this regard, when was Jesus "foreknown"/fore-loved? "Before the foundation of the world!" This indicates that before the world began, God the Father and God the Son enjoyed a love relationship that had existed for eternity! Now with this relationship in mind, what did Christ do? "[He] appeared in these last times for the sake of you." One must understand that this is NOT simply talking about the fact of Christ's incarnation. "He appeared" is referencing His entire life which began in a manger and ended on a Roman cross!

Because this is the case, understand that the sacrifice born by the Lord for our salvation! On the one hand God the Father and His Son enjoyed a love relationship from eternity. On the other hand, there was the crown of His creation — you and me — yet now "worthless" on account of our sin. And what did God the Father do? He made a choice! With Christ and you before Him, God forfeited the eternal love-relationship He had with His Son to save you!

Oh Christian! What ought to characterize our lives today? Struggles with doubt over God's love for us? Indulging in the passing pleasures of a sin which cost Jesus His life? Or a sense of reverence and awe on account of the One who loved and loves us so?!

As Peter thought of His persecuted brethren facing public ridicule, torture, deprivation, and martyrdom, he knew the pressure that would weigh upon them to compromise- in the words of Heb. 10:38, "to shrink back" in their faith! Accordingly, he brought before his brethren a heavier motive than worldly praise or temporal comfort — specifically the glorious implications of Christ's role as THE Judge of the Universe. To live mindful of this, our Lord is to live out our days with awe, love, and sobriety- otherwise known as "fear." May God give us the grace so to do!!

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End Note(s)

¹ “The term ‘sojourning’ is used in the OT to indicate those who do not have the rights of citizenship but are temporary foreign residents of an area (Leviticus 25:23; 1 Chronicles 29:15; Psalms 33:5; 38:13; 118:19).” (Davids, 1990, p. 71)

² This is why flippancy ought never to be named amongst God’s people. In fact, one of the chief characteristics of a godly man is that of sobriety (1 Timothy 3:2)!

³ The word here is λυτρόω (lutrōō) which speaks of the freeing of a slave through the payment of a price- as in the Exodus and the Passover Lamb.

⁴ cf. <http://money.com/money/3925308/rich-families-lose-wealth/>.

⁵ John MacArthur wrote, “Traditional religion, whether it is apostate Judaism or paganism in its multitude of forms, is a feature of sin’s bondage (cf. Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:3, 6; Mark 7:8–9, 13; Galatians 1:14; Col. 2:8) from which people need redemption.” (MacArthur, 2004, p. 75)

⁶ cf. also cf. Jeremiah 2:22; Romans 1:18-32; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5-7!

⁷ The Puritan Thomas Watson wrote, “Great was the work of creation, but greater the work of redemption; it cost more to redeem us than to make us; in the one there was but the speaking of a Word, in the other the shedding of blood. Luke 1:51. The creation was but the work of God’s fingers. Psalm 8:3. Redemption is the work of His arm.” (Watson, 2012, p. 146)

⁸ Peter Davids wrote, “The readers’ ‘Egypt’ may have been cultural, not physical, but the price paid to redeem them was far more than money, more even than the first Passover, for it was Christ’s own blood.” (Davids, 1990, p. 73)

⁹ Yet we grow cold to this sacrifice- to this glorious work of God! C. H Spurgeon put it like this, “I have often felt, when I have been rambling in the Alps, that nature was too small to set forth God. The mirror is not large enough to reflect the face of the Eternal. You stand in the Alps and hear the avalanche like claps and peals of thunder resounding in the air. You gaze afar off and there it is, and it looks to you like the falling of a few grains of snow. It is so inconsiderable that the grandeur seems to be destroyed. Though every one of those granules may be a block of ice weighing a hundred tons, at such a distance the thing grows small.” (Spurgeon, 2014, p. 1 Peter 1:17) This no doubt is why Peter here brought it before his persecuted brethren! Christian don’t ever grow bored of Christ’s sacrifice! Let us ever and always live with reverential fear on account of it!