

When Fear Is Healthy for Faith

1 Peter 1:17-21

Verse 17 exhorts us to cultivate a sober-minded fear about our potential for spiritual complacency or compromise.

The passage, verses 17-21 present three reasons why this fear is necessary and healthy.

1. Because God, the one we call on as 'Father', is an impartial Judge who evaluates each Christian's work, verse 17

God is not a sentimental passive father who lets his children run wild in bad behavior.

He is the divine Father who "judges impartially based on each one's work."

God will not allow us to misrepresent Him and devalue his Glory.

2. Because we have received a costly deliverance from sin's control over our lives, verses 18-19.

A. Redemption is from an "empty way of life" (verse 18).

From emptiness of unsaved Jews (Philippians 3:4-9).

From the treatment given to Jesus by the Jewish religious elites, we know there was much religious corruption in Judaism in the first century.

From emptiness of unsaved Gentiles (Ephesians 4:17-19).

B. This "empty way of life" is caused by depravity inside us and deception all around us.

The depravity inside us: the old heart (Jeremiah 17: 9)

How the old heart works (Romans 1:21-31)

The deception all around us: the Devil and the World

There is no restraining influence on the dominion of depravity in the hearts of unsaved people.

But God's redemption has made possible escape from the destructive influences of sin in the midst of a deceptive world.

C. God's redemptive plan was costly for Him, and a priceless gift for us.

Our liberation to live a God-centered life is a remarkable privilege experienced only to people who know Jesus as Savior.

We must therefore cultivate sober-minded fear of our capability to compromise or waste this privilege.

3. Because God is always faithful, but we suffer doubts, verses 20-21.

Redemption was a plan conceived by God in eternity, promised through the ancient prophets, and now carried out in history through the resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ.

The mighty plan and preparations of God for our redemption have been fulfilled.

We who see this should be restrained from surrendering to any doubts about God's faithfulness.

Because our faith is a revealed faith, most people find it hard to accept and may reject your witness.

This is more reason to cultivate a sober-minded fear about life in this world.

This kind of fear is not a sign of failing faith. It is a wise sense of realism. It is not fear of other people, it is a serious regard for our own potential to cave in our trust in God.

Conclusion:

When properly submitted to, the redemptive plan of God revealed in Scripture, has brought love, and peace, and joy, and eternal hope to individuals, families, communities, tribes, and nations all over the world.

If we are to enjoy this love and peace, we must live our lives in sober-minded fear of how vulnerable we are to spoiling much blessing.