

A Wonderful Fear

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Bible Verse: 1 Peter 1:17-19
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I invite you to turn to the book of 1 Peter 1. There is a text and a theme that I want to develop for a couple of weeks. As we go through it, we will find our hearts well-prepared for the Lord's Table when we take it two weeks from today.

1 Peter 1, beginning in verse 17.

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; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

This passage gives us a perspective on the nature of God and the nature of salvation and it gives us a sense of contrast between our former manner of life and our present manner of life in Christ in a way that utterly informs everything about the way that we would view life and view the world in which we live. This is very framing for the way that we think about the very nature of life itself and so it's an important text and I'm glad for the opportunity to be able to share it with you here this morning.

As we start to enter into it, I want to call your attention to verse 17 to understand that the central command in this text around which everything else is built is found in verse 17 when it says, "conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth." There is a conditional statement there at the start, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges," but that's leading into the command, "conduct yourselves in fear," and you conduct yourselves in fear based on some things that you know found in verse 18, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life." And so considering who it is that you address as Father, who your God is, you conduct yourselves with fear during the time of your stay on earth, and as you conduct yourselves in fear, you know and you remember and you call to mind something very significant, that your redemption, that your salvation was purchased with precious blood, the very blood of Christ.

So Peter is addressing in this text how we are to behave, how we are to live, how we are to think and what the spiritual focus of our life is to be. He's giving us in a short compressed text a comprehensive view on how to live and how to have the perspective that helps you live in the way that would be pleasing to the God of your salvation. And when you remember the context in which Peter wrote, you can see how cutting edge it is, how relevant it is even in the most severe kind of adversity. Peter was writing to encourage first century Christians who were living in the area of modern-day Turkey, if you can picture that football-shaped area of land to the east of Europe. Modern-day Turkey is where these people were living at the time and they were suffering in many different ways. They were living in the midst of hostility and government endorsed opposition to their lives.

Look at 1 Peter 1:6 and I just want to show you three verses to give you the sense of the theme of suffering that informs the broader context of this exhortation that Peter gives to us. 1 Peter 1:6, he says, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." He assumes that there are trials going on. He assumes that they are distressing and yet there's almost a sense in which he treats them as a tangential matter compared to the greater realities of salvation in Christ, and that these tangential sufferings that are real and difficult still are subordinate to the greater theme of living in Christ.

Look over at chapter 3, verse 14, where he says, "But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled." Do you see again in this text the almost tangential way that suffering is considered? It's recognized, it's acknowledged but it is subordinate to something greater, that this suffering and these difficulties are not something that we are to cave into, so to speak, they're not something that utterly overwhelm and crush us, rather there is something about the nature of salvation that we consider, that we think about that allows us to live above it. And those of you whose minds are enmeshed day by day in cable news and all of those things, you especially need to hear this because all of those things, all of the media, all of the politics, all of the spiritual problems in the church today, all of it if we simply focused on that would certainly overwhelm us and drown us in the sorrows of what we are seeing. We need something to help us live above that. We need something that gives us a sense of perspective that transcends those things so that while they are real and while the suffering that they engender have very real life consequences for us, we understand that life in Christ is not defined by that, rather that suffering is defined by something different for the believer and it is so essential for each one of you to have these things in mind that we're going to see today in order that we would have a right perspective on the difficulties that are inevitable in this life.

In chapter 4, verse 14, once again you see suffering acknowledged, you find the difficulty and persecution acknowledged, but a different mindset informs what perspective that you ultimately have on it. Chapter 4, verse 14, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." You may be reviled, you may be on the receiving end of hostility from the world in which you live but understand that you are blessed in the midst of it, that there is a spirit

of glory and the spirit of God that rests upon you as you go through it. I don't know about you, but in the times that often come in my own life and getting overwhelmed by circumstances, getting overwhelmed by difficulties and wondering how all of this is going to work out, I need a perspective like this to help me live above it, to see it from God's perspective so that I would be able to persevere, and I rather suspect that each one of you are in one way or another in the same boat with me on that. So we find something that can redefine life for us.

Now near the time that Peter wrote this letter, Rome had burned in the year AD 64 and Nero, the Emperor at the time, falsely accused Christians of setting the fire, and so he used the Christians as a foil to deflect away from the failures of his own administration. Many people think Nero himself actually set the fire himself, but he needed a scapegoat to redirect the hostility away from himself and his administration's failures so that politically he could survive and he chose the Christians as his foil, you might say. So he had made these false accusations against the church, he treated them in utterly demonic and despicable ways, he burned them alive, he would crucify them and encase them in wax to light his garden at night, other Christians he sewed alive into the skins of wild beasts and then turned wild dogs upon them to terrify them and to terrify those who were watching, to intimidate them and to steer them away from their proclamation of Christ hoping to intimidate them out of their commitment to Christ. And whether Peter wrote in response to those horrific events or whether he wrote just prior to them, what we know is that his readers were suffering in a very significant way, and he does something for them. The Spirit of God working through Peter as he wrote this letter, gives a gift to the church of all time, the Spirit of God gives us a mindset to walk through this hostile world in a way that let's us live in triumph over it.

And we need this mindset and so let's consider it here. Look again at verse 17, 1 Peter 1:17. He says, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work." Without going into a long lengthy explanation that you could do to justify what I'm about to say, in other words, he's simply saying, "If you are a Christian, if you have been born again so that you know the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as your own Father in heaven, if you know that to be true, if these spiritual realities belong to you, then I have something to say to you," Peter says. He says, "Conduct yourselves in fear," fear indicating that you should have a sober-minded respect for the God of your salvation.

We're going to go through the text here but I just want to give you a little bit of an overview to orient your mind as to where we are going today. This fear is in response to the fact that God is a transcendent God and he is a transcendent God to whom each one of us will give an account one day. One day we will stand before him and we will give an account of our lives to this holy God, and in light of that there is a corresponding fear and respect and reverence and sobriety of mind that takes place that when we realize that we have an appointment with God that is coming. That is our destiny. Each one of us whatever paths we are following, it's all coming to that ultimate conclusion where we will stand before a holy God and give an account. Now I don't know about you but that tells me that there is a certain element of seriousness to life, there is a seriousness to the

pursuit of holiness, there is a seriousness to the toleration of sin because ultimately there's going to be an account that we give to a holy God in these things.

Now along with that looking there again in verse 17, he says, "conduct yourselves in fear" because of who God is, and then he goes on and he gives a chronological perspective to it when he says, "during the time of your stay on earth." In other words, during the window of time in which you live on this earth, conduct yourselves in this way, and the very phrase of that gives us a sense that what we are walking through is temporary. It is not permanent, that our lives have a definite beginning... just as, let's put it this way, just as our lives had a definite beginning point at our births, there will be a definite end point for our earthly lives at our time of death if the Lord tarries, and therefore whatever else happens whether you live 95 years or live 9 ½ years, this window of time is temporary. This is not all that there is. There is more to life than that and because life is temporary, we understand something that informs our whole perspective about it all. We are pilgrims passing through. We are those walking on a journey to another destination and whatever is happening around as we go on our trip, this trip is not the ultimate destination of it all. It is not the final word. It is not everything that we are living for and the fact that as some of you walk through awful hardship in your family lives, as some of you walk through awful hardships in physical need, as some of you walk through awful hardships in other realms of existence, we must look at it all.

Let me just pause there and give the positive side to it. Those of us that are walking through joy, experiencing the blessing of God, those of us that see the hand of God and your lives are joyful and there is an element of earthly comfort that defines your existence right now, understand that that too is temporary. The joys and the sorrows are temporary because it's just during this time on earth and so we are pilgrims that are passing on to another destination. That is essential to living life in a proper way. And it's hard for young people to grasp onto that because, you know, you feel like you're going to live forever, you're strong and you're vibrant and all of that, but those of us that have lived a few more years understand that the flower of youth is temporary, it's fading, and Scripture often makes this point about the temporary nature of our time on earth. In the Psalms, David prays and says, "Let me know how transient I am." In Psalm 90 it says, "Give us wisdom that we might be able to live with wisdom here on earth," and the understanding being that life is temporary. In Hebrews 11 it says that those who died in faith confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. And in Hebrews 13:14, it says in vivid language, "here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come." We understand that this life is not all that there is for the Christian. It's almost an incidental appetizer to the main course of eternal fellowship with Christ in heaven and so it redefines the way that we look at everything that happens to us in this life, realizing that it's temporary, it's passing, and that eternity is going to far outstrip it in significance and in duration.

So what happens in eternity informs the way that we look at things here on earth and because of that, my friends, when you think about the suffering that's attendant to life, you think about how temporary it ultimately is, you come to start to appreciate something that is Peter's point here today. Think about the book of Ecclesiastes, there's a certain

futility to life under the sun. We live our lives, we work, we love, we suffer, we have joys and we go through all of that but it comes to an end eventually, and one or two generations pass and do you know what? No one even remembers that we were here at all. People forget that you were even here and sooner or later the nature of your life on earth, it just kind of fades into the mists of memory that eventually evaporate.

Now that's not a defeatist view of life, rather it sets the stage for us to understand something very significant. Salvation in Jesus Christ delivers you from all of that futility. All of a sudden you've been given a purpose that transcends that which is temporary. All of a sudden you have eternal life which is a quality of life and also a duration of life that extends far beyond, infinitely beyond what we go through in life. And along with that, salvation in Jesus Christ delivers you from sin. It delivers you from Satan. It delivers you from death. It delivers you from eternal damnation in hell. Do you see how transcending the bonds of time on earth, transcending and being delivered from the bondage of sin, the penalty of sin, the power of sin, one day in heaven ultimately away from the presence of sin, do you realize how this shatters everything about our perspective on life and utterly redefines it? Do you see that? This is conclusive. It could be no other way and so these perspectives inform our view of life in this passing world and that is Peter's point here. "Yes, you are suffering in this life," he says to his readers, "but here is a perspective that redefines the way that you think about it." You and I, speaking today, you and I need to be delivered from our sense of self-pity. We need to be delivered from encroaching senses of hopelessness. We need to be delivered from our frustrations and our angers and our fears about what's happening in the bubble of this life and realize that salvation in Christ has come to pop that bubble and to release us to be in a different realm of life that defines everything else about our existence. It's really wonderful to see and this is what we have ahead to consider today and over the next couple of weeks as we look forward to the Lord's Table on June 20th.

So for today we're going to break this passage into two separate points, I guess you could say, and building on the imperative nature of the passage. This passage comes to us as a command. It comes as an imperative. It lays its authority upon your volition, upon your thinking and says you must think this way so that your life is shaped by the things that Peter is about to command, remembering that Peter was writing God's word. This is what God commands us to think and this is the worldview that God commands us to have. This is not optional for a Christian, this is the command of God upon our lives and the way that we are to think. You see, as I like to say many times, I never get tired of repeating this. Christianity is not first and foremost just a matter of changing your moral living. You know, go and be good to other people and live right and all of that. You know, that moralistic sense is not the core and the essence of salvation and so we need to think in biblical terms and realize what God has done for us in Christ and let the reality of those indicatives inform the way that we respond to the imperatives of Scripture.

So what are these imperatives? Well, number 1 here this morning if you're taking notes, and I think that's a good habit for us all to be in, point number 1: fear God in light of your future judgment. Fear God in light of your future judgment. As I said earlier, Peter is addressing true Christians to help their view of the world.

Look at it here again with me in verse 17. He 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." Those of you that are Christians, you know the Spirit of God teaches your heart to pray to him and to address him as Father, and you're addressing him from that sense of trust and dependence that the word "Father" implies. The Spirit teaches you to pray that way and in a like manner, the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us to pray in that way when he said in Matthew 6:9, "Pray then in this way, Our," what? "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Your name." All of prayer, Jesus teaches us, for his disciples is framed by this understanding, this disposition that we are approaching God as the Father whom we trust and whom we worship and who we need. And so there is this affectionate trust that informs the way that we pray.

I remember going as a non-Christian, this really strikes my memory and it was convicting to me as I remember this if I'm remembering the sequence in relation to my conversion properly. I was invited to go to a church meeting involving college students when I was at Indiana University. I'm quite certain this was before I was saved. And in those meetings there was a time of teaching and then they broke down into small groups to pray, and I'd never been really comfortable in those kinds of environments but that's what they did, and so I joined in this circle of five or six people, I didn't know them and, you know, don't remember any of their names, but I remember when they started praying and the way that they prayed was amazing. They were talking to God like they knew him and there was a tenderness in their speech, and there was an affection for him in the things that they were saying and they were praying, and they were using this term "Father." Well, I knew nothing about that. That was utterly foreign to my experience. You know, it was, "Dear God," and you know, you're speaking to this remote deity with that sense of separation in your heart and, you know, like George Bailey, "God, if You're up there, please, please help me." Well, this wasn't the way that these people were praying. There was an evident tone of intimacy in what they had to say that echoes in my mind 40 years later, and that is the heart, my friends, that in prayer is expressing the reality of salvation. If you're addressing God as Father like that, it's because the Spirit has brought you into union with him in Christ. Romans speaks about, you know, we cry out, "Abba, Father," as we pray. There is this sense of intimacy that is the mark of the prayer of a true Christian.

So when Peter says if you address God as Father like that, then, you know, he's making the point that he's speaking to true Christians. Now let's just kind of think through that term "Father" for just a bit. What is it saying to us? Father is a term that recognizes the goodness of God. It recognizes him as one in whom we have relationship, that there is a commitment, there are promises from God to his children, we're in the family of God. And so we have the prerogative, we have the right, we have the privilege, we have the responsibility to speak to him in these terms and this term "Father" – watch this – it expresses the implicit trust, the implicit trust that should mark true prayer. Your Father is near you. Your Father loves you. Your Father protects you. Your Father knows your needs before you ask. Your Father provides. Your Father when you ask for a fish will not give you a snake. Your Father when you ask for bread does not give you a stone. That's

not what a loving father does and so we recognize something about the goodness of God when we come to him in prayer and we trust him. We're not trying to change his mind and alter his disposition from one of indifference to one that responds to us. No, we are laying ahold of a compassion that he has already for us when we go to him in prayer. We're not trying to get God to change his mind to be nice to us, we recognize him as Father, as good, as loving, as gracious, as kind, as patient, and we say, "God, because You're like that, therefore I pray to You, my Father, You whom I love, You whom I trust."

And I ask you whether you've got a God like that? Do you know God like that? Do you pray to him like that? Do you have that sense in your heart of the goodness and the kindness of God that lets you pray to him in trust like that? My friends, this is the mark of true salvation. This is the mark of knowing God. We have been reconciled to him in Christ. We have been brought into his family. Now we are children of God, John says, and one day we'll see Christ like he is, and the whole point, the whole argument of Scripture is that God is like this to his children and therefore we pray to him like that with a spirit of trust, and that we're content to wait on him.

So if we were to put this in just kind of colloquial personal everyday terms, we should be coming to God and have a disposition of mind that is like this, what I'm about to express. You think in your mind as you're going to him in prayer, "This God to whom I am about to pray is my good Father. He will bless me as I come to Him. I can trust Him. The circumstances may not immediately change but He is with me. I fear no evil," Psalm 23:4 says, "I fear no evil for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Do you know God like that? Do you pray to him like that? That's the reality of being in Christ that God is a Father like that, so that whatever is swirling in life about you, that when you go before God, if you kneel before him or you pray as you're walking, or whatever you do, you know, that there is a sense that, "I have left behind the hostility of the world and now I am in a realm of the favor of God. I can relax here and I can pour out my heart to Him like all 150 of the Psalms do and know that He's going to receive me favorably and that the Spirit of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, they are interceding for me even as I pray now, and even in my stammering speechlessness and the foolishness of my words, that somehow God is so favorably disposed to me and the work of the Spirit of God in my heart and on my behalf is so powerful, that He transforms my stammering lips into things that are effective before the throne of God." Father. It's like that.

I ask you again, do you know God like that because this is the spirit of true Christianity. This is the spirit of growing in grace. And so you say, "God is my good Father. He will bless me as I come to Him." You rehearse in your mind, "This good Father, He hears me when I pray. He cares about me when I pray. He's not like others who criticize and rebuke me when I'm weak and rebuke me perhaps when I stumble. This God receives me. He hears me. One way or another as I bring my case before Him, it will be well with my soul and it is well with my soul." I ask you whether you know God like that, whether you

know Christ like that, my friends, because that is the overflow of a heart that has been changed by grace and has come to know God for who he really is to his children. Do you know him like that or are you focused on rules and regulations and sternness and coldness of heart and thinking that God deals with us like that, deals with his children like that? How can you address someone as Father and trust if that's your view of things? Maybe just maybe that some of us need a complete revolution of our perspective on God to conform it to this term, this loving sense of God as our Father because you must know, you must pray to him rightly and for who he is if your prayers are going to prevail upon him. This perspective of trust is crucial. It's indispensable for proper prayer and proper Christian living.

So Peter is alluding to that confidence that true Christians have when he makes these statements here in verse 17. And so, you know, there's just this wonderful sense of rest and refuge that Scriptures talk about. "God is the help of my countenance." Yet as he says that, Peter quickly injects a balancing consideration to us. Look at it again with me in verse 17. He says, "If you address as Father," and you know Him rightly and righteously as this God of grace, remember that there's another aspect to the nature of your position before Him in Christ. "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work." Wow. That adds another perspective that we also need. A plane needs both wings to fly, right? You only have one wing, it's going down pretty quickly. There's a balance and a consideration that we need to have in mind. God is a Father to us as we said, and as we have supported abundantly from Scripture, and it's an encouragement to our hearts to love him and to trust him. Period. Full stop. But God also bears another office toward us in our lives. He is more than a Father to us, he is ultimately a judge of us as well.

Romans 14:12 says, "each one of us," he's speaking to Christians there, "each one of us will give an account of himself to God." In 2 Corinthians 5:10, it says, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Again in context, clearly speaking to Christians. Now we are going to appear before God in the sense of judge not because he's going to rehearse our sins with us and rebuke us there when we meet him. No, no, all of our guilt, all of our sin, all of God's wrath has been fully satisfied in the Lord Jesus Christ in his death on Calvary. So God is not going to rehearse with us all of our sins and transgressions when we stand before him but there is going to be a sense of accounting of the nature and the tenor of the lives that we lived as Christians and we're going to give an account. What were our priorities? What did we devote our time and resources to? What was our perspective? What was our life like in relationship to the people of God? What was our attitude, our source of study and concern for the word of God? What was the general pattern of our life toward prayer and dependence and trust and evangelism and all of these things? There's going to be an accounting that's given, you know, and mindful of the parable that Jesus said, some were given five talents, some were given two, some were given one, said, you know, there's going to be this sense in which we say, "Lord, you gave me this. Here's what my life shows for it. Here's the fruit of my life."

You know, I wonder how anyone can possibly be preparing themselves for that day if they're not conscious of the sense that what they have is a gift from God that one day

they're going to give an account for it. How could anyone possibly be preparing themselves for a right and good accounting before God if it's not even something that you think about? How could you possibly be using your life rightly, coming for this inevitable day especially if you claim to be a Christian, if the idea of living your life for the glory of God isn't even on your radar? How could it possibly be well and right with your soul? How could you be living rightly if that's not even, you know, that doesn't even inform your life or your day-to-day living?

No, we will all give an account. We will all give an account and Scripture tells us, Peter says it right here, he says there will be no favoritism. God will deal with us impartially and we should not presume upon his grace as we contemplate that day of accounting that is coming. Look at it there in verse 17. He says, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work." You could write your name right there in the text, my Christian brother, my Christian sister, and understand that if you're praying to God in this way, if you're a true Christian, understand that God plans to impartially judge you according to your work. Write your name in there. For me, he's going to impartially judge Don according to his work. Wow. Wow. And just as an aside for those who teach the word of God and it's going to be a stricter judgment to those who teach. Do you know what that does for me? I trust God, I pray to him as my Father, but that strikes a tone of fear in my heart to realize that not only am I going to stand before him, I'm going to have a stricter judgment, a stricter account to give as a result.

Well, you know, Scripture makes this point. It will surprise you how often the New Testament makes this point about the nature of God. Romans 2:11 says, "there is no partiality with God." Galatians 2:6 says, "God shows no partiality." Ephesians 6:9 says, "there is no partiality with Him." Colossians 3:25 says, "He who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done and that without partiality." Impartial, meaning that there is a clear standard by which God will judge us and by which we will give an account, and there is no evading that. You can deny it. You can ignore it. You can say, "I don't care about this, preacher. You say those things, I'm going to keep living the way I live." You can do that if you want to but ultimately there is an accounting to give. You say, "Well, that's okay, God loves me and I address Him as Father and I'm in Christ and, you know, and so I'm not going to worry about that." No. No, that's a wrong conclusion to draw. Scripture warns you against thinking that way. We trust God but we also fear him because we understand that there's going to be an account to give one day in his presence.

What's all of this telling us? Well, in passing it's telling us that the preoccupation with so-called race in our society is utterly misplaced. God's going to judge black and white in the same impartial way, and so to make those divisions here on earth could not possibly be consistent with the spirit of what he has revealed himself to be. But that's an aside. What does it mean for us here today, this idea we address him as Father and yet he impartially judges us as well and will judge us? What it tells us is this, what it tells you is this, my friends, is that you should not presume upon the grace of God. You should not presume upon it and let a false view of grace lead you to careless living, licentious living, carnal living and thinking. If you know God like this, then you would realize that that could not

possibly be the right conclusion. Paul said, "Should we continue in grace? Should we continue in sin? Should we continue in sin so that grace may abound?" He says, "May it never be! God forbid! No, no, no! That's not what salvation is about." God didn't save you so you could live carelessly, God delivered you so that you could live obediently to his glory. He gives you the power in order to honor his word and to honor his law. That's the point of salvation in this life and the one who understands true salvation thinks in those terms. Grace is not a license for ungodly living. Somehow there will be consequences for unrighteousness, diminished reward.

There will be consequences and so in light of all of that, God is our Father, God is also an impartial judge, what's our response? How do we think about that? Well, because we recognize these things to be true from his word, because we know him in these different offices that he holds toward us, we do something as a result. We live in sober fear of our God. Sober fear. Reverence. Respect. Honor. Honor your father and your mother. That's a human command. Multiply that by infinity and honor your Father who is in heaven, honor him with your life. Shape your priorities to his glory. Make your decisions based on what would reflect best on him rather than on your carnal desires.

So we trust God because he is our gracious Father and yet we do not trifle with him because there's a future judgment coming. We fear him in light of future judgment. That's what Peter says here. Look at it again. He says, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work," central command of the text, "conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth." That's the end of the first point. Second point here this morning. Oh, the riches of the glory and the wonder and the majesty of God. There's a second point that Peter makes right alongside this and it's this: fear God, fear God in light of your redemption. Fear God in light of your redemption. There is an exquisite balance into the teaching of Scripture on these themes and an exquisite balance in this short compact text that we are considering this week and the next two as well.

Fear God in light of your redemption. What do we mean by that? More than God's impartial judgment undergirds this sense of godly fear by which you are to live. God does not simply warn us about judgment and leave it there, "Therefore fear Me as you live." There's a reality and a truth to that but it's not all of the truth. It's not all of the truth. There's another consideration. There is more than impartial judgment that undergirds this godly fear for a Christian and the question is what's that? What's that? We've got God as Father and we're trusting him as we address him. God, one day we're going to stand before him and give him an account, you mean there's more which would inform the way that I would live with a robust Christian worldview? Absolutely. Absolutely. There is also in addition to all these things we've been talking about here today, there is also a sense of profound gratitude for our Lord Jesus Christ. There is also a sense of profound gratitude for our Lord Jesus Christ. We fear God in light of our redemption.

Peter goes on after having said those things in verse 17 that we considered, Peter goes on and tells his readers to remember something else. He tells them to recall the ground of their salvation. Why is it that you are able to address God as Father? Verse 18. What is it

that you are to call to mind? Verse 18, "knowing that." He says, "If you address God like this, conduct yourselves in fear, knowing that," remembering something additional that he is now going to explain. You conduct yourselves in fear while you're on earth, verse 18, "knowing that," or because you know this, "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." As sweet and precious as everything we've said before has been, we're entering into something that somehow has an even more exquisite taste to it because it brings us into the realm of Christ, and what Peter is doing here in these two verses, verses 18 and 19, he uses a contrast to point out the precious nature of biblical salvation, and you are to know these things. You are to study them. You are to meditate upon them until they become a defining conviction in your life. You are to know it with certainty and with conviction and with clarity something about your redemption.

Well, that word "redemption," as we've explained in the past, redeemed, you were redeemed with precious blood, "redeemed" is a word that comes from the days of slave markets when people were being bought and sold to other human beings. A slave, one who was under the domination of his master, owned by someone else, a slave or someone on his behalf could purchase his freedom. You pay a price and that slave can go free and no longer be under the bondage of his former master. Well, the price that was paid for freedom was called the redemption price, the redemption cost. And how does that fit into the perspective of the way that we think about our lives as Christians? Well, the Bible describes unsaved people, if you're not in Christ what I'm about to describe applies directly to you, for those of us that are in Christ, it describes what used to be true about us. Scripture describes unsaved people as being slaves and I don't mean to be overly provocative here but this kind of slavery, this spiritual slavery is far more important in eternal consequence than any earthly slavery ever was. This is the slavery that we need to focus on and to recognize and understand so that we could be delivered from it and make sure that we are in the realm of this kind of deliverance.

Scripture describes unsaved people as being slaves. Jesus said in John 8:34, "Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." In 2 Timothy 2:26, speaking about unsaved people, it says they are in "the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will." And we could multiply this in different metaphors from Scripture. People are dead in their trespasses and sins. They belong to the prince of the power of the air. But those verses are enough to establish the point. My friends, before Christ saved you, you were a slave. You were a slave to sin. You were a slave to Satan. And you were a slave to the impending doom of the wrath of God that was upon you for your rebellion and rejection and suppression of the truth in your life. And if you're not a Christian, that's who you really are no matter how you might flatter yourself to the contrary. Very very significant.

So the Bible describes unsaved men as though they were prisoners with no will of their own to escape, no ability of their own to escape from that. Look, if someone is held captive by Satan, Satan is a supernatural being with supernatural power. If you are not in Christ, you in your human limitations and your human ability, you are under the domination and slavery of a supernatural being stronger than you and you don't have the

power to release yourself. And what's true of Satan's realm over you, the Bible says he blinds the minds of the unbelieving to the truth of the gospel, this power of sin, the reason you can't break your bad habits, the reason you keep doing things that you know are wrong and just go deeper and deeper into sin, even if you try to just redefine it with a more palatable term of addiction, there's a reason, it's because you're a slave to it. You're a slave. You're in bondage and your own life manifests your utter inability to escape it.

So Scripture shows and pictures the unsaved man as someone who has no power to effect his own freedom. He does not have the redemption price to be made free. He does not have any power of will to change himself. The leopard cannot change his spots. The zebra cannot change his stripes. In the same way, the sinner cannot change his condition on his own power. It's who he is. It's who she is. It's who you are if you're not in Christ. And that's why, my friends, that Scripture often speaks about salvation in terms of redemption, a deliverance from that condition of slavery based on a price that has been paid.

Look at verse 18. He says, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers." Your futile way of life. He's setting up a contrast. He's talking about what didn't happen in order to effect your redemption. He says your way of life was futile. The life of unsaved people no matter what they attain in this world, no matter what accomplishments, no matter how good life is, ultimately it's futile, it's pointless. There is no lasting value to it at all because they've lived for passing things. They worship false gods, even if it's simply the god they see in the mirror, and the end of it all is spiritual death and eternal damnation. If that's the outcome of it, isn't it obvious that it's futile, it's pointless, there's no ultimate purpose to it? Isn't that obvious if that's the outcome?

Think about a ballgame. What does it matter if your team is ahead by 15 runs in the sixth inning if you surrender the lead and you lose in the end and you lose 16 to 15? What does it matter that you were ahead for a temporary time if the conclusion is a loss? Well, my friends, those of you that are not in Christ, no matter how far ahead you may think you are in life, understand that you're doomed to lose and the loss is great, and no matter how far ahead you get, you can't get far enough ahead to avoid your ultimate accountability with a holy God.

So it's futile. Look over, I want you to just see something in Ephesians 4 just briefly that just reemphasizes this theme of futility. Ephesians 4:17, the Apostle Paul says, "this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." This is the biblical description of the unsaved man. It's not pretty. The Bible does not flatter men telling them how good they are. Just the opposite.

So what Peter says is that you were in this nature of life that was so futile and lost and dark and pointless, if you're a Christian you were redeemed out of it but you weren't redeemed with something that paid an earthly cost. There wasn't an earthly price given for your redemption. It wasn't gold or silver that might have purchased somebody out of a human slave market. Earthly currency has no value in heaven. It's Monopoly money. There's no real value to it. That can't save you and it didn't save you. Now we're speaking very directly to Christians. You must think and understand how it was that you were delivered from sin, Satan, death and hell. What was it that delivered you? What cost was paid for your salvation? You need to know this. It wasn't the perishable things. It wasn't the passing material things that you can't take with you when you go. No, my friend, you were redeemed with something far greater, something of infinitely greater value and Peter injects a sharp contrast at this point. Verse 19, "but." Sharp contrast. Forget that stuff in verse 18 and instead focus on this, verse 19. What was the cost that secured your freedom, your spiritual freedom? It was "precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

Now just a little interesting point here. Some people like the technical details of Scripture. In this verse, there's a really nice alliteration in the original language. Five different words all start with the Greek letter Alpha, the equivalent of the English letter A. There's just this stunning alliteration that marks these things and just highlights more the nature of the perfect sacrifice and the perfect blood of Christ. Peter's point here when he talks about precious blood is this, is that the sacrifice that redeemed you was eternal. It was perfect. It was the shed blood of Christ. Christ, the offering for your redemption. Christ, the price that was paid for your soul was perfect. In his person, he was perfect. He was the eternal Son of God. In his person, he was perfect. He lived a life of perfect obedience to the law of God. In his person, there is just this utter loveliness about him. And in his sacrifice, his offering was perfect as he spilled his blood on Calvary, paying the price, his shed blood satisfying the righteous demands of the wrath of God on behalf of his people. His blood shed so that yours would not have to be. His blood satisfying the wrath of God because your guilty blood never could have done it. And that's what redeemed you. That was the price of your redemption. He was sinless and so his perfect life qualified him to be the perfect Lamb of God. Think about it this way and think about the contrast here, my friends. His blood was shed so that yours need not be. His blood was shed so that your blood could be spared. It was a substitution of highest order and magnificence.

So his blood is what the price was that freed you from that past futility. His blood is what freed you from future doom. His blood is what satisfies the judge. His blood is what enables you to address God as your Father. His blood is what gives you confidence before the throne. And Peter's point here is this, remember he's saying conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth. Well, what does this mean? How does this inform us? And how does this inform our fear? Simply this: the reverence and the love that you should have in your heart for Christ for offering a sacrifice like that should inject a sense of grateful sobriety. If Christ did that for me, then how must my life be ordered here on earth in response? Not because I'm trying to be a more moral person. No, but because there was a price paid for my redemption and it is only right and fitting that I live

in response to that, and I revere and I elevate the shed blood of Christ, I revere and elevate the eternal Son of God so highly that, with such gratitude that my life is shaped in response to it and I live in reverence for Christ. Not a careless gratitude but a reverent gratitude that says he has delivered me and I will live for his glory.

It was a price that was paid independently of anything in this transient world, and because the price of your redemption was independent of this transient world, then it redefines the way that you think about life in this transient world. Everything about our relationships, our jobs, our education, our finances, our health, everything is subordinate because all of that belongs to the transient passing order of this age and that is not what defines our existence as believers in Christ. The blood of Christ does. Christ himself does. God our Father does. That's what matters. That's what we live for and as a result, we live in fear during our time on earth.

John Calvin said this, "Peter teaches us that Christ was a suitable victim and approved by God. He was perfect, without any blemish. Had He any defect in Him, He could not have been rightly offered to God nor could He pacify His wrath." But he was perfect. He did pacify the wrath of God and that just leaves this question, my friends: has the blood of Christ been applied to your soul? Have you come to him and received him by faith in order to be delivered from this wicked world and from your own wicked self? If you have and that blood belongs to you, then Peter's point is obvious: live with fear during your time in this passing world.

Let's pray together.

O God, we address You as Father, the One that we can trust and the One who will one day bring us to account. We address You as Father and therefore we love You and trust You and yet with a sense of fear and reverence. O Christ, we look to You, we look to Your wounded hands, and we look to Your riven side and we realize we were redeemed with precious blood. Your precious blood was the price of our salvation. You gladly voluntarily offered up Your life as a sacrifice to God, a substitute to quench His wrath against us because You love Your people. Oh, how sweet are those words. What more could establish Your love for Your people, Your love for Your church than that You shed Your precious blood in order to infallibly secure our redemption? We love You and we honor You and we pray that You would help us conduct ourselves in fear during the time of our stay on this passing and transient earth and we pray for those with us, those who will hear in subsequent days, Father. We pray for those that are outside of Christ, that Your Spirit would convict them of the truth of the things that have been spoken, and that Your Spirit would convict them of sin, righteousness and judgment, and that, Father, You Yourself as You have said in John 6, as Your Son said, Father, that You would draw them, that You would persuade their hearts, that You would change their hearts, that You would give them new life so that they might come to You in repentant faith and find this redemption from sin, Satan, death and hell that is exclusively found in our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in His wonderful name. Amen.

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