

Conduct Yourselves in Fear: A Study in 1 Peter, 1:17-21

Preached at Harambee by Pastor Michael Ly on April 19, 2009

“And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake, 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.” - 1 Peter 1:17-21 (English Standard Version)

Intro

Two weeks ago we began studying this section of 1 Peter that begins in 1:13, where Peter calls us to prepare our minds ready for action, and you will hear next week ends in 2:3. We looked at the commands to “set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (v. 13) and to “be holy in all your conduct” (v 15). Today we continue our study by looking at Peter’s third command to “conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile” (v. 17) and how God’s provides the grace and means to obey.

Peter begins by reminding us of our identity in God, through the relationship we have with Him, because of the redemptive plan He created before the foundation of the world through Jesus and brought to completion through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and resurrection from the dead.

From the Head...

Before we can get to Peter’s main point, we must take a look at the assumption Peter makes in the statement “And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each ones deeds.”

- **God is our Father (v. 17)**

Peter reminds us of the intimate relationship followers of Jesus have with God, who is now our Father. Paul also writes of this relationship with God in Romans 8:14-15 and Galatians 4:6. He is our “*Pater*” (Greek), “*Abba*” (Hebrew/Aramaic), our Father. Maybe the best word to convey this intimacy from a child’s mouth is the word Daddy. It’s one of the first words children learn and is not only precious for parents to hear, but also shows the kind of intimacy that this word Father portrays.

As believers we also have a Father “who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds” (v. 17). This truth speaks against the lie that our actions as believers do not count in eternity.

- **Ransomed from futile ways (v. 18)**

Peter describes the great lengths our Father God went to ransom us. But what did He have to ransom us from? Peter refers to “futile ways inherited from our forefathers.” He is specifically referring to the sinful practices of Israel and how they continually turned away from God and His commands. However, if you really look at the practices of any culture that you came from, you will realize that Peter could have referred to any of our specific forefathers and cultures. We really do not understand the immensity of the darkness and evil that we inherited.

- **By the blood of Christ (v. 19-20)**

What did it take for God to ransom us from our “futile ways”? The blood of Christ! Now what does Peter actually mean by “the blood of Christ? This is quite a controversial topic today within the evangelical world. There are Christian theologians, pastors, leaders who are attacking the very idea of this. Statements like “Did God really have to sacrifice His own Son, shed Christ’s blood, for us? Did He really have to do that? That’s cosmic child abuse! That goes against the very nature of God’s love!”

Is that what Peter is stating here? On the contrary! The original recipients of this letter would have recalled the lamb’s blood in the Passover celebrations that was celebrated every year. They would have made the connection between Christ’s blood and the lamb’s blood, understanding as the writer of Hebrew’s points out “he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption...and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” (Hebrews 9:12, 22b)

God knew what He was doing and only God knew what it took to make this happen. In order to ransom us and redeem us, it took the sacrifice of Christ’s blood on the cross! And not only that, He planned this “before the foundation of the world”. Just imagine, God CREATED and PLANNED the whole story of redemption. He wrote it not us. He was not surprised that one day God the Son would have to come down in human form as Jesus to shed blood on the cross for our sins.

...to the Heart

- **Faith and hope in God (v. 21)**

Fortunately, it does not end there. God did not leave His Son to decay in the ground, but raised him from the dead and gave him glory! We celebrate a resurrected Savior, not a dead one. Because of this, it is only through Jesus Christ that we can have an intimate relationship with God. And just like Jesus trusted God when He went to the cross that God would fulfill His promises, we can place our faith and hope in God to fulfill the promises He has given us.

- **Conduct yourselves with fear (v. 17)**

It is precisely because our faith and hope are in God as our Father that we can conduct ourselves with fear in this lifetime. Peter is referring to the kind of fear that produces awesome reverence for a God who would go to such great lengths to redeem us. A kind of fear that recognizes He has already redeemed us as His children through Jesus. When we find our identity in this place of His child, we will find ourselves overwhelmed with praise to God.