

## Week 6 - Live Reverently - 1Peter 1:17-21

### Scripture Reading: Matthew 10:26-33

#### Introduction

Reverence is a concept that isn't much esteemed or practiced in society today

Being reverent means having profound respect and esteem all mingled together with simultaneous fear and affection for something or someone

Perhaps we lack reverence because reverence requires humility and we have been so thoroughly trained to believe we are the center of the universe and are so egocentric that we cannot truly hold anything or anyone else in high regard

Thus far in his letter, Peter has reminded his readers of the greatness of their salvation and their special relationship to God

And he has just called them to holy living and the motivation they should have because they are members of God's family and how their desire should be to imitate their Father in heaven the same as an obedient child seeks to imitate their earthly parents

Last week, when we looked at verses 13-16 of 1Peter 1, we saw Peter command his readers to not be conformed to the ignorance of their former way of life and we acknowledged the difficulty that going against the tide of tradition can bring

How it can often mean standing alone against the crowd or being alienated from friends and family

It's hard to be holy because the pull of this world and the desires of our sin-nature are great and remaining separate and fit for God's use requires a good deal of motivation

So, in verses 17-21, Peter continues in his appeal to holiness by listing a couple more truths that should serve to spur us on to holy living

What Peter turns to here is not exactly carrot and stick motivation where punishment and reward are employed but he does introduce both negative and positive incentive both of which tie back into showing reverence for God the Father

In fact, the only command in the passage before us is "*conduct yourselves with fear*" and the remainder tells us why or how we should do that

First, Peter says **we should show reverent fear to God because of his impartial judgment**

Then he says **we should show reverent love to God because of his great love for us**

And, interestingly, both of those have positive and negative aspects to them as well

So, without further ado, let's dig into our passage to see what we can learn about living reverently from **1Peter 1:17-21** where Peter writes:

*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 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.*

Notice that Peter addresses his admonitions here to those who can rightly "*call on [God] as Father*"

In other words, true followers of Jesus Christ because, while God is the Creator of all mankind, only those who have trusted in Christ are the children of God

And Peter says that, even as God's children, we should be motivated by a reverent fear of God's impartial judgment

## **I. God's Impartial Judgment of Believers**

Think about how you tend to picture God - how you envision God and how that impacts your relationship to him

The fatherhood of God to believers is widely attested to in the Bible and Peter here speaks to it directly

But what does the reality of having God as your heavenly Father mean to you - what are the implications of that relationship and how does your image of God as your Father impact how you live?

There is an intimacy that believers enjoy as they can approach God as a child approaches a father

Jesus revealed that right when he taught his disciples to pray with his model prayer we know as the Lord's Prayer saying to begin "*Our Father in heaven...*"

However, it's possible for us to carry that idea too far so that we have a wrong impression of God and, as we saw last week, how we think soon becomes how we live

Paul's teaching in **Romans 8:15**, where he speaks of us addressing God as "Abba," has caused a lot of people to lapse into a perhaps too casual way of envisioning God – thinking of him as cuddly and indulgent toward his children

After all, Abba translates roughly to our English word "Daddy" and many people have become unbalanced in their idea of God through an over-emphasis of that aspect of our relationship with God

We do love to ride the pendulum out to the extremes and then stay there – but God is neither a tyrant nor a teddy bear

Still, Peter, in verse 17 [**1Peter 1:17**], tells his readers that they should expect no favoritism from God when it comes to his judgment

The fact that we can approach God and call on him as our Father is a blessing beyond words

Because we are part of God's family we are the objects of God's fatherly love and the recipients of his special blessings

But we dare not forget that God is also the Judge of the universe and that our membership in God's family doesn't mean that our disobedience goes unnoticed and undisciplined

God is our Father and he responds to us with all the tenderness and care of a father

But he is also our Judge who shows no favoritism - not even to his own children - as he continually judges and rewards each person, both saved and unsaved, according to their deeds

And that isn't just New Testament thinking either

After all, David wrote in **Psalms 62:12** that God "*will render to a man according to his work*"

And God's judgment has two different aspects to it that we should be aware of

**First, there is the future judgment of all mankind where unbelievers will be excluded from heaven**

And God's children will also face judgment at the Bema Seat of Christ

Peter's use of the phrase "each one" shows us that God's end-times judgment isn't restricted to unbelievers only

And Paul, in **Romans 14:10** says "*we will all stand before the judgment seat of God*"

While the Christ-follower need not fear God's condemning judgment as those who remain outside of Christ do, they will still face judgment and will receive or lose rewards based on that judgment

Paul makes that fact clear in **2Corinthians 5:9-10** as he indicates, like Peter does in our passage, that knowledge of that judgment should affect how we live our lives

*So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

Christ-followers shouldn't look at the Bema seat of Christ as God judging them for their sins, but rather as God rewarding them for their lives during their sojourn on this earth

Some of the things we will be judged for are how faithfully we served Christ, how well we obeyed the Great Commission, how victorious we were over sin, how well we controlled our tongues and the Bible speaks of receiving crowns for a variety of things

But, as we read in **2Timothy 2:5**, *“An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules”*

And in **1Corinthians 3:10-15** Paul uses the analogy of different builders and the materials they used to describe their lives here on this earth. Paul writes:

*According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*

Heaven is guaranteed for the Christ-follower because of the foundation that Jesus laid at the cross

However some will get in as one escaping from the conflagration of their earthly lives as what they have done here is revealed to be worthless while those who lived lives that are commendable to God will be rewarded

And, in our passage, Peter says the reality of judgment should motivate us to live in reverential fear of God’s righteous, impartial judgment now

**But there is also the present judgment of God that leads to temporal correction and reward**

**Hebrews 12:8** tells us that God disciplines his children for their sin specifically because they are his children

Of course, God’s isn’t out to harm us he only seeks to cause us pain in order to bring about moderation in our behavior

And Paul writes about this kind of judgment in **1Corinthians 11:30-32** when he addressed the abuse of the Lord’s Table that was going on in the church in Corinth - he writes:

*That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.*

I want to be sure you notice what Paul says there

Had the Corinthians recognized that God was watching and judging their actions and thus moderated their behavior, they would not have needed to endure God’s judgment or corrective discipline

I believe, if we’re being honest, the thing that keeps most of us from speeding when we drive is the threat of a speeding ticket and the fine and possible insurance rate increase that accompany it

After all, who doesn’t take their foot off the gas pedal, at least long enough to check their speed, when they see a cop car?

And Peter is clearly saying that Christ-followers should have a reverent fear of God’s discipline in this life and live a holy life because they know that God is watching and judges impartially

There are many who try to dismiss the fear of God as an Old Testament concept that has no place in the New Testament but they have to overlook many New Testament passages in order to do so

For example, we have the account of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, in Acts 5 when God struck them dead for lying to the Holy Spirit about the gift they had given to the church

And in **Acts 5:11** we see that *“Great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard”* about the event

Then in **Acts 9:31** we see that the believers were *“walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit”*

We also have passages like **2Corinthians 7:1** and **Colossians 3:22** and **1Timothy 5:20** that all show the fear of God to be a sign of a New Testament church that was growing in maturity and experiencing God’s blessing

And in **Philippians 2:12**, Paul connects fear of God with growth in holiness

Fear of God is not inconsistent with our loving him or God loving us - fear of displeasing him is merely the flipside of loving him

Still, people today find having fear for God and judgment disturbing because they want to focus instead on God's love and Peter turns to that next as he says our other motivation should be God's great love

## **II. God's Great Love for Believers**

In verses 18-19 Peter points to something that we know but are prone to forget and that is that we have been bought with the blood of Christ which is precious in God's sight

Just last week we observed the ordinance of the Lord's Table which Jesus gave to the church as a means of remembering him and what he did for us and one reason for remembering, according to our passage, is motivation to holy living

As Peter uses the term here, to be ransomed means to be released or set free through the paying of a price and the cultural analogy that Peter's first-century audience would have readily understood is buying a slave out of bondage

And Peter says the thing his readers were freed or ransomed from is the "*futile ways inherited from your forefathers*"

Last week we saw him refer to the "*your former ignorance*" in describing this same state [**1Peter 1:14**]

Every person who has not been redeemed by Christ is in slavery to sin and the spiritual death that comes from it

And like a slave, they are unable to pay the price to free themselves and are in need of someone to pay the ransom

Perhaps it's different elsewhere, but one of the big problems we have in the culture that surrounds us is that people don't understand their condition without Christ

We have it pretty good and most people, unless they are in the grip of some debilitating sin or find themselves in a horrible situation, don't see that they are in bondage so they see no need to be ransomed out of it

Even Christ-followers tend to downplay their former state and see themselves as always having been pretty good people who were worthy of salvation

And our culture certainly serves to downplay the seriousness of sin

I often cite the late senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who coined the phrase "defining deviancy down"

His point was that a society can only abide so many deviancies so that, when that level is exceeded, behavior that was once considered deviant must be reclassified as normal in order to maintain a tolerable level of deviancy

And as we look at the downward trend of society's mores we see that he may well have been onto something

We also tend to do the same thing in our Christian walk as we try to rationalize that we are still okay

Peter recognized the tendency to forget from whence we came so he reminded his readers to know, to keep in the forefront of their minds, that they were ransomed from bondage

Of course, ransom, by definition requires a price be paid - it comes with a cost

And the typical means of ransoming, or redeeming, a slave was with the payment of some amount of money and, in Peter's day, the payment would have most likely been made in silver or gold

But Peter says that his readers were ransomed with something much more precious - the blood of Christ

And the natural question when we read that should be, "Precious to whom?"

Certainly, the blood of Christ was precious to God

After all, it was the blood of his only begotten Son that was shed for us and that shed blood was a great price for God to pay

Twice in his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul reminds his readers they were bought with a price in first in **1Corinthians 6:20** and again in **1Corinthians 7:23**

And in **Mark 10:45**, Jesus taught that he came *“not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”*

The sin that enslaved us resulted in such a great debt that a great ransom had to be paid to remove it

The death of Christ and the blood that was shed because of it are so precious in God’s sight that we should never underestimate its value

So Peter next lists five reasons that make the ransom God paid for us precious; not just to God but to us as well

**First**, he saying in verse 19 [**1Peter 1:19**] that Christ was a *“lamb without blemish or spot”*

This imagery calls to mind a worshipper bringing a sacrificial lamb to offer to God under the Law and how that lamb had to be perfect - one couldn’t offer a damaged or diseased lamb to God - you had to give your best to God

And Peter says the gift God used to ransom us is precious because God gave us his best - the substitutionary sacrifice of his own Son was the greatest gift God could give and the only gift that would satisfy the ransom required

**Second**, Peter says that the ransom God paid was planned before he created the universe

That’s the meaning of verse 20 [**1Peter 1:20a**] that reads:

*He was foreknown before the foundation of the world*

There are people in this world, and Kathy is one of them, that plans gift giving well in advance

She listens and looks for hints that clue her into gifts that will be special to the person receiving them

I’ve known her to be buying Christmas gifts in the heat of summer when she comes across that ideal gift for someone

Consequently, the gifts she gives are typically very special and highly valued by those who receive them

Peter says that’s what God is like

He says that God planned to send his Son - notice that God didn’t just plan to redeem mankind in some abstract, ethereal way - which would have been fantastic in itself - but that he planned to use his Son to do it

Sending Jesus to earth to live as a man and to die on a cross was not Plan B or something that God came up with on the spur of the moment

God planned to send his Son to save you before he even created mankind because he knew it would be necessary

That brings us to the **third** distinctive about the ransom God paid - it was for you that he paid it

We see that in the final part of **verse 20** where Peter writes it was *“for the sake of you”* that God carried out his plan

We have a tendency to think of the sin that Christ died for in the collective - as the sins of mankind

And, it is true that Jesus died for sins of all

But he also died specifically for you and the price he paid on the cross was the ransom for your sins

If there was no one else in the world that needed to have their sins paid for, Jesus would have given his life for you

This precious ransom was personal, for your sake, and it was planned and carried out by God before you were ever born

The **fourth** aspect of the ransom that Peter reveals is found in verse 21 - it restored our relationship with God

It is through Christ that we are reconciled to God the Father and have a familial relationship with him

Jesus taught in **John 14:6** saying:

*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

**Fifth**, the gift is precious because of its permanence

Various companies through the years have advertised claiming whatever product they were selling was “the gift that keeps on giving” - it’s become something of a marketing cliché that crops up from time to time

In reality, most gifts have a limited usefulness but not the perfect ransom that God planned and gave for us

God’s gift of ransom is truly the gift that keeps on giving as it forms the basis for our faith and hope

Look at it this way -

Because God planned your redemption from eternity past and because he sent forth his Son for your sake and because he raised Christ from the dead and glorified him therefore you can put all your trust in him

Believing in God will never leave you disappointed because the faith and hope you place in God has been validated by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead

## Conclusion

As sojourners we are tempted to assimilate into the culture surrounding us

After all, as I pointed out last week, that which surrounds us seems normal and what is normal begins to seem right

Assimilation was the main difference between Abraham and his nephew, Lot

In Hebrews 11 we read how, even though God had given the land of Canaan to Abraham as his permanent possession, he still considered himself a stranger and exile and he lived in a tent because he was looking forward to his permanent home in heaven

But Lot moved into the city of Sodom and made it his home and soon became like the people of Sodom

And while God still viewed Lot as positionally righteous before him, Lot entered into the immoral society that existed there

This is evident in the example of Lot’s daughters who he first offered up to the men of Sodom for illicit sexual relations and then who slept with their father to produce children for themselves thus perpetuating the ethos of Sodom

The lives of Abraham and Lot provide us with concrete examples of the danger of not living reverently toward God

It’s far too easy to be lured into the ways of the world and to begin to live like everyone else around us

That’s why Peter tells us that we must be motivated to live reverently before God as we are guided by the knowledge of God’s impartial judgment and the great love that he has for us

And out of love for him that we strive to live in obedience so as not to earn his displeasure or to devalue the precious gift of his Son whom he gave that we might be reconciled to him

Still, that can be difficult and the people around us might not like us for being different

But God’s ways are perfect as the psalmist writes in **Psalm 18:30** and he will protect us as we walk in his ways

Jesus taught in **Matthew 10:28** that we need have no fear of those who might seek to do us harm but rather that we should fear God

And that’s Peter’s lesson as well - that we must have a proper, reverential fear of God and his judgment so that we are motivated to live for him

God loves us so much that he provided the way to become our heavenly Father and being his child comes with abundant blessings and we love him for who he is and what he has done but, being his child also comes with expectations

If we call him Father, we should act like his children and strive to meet his standards for his family

And that means living reverently toward God

Let’s Pray

**Matthew 10:26-33 (page 815)**

“So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”