

I PETER

The Fear Of God Protects Us

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I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness

- A. **I Peter 1:17-21** . . . 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. [20] For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you [21] 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.
- B. Pray

II. The Fear Of God Helps Us Gain And Maintain Holiness

- A. Before digging deeper into this portion of scripture, I want to make two introductory points that I hope will help us better understand what Peter is saying in these verses.
 - 1. **First**, I want to paraphrase verses 17-21, not because I can do it with less words, but because I think I can make it a bit more simple to understand.
 - a. **Paraphrase:** If you believe you are a born again child of God, that is, of the God who impartially judges us according to our deeds, then conduct yourself in fear the rest of your days here on the earth, because you were not redeemed with any earthly and therefore perishable treasure, such as silver or gold, but with the precious and imperishable blood of Jesus, who was no ordinary man, but was known to God from eternity past and selected to come at God's appointed time (*during Peter's lifetime*) for the sake of saving us from the penalty and power of sin so He could reconcile us to God for eternity.
 - 2. **Second**, there are two kinds of fear we Christians ought to have in relation to God.
 - a. **First**, there is the fear of judgment and the punishment resulting from that judgment (i.e., much like a child fears his parents).
 - (1) A clear example from the NT of this kind of fear comes from **Hebrews 10:26-31**, which begins with "For if we go on

sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,” and ends with “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

- (2) Again, this is an example of the fear of God related to judgment and punishment resulting from that judgment. And anyone who lacks this kind of fear of God, is a fool.
- b. The **second** kind of fear is different from the first in that it is not a fear of judgment and punishment. Rather, this fear is better described as a reverential dread, that often includes mourning, tears, and even trembling. This reverential dread comes upon us when we face up to how pathetically vile and shamefully sinful we are in the light of the holiness of God – a holiness that is so profound, it is ineffable, that is, it is beyond human description.
 - (1) In **Isaiah 6:5**, the prophet Isaiah describes his experience of reverential dread in response to encountering the holiness of God. And in **Revelation 1:17**, the apostle John describes his response of reverential dread as a result of encountering the presence of the Holy Son of God.
 - (2) Now you may think these two examples mean this kind of fear is rare and only for a few of God’s greatest servants.
 - (a) I will agree this reverential dread seems rare, but it doesn’t have to be. In my opinion, it should be the common experience for any of us who have been Christians for several years.
 - (b) All that is required is for us to see and hate our vile sinfulness while pursuing holiness in all our behavior and pondering the holiness of God until it looms huge in our thinking and living.

B. With these two points in mind, I want us to take a more specific look at this portion of **I Peter**.

- 1. The first word in verse 17 is “IF”. It is not a conditional “IF,” that is, it does not require you to do something in order to get something. Rather, it is the “IF” of a logical argument.
- 2. Therefore, God is saying to us, “If you call on or speak to God as your Father – that is, the God who impartially judges according to what we do – then conduct yourself in fear of God’s present discipline and final judgement during the rest of your time here on the earth.”

3. Now I know there is a great emphasis in our day on the security of our salvation based on Christ's fulfillment of the legal requirements for salvation, which includes paying the penalty for sin, graciously redeeming us by His shed blood, putting His righteousness on us (*imputed righteousness*) so that we appear righteous in the sight of God regardless of how sinful we are, and standing at God's right hand to be our advocate when Satan accuses us of having sinned.
 - a. And you may choose to so trust in the completed work of the legal side of your salvation as to exclude or ignore other truths and warnings, and in so doing, make this exhortation to fear of God something that does not apply to you.
 - b. But I urge you to read the entire Bible, for in so doing you will come upon truths and warnings such as this one from Jesus: "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matthew 7:22-23).
 - c. My point is simple, God's exhortation to live in fear the rest of our days is not an idle or worthless exhortation, it is a much needed reminder for every Christian, if we are going to remain faithful to pursuing holiness in all our behavior like unto God's holiness.
- C. I want you to notice that God's exhortation to live in fear the rest of our days is His first example of where and how we are to pursue holiness in all our behavior. This means, this exhortation to fear directly follows the reminder that God is holy. And I believe God makes this direct connection between His holiness and our fear on purpose.
 1. This exhortation to fear, and therefore the reason to live in fear, is based on two truths. **First**, God is an impartial Judge who will judge each of us according to our deeds. **Second**, we have been redeemed from our sinful way of life with the precious blood of Jesus.
 2. In relation to the first God-given reason to fear, there are a number of scriptures warning us that we all will stand before God – non-Christian and Christian alike – and be judged on what we have done during our time here on the earth. For the sake of time, I will give you three references and read a fourth.
 - a. **Deuteronomy 10:12-13, 17, Matthew 16:24-27, and II Corinthians 5:9-10.**

- b. **Romans 14:10-12** . . . But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. [11] For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." [12] So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.
- c. Now God takes this warning a step further than simply telling us we will one day stand before Him in judgment of our deeds. He reminds us that He is an impartial judge. And we see the importance of this reminder in our own day.
 - (1) Impartial speaks of judging without regard to superficial appearances – such as religious activity, wealth, power, or position and status – in the church or in the world, but rather in accordance with our true character as demonstrated by our intent in well-doing and our actual deeds done.
 - (2) The point here is that even though we are born again and members of the Body of Christ (universal) or members of some church locally, we are still going to stand before God and be judged according to our deeds done while here on the earth.
- 3. The first reason God gives for living in fear is the coming judgment. But God again goes further and gives us a second reason to live in fear the rest of our days.
 - a. This second reason ought to capture our attention and motivate our behavior even more than the first reason. Why? Because this second reason is this: We have not been redeemed with anything that is in any way perishable or of an earthly value, but with the invaluable precious and imperishable blood of Christ.
 - b. I know this may not be easily understood by some of us, but I do want to make the point that the motive for living in fear because of a coming judgment, is “ME” oriented (self-serving). This second motive for living in fear is “Christ” oriented (Christ-serving), for it is based on the value we place on properly treating the One who died for us.
 - c. Simply stated, we will live a godly life and press on in pursuing further godliness of life according to the value we place on our Savior and the price He paid for our redemption.
 - d. In other words, the value of Christ to us and the price He paid for us is reflected in how seriously we pursue holiness and in how godly or ungodly we live day in and day out.

D. I want to address one more thing related to living in fear the rest of our days. The issue I want to address is what this fear looks like in everyday life.

1. Whether it is the fear of judgment and resulting punishment, or the fear of reverential dread we feel when seeing the holiness of God, it is never an immobilizing fear or a form of fear that paralyzes us intellectually and emotionally to the point of being unable to reason and think rationally as Christians.
2. For an example of immobilizing or paralyzing fear, consider the third servant in Christ's parable of the talents. He was too afraid of his master to risk investing his talent, so he hid it instead of putting it in the bank. His fear was irrational, and the proof of that is the fact that it led him to an unreasoned and unreasonable choice and action.
3. The fear God's exhorts us to have is a fear that motivates us to think rationally and act wisely. It is a fear that over-rides or makes unimportant every lesser fear we may have. Therefore, the fear of God spoken of in the scriptures – be it fear of judgment or reverential dread – is identifiable by the fact that it continues to motivate us toward more humility and greater godliness.
4. For example:
 - a. **Psalms 128:1** . . . How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who [as a result] walks in His ways.
 - b. **Proverbs 16:6** . . . By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.
 - c. **II 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.
 - d. **Philippians 2:12-13** . . . So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; [13] for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.
 - e. **Luke 12:2-5** . . . But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. [3] Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops. [4] I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. [5] But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who,

after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

5. Once again, godly fear never immobilizes us or turns us away from God, but rather, it always drives toward God and greater godliness.

E. So why all this emphasis on fearing God when we have been saved by grace, and we stand before God clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and our salvation is secured by Christ himself, and we have forgiveness of sins by means of confession and the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and should we sin, we have an advocate who takes up our cause when the devil accuses us before God for having sinned? We have this emphasis on fear because the fear of God helps protect us from foolishness and carelessness in regard to sin, and it motivates us to pursue, gain, and maintain holiness in all our behavior that is like unto God's holiness.

III. Two more points from **I Peter 1:17-21**

A. **First**, God says that our way of life (*pattern of thinking and behaving*) before coming to faith in Christ was futile, and it was inherited from our forefathers.

1. Adam and Eve's sin changed their nature, and in so doing, set the course for our nature, too. They went from being pure, willingly obedient children of God to rebellious, self-devoted, spiritually broken human being who now wanted their own rather than God's way.
2. And, Adam and Eve's sin changed their present and future status with God from being acceptable to God and in constant fellowship with God to being an enemy of God, separated from God, and damned to separation from God in eternity.
3. Since we are children of Adam and Eve's changed nature and changed status before God, we not only share in their ungodly nature, we also share in their damaged relationship and separated status before God. In fact, we are born into this world as those who belong to Satan's kingdom and under Satan's rule and slaves of sin.
4. But for the grace of God through Christ Jesus, we would be born, live, and die in our sin-sick condition, separated from God in this life and separated from God eternally after this life, for this is the futile way of life our parents passed on to us and this is what we will pass on to our children. But thanks be to God for His mercy and grace!!

B. **Second**, Christ was in God's plans and known by God before He ever created the earth.

1. This makes it clear that God was not caught off guard by Adam and Eve's sin and the subsequent fall of human nature and the enslavement of mankind by sin.
2. And this makes it clear that God, in eternity past – long before He created the heavens and the earth – had a remedy in place and a sacrificial Lamb selected to redeem us so that we could be reconciled to God, adopted back into His family, and once again live within His eternal purposes for us.
3. So why did Christ appear when He did? Why all those years without the perfect sacrifice for sin being slain? We may not know the definitive answer to this question in this life, but we can rest in the fact that God decided the timing, and He does all things perfect and well. Therefore, let us rejoice at what God has done even though we may not know exactly why.

IV. Conclusion

- A. I urge you to ponder the two kinds of fear – fear of a coming judgment and the consequent outcome of that judgment, and reverential dread which comes upon all who grasp the profound and ineffable significance of God's holiness.
- B. I urge you to remember that godly fear motives to action while ungodly fear immobilizes and paralyzes us – thus preventing us from acting as we ought or know we should.
- C. Finally, the intended outcome of these words from God is greater holiness, greater faith, and a more confident hope in God, himself.