

Unlocking Freedom: “1 Peter: Hope in a Foreign Land”

Sermon preached by Chris Lofquist

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Introduction

Today is the first Sunday of the New Year, January 5th 2020, and already we have a lot of catching up to do! In the month of December, we took a wonderful detour to focus in on the advent of Christ, the supernatural birth that brought about our redemption (our salvation). And I hope you were truly blessed through that study. However, because we took that break from our sermon series in 1 Peter, we must do some review. Peter, an Apostle of Jesus, is writing to the scattered Church in Asia Minor – these are a group of Christians who have been chased out of their homes and villages due to persecution. He is writing this letter during Emperor Nero’s reign of terror and therefore he has spent some time encouraging these discouraged Christians to continue to live for Christ, even when times are difficult. In chapter 1 we have seen three commands given to us as believers: First, we see in **verses 1-13** that God, through His Son, has redeemed us, causing us to be born again to a living hope! In **verse 13** we read, “*Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Here is where we see the first command – **Hope fully in the grace of God**, even when times are difficult, look to Him, and find your hope and strength in Him and His love for you. **Verses 14-16** drive us toward the second command, which is found in **verses 15-16**, “*Be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.’ Because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I AM holy.*” So, not only are we to live in hope – but we are to also **live in holiness**. What a great reminder for us as we approach this new year. No matter what comes our way, the standard for our living should be holiness fixed on hope. That is, our belief in God’s sovereignty, love and provision should motivate our conduct. **Our holy living flows out of our living hope in God through Jesus Christ**. And that is where we left off in our last study together. This morning, we are going to look at the third command of Peter found in chapter 1. The BIG IDEA is that: **As followers of Christ, we are motivated by fear to be holy in all our conduct.** *Live in Hope, Live in Holiness, and Live in Fear.* With each of these we mover farther and farther away from the world and the way we used to live and closer to God’s standard of living, which is what brings the most purpose, reward, and fulfillment in this life.

Please open your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 17.

Read **1 Peter 1:17-21**. *Open in Prayer.*

Conduct yourselves in Fear...

When we think of the word ‘fear’, we often connect it to those negative things we are afraid of. For instance, most children are afraid of two things – being alone, and the dark. I know I was when I was young. They were afraid of being alone, because they knew they were absolutely dependent on their parents and others for life. And they were afraid of the dark, because they could not see what was coming for them! And because

of that fear, children take many measures in order to stay close to their parents and stay away from dark basements. Fear can be quite the motivator.

We allow fear to motivate our actions and behavior (our conduct) all the time as adults. Our fear of death motivates us to conduct our lives a certain way. Our fear of failure impacts our work and careers. Our fear of being alone impacts our relationships.

And because of fear we can fall into the trappings of being people pleasers, of not taking chances, and of being stuck in the same discouraging relationships and places. Fear can both motivate us to positive life changes and negative behavior. Here, God wants us to allow our fear to motivate us toward holy conduct or behavior. And these verses explain what we are fearful of.

Conduct yourselves in fear....

1. **Knowing that our Father loves us and is also our Judge.** (v. 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.”

“If you address as Father...” We are reminded by Peter here that God Almighty desires us to address Him, to call upon Him, as Father. This is an amazing truth. **Gal. 3:26, 2 Cor. 6:18, Romans 8:14, Galatians 4:7, Luke 11, John 1:12, 1 John 3:10** – each one of these verses we are told that upon receiving Christ as our Savior, we enter into a new covenant and relationship with God, one in which we are now “Children of God”, adopted in to His heavenly family – *“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are...”* **1 John 3:1.**

Illustration: Many of us know what it’s like to have a father or be a father. To a good father, his child is the most important thing to him. If you watch any father at a soccer game or school play and you follow his eyes, they are constantly on his child. “There he is! Did you see how she did that?” Oh, there are other children running around or singing, but his child is the object of his special love. Now, fathers on this earth are not perfect, and we have plenty of examples of fathers who could seemingly care less, but when it comes to our heavenly Father, He loves us perfectly! Let’s continue on with this thought. That God is our Father means that He cares for us more than any earthly father could care for his own children. What good father wouldn’t sell all he has to get adequate medical care for his child if they needed it? What good father wouldn’t risk his own life to save his child from danger? What good father wouldn’t tear apart anyone or anything that would seek to harm his child? A good father cares for his child! Now, take that and multiply it by an infinite number, and that is how much your heavenly Father cares for you. When we stop on the word, ‘Father’, we need to be reminded of how great the love is that the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God.

But the Father who loves us beyond measure, also is our Judge.

“...The One who impartially judges according to each one’s work...” Each one of us will be judged for our actions on this earth in regard to how faithful we were with what God gave us. Remember, we are all stewards – and God has gifted us with time, with abilities, with money and possessions, and with the Gospel message.

And God will judge us impartially based upon our faithfulness in being good stewards, or in other words, God will judge us impartially based upon our conduct – which means He does not play favorites, He cannot be bought, He is perfectly fair. And even though He loves us and we are His children, we get no special treatment – although *there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1), our work will be tested and we will be rewarded based upon our stewardship of what God has given us (1 Cor. 3:12-14)*. Let us not forget that He is both our loving Father and our impartial Judge.

Conduct yourselves in Fear. This is to be the motivation toward obedience. Now, the ‘fear’ of which Peter speaks is not a paralyzing dread or even a sense of absolute terror. This fear that motivates holy living is based upon two factors. 1) Within the confines of this verse we are reminded that we have a loving heavenly Father. The deep love we have toward Him in response to His everlasting love toward us is where part of our fear lies. Like a child who loves his father so much that he does not want to disappoint him, the love of the Father brings about a response of obedience based upon our fear of disappointing our failing our heavenly Father who has done so much for us. 2) We also see in the words of this verse that our Father who loves us is also our Judge – we must give an account of our lives – this truth, and fear of the deadline motivates us to be prepared to give a good account. Like a college student who knows that the final for the semester is three months away and therefore disciplines themselves to read the textbook, do the homework, show up for class, ask questions when they needed help. This fear of giving an account at the end of the semester motivated them to do what they had to do during the semester to be ready. This same fear is what is to motivate us to be ready to stand before God as His children.

So, Peter is reminding us that we are to **conduct ourselves in fear knowing that we have a loving Father and an impartial Judge – and this fear is to motivate us toward righteous and holy living.**

However, there is another motive that Peter reminds us of – you are to conduct ourselves in fear...

2. Knowing that you have been Redeemed by the Precious blood of Christ. (vv. 18-19)

“Knowing that 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.”

This, like our realization of our heavenly Father’s love for us, is the positive motivation to a holy life. In verse 18 Peter reminds us of something that we know – and sometimes we forget – *that we were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (not by perishable things like silver or gold inherited by our fathers)*. This is why we have communion every month – we do it in remembrance of Jesus’ precious sacrifice – because thinking about what He did for us is to be motivation to holy living.

You have been Redeemed. This is something that we think about often but may not understand it as well as those Peter was writing too. You see, as the Roman empire grew

in power and conquered neighboring countries, they made the conquered people their slaves. There were millions of slaves in the Roman empire and that meant that they were not free to make their own decisions and live their own lives – they were property of the Roman empire. The slave was in bondage and they felt it. To be redeemed meant that they were bought out of slavery and given freedom to live their own lives. So when we think of our Redemption as Christians, we must realize that we were slaves to death and sin and this life *was a futile way of life inherited from our forefathers*. You live for yourself, trying to take as much as you can in order to hopefully bring momentary happiness, and then after years of never really succeeding you get sick and die. What’s the point? It’s futile – it’s empty, it’s aimless, it’s pointless. **But you have been Redeemed (or bought back)!** And that redemption involved cost - your freedom, your liberation, your redemption was purchased by the precious blood of Christ – *the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*. Jesus Christ, came to this earth in order to die a horrific death on the cross, taking on the sins of all humanity, experiencing the wrath of His Father in order to free you from the bondage of sin and death. **Fear of mistreating this precious gift of redemption should motivate us toward holy living.**

One final motivator toward holy conduct is that we are to conduct ourselves in fear...

3. Knowing that in these last times through Christ our Faith and Hope are in God. (vv. 20-21)

“For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these 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.”

God the Father is our Judge, and we are driven toward obedient living because of this. We were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and we are motivated toward holy living because of that! And now, we are motivated toward obedient living knowing that through Christ our faith and hope are in God.

Adding to the precious infinite value of Christ’s sacrifice is the fact that this was the plan all along. *“For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world...and appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God...so that your faith and hope are in God.”* This was not a pity party put on by God simply because we sinned and He felt bad for us; this was the plan set in place, knowing that with free will we would sin. Therefore, at the perfect time He sent His Son, our Savior, to bring about redemption for those who believed. Paul puts it this way, *“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”* **Romans 5:6**. This again points to the unfathomable love of God.

And interestingly enough, Peter tells us that when Jesus appeared, the *last times began*. We have been in the last times for the past 2,000 years – therefore, Christ could return at any time and rapture the Church, putting into motion the tribulation, millennial reign, and final judgment. This tells me that we must live with purpose, not walking aimlessly, but taking advantage of each moment in pointing others toward salvation in Christ. The timeline in which we are living and the sense of urgency that is added to each step should motivate us to live out our faith and hope in God. *And we do this by obedient living.*

Conclusion

Your life matters. Like a ripple, it will have an eternal impact on those around you. The greatest way we can live pointing others to the Savior, is through obedient and holy living. As we approach this new year, I challenge you to allow the love of God, the fear of judgment, the gift of Christ, and the proper sense of urgency to motivate us toward Godly living – to the glory of God and the salvation of those around us.

Let's pray.