*Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb*

1 Peter 1:17-21

11/13/22

Last week, we began to unpack the main body of 1 Peter, which is a long list of commands focused on how Christ’s followers live while they await His return. We noted that 1:13-2:12 give general principles for spiritual growth. These principles are encapsuled in the command: *like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior*. This morning we meet a new command in the “general approach to spiritual growth” category. It includes one of the features that makes 1 Peter so helpful. Peter grabs the future reality of judgment by God and couples it with the redeeming work Christ already accomplished to explain why we are to conduct ourselves in fear. He demonstrates how two theological truths form the basis for our actions. This is what makes Peter’s writings so helpful. Theology is linked to behavior. What we believe should shape how we behave. Our passage calls us to live for the eternal purposes of God because Jesus has redeemed us from sin’s slavery. There are three aspects to this truth found in the text.

First, we are reminded of the future reality that every person will be judged by God, including believers. The conditional statement *if you address as Father* is given in a way that assumes the readers are 1) addressing God in prayer and 2) doing so as if He is their Father. We noted when we studied vs. 3 that only those who are in a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ can rightly address God as Father. So, Peter is assuming that his readers are children of God.

Yet Peter defines the Father as the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work. This reminds us that everyone must give an account to God for their actions. Now this looks different for the believer than it does for the lost. Sinners must give an account to God for their rebellion. They will be found guilty and condemned to hell. This is not the believer’s judgement. Christ bore sin’s penalty for us on the cross. In Him, we escape the wrath and condemnation of God. Yet the bible is clear that believers will be judged according to *each one’s work*.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 3, where this judgment is explained more fully (Read vs. 10-15). Like Peter, Paul is addressing believers, for they have the foundation of Jesus Christ. On this foundation we are to build our lives. Of the materials listed, some are imperishable, while others are perishable. The imperishable represent things done for God’s glory; the perishable items represent things that have no value beyond this life. They may even be sinful. The reality is that every believer builds with both material types. On judgment day, our works will be tested by fire. That which was done for God’s glory will remain, while all pursuits of temporal value will be consumed. The text says that we will receive a reward for the good works that endure. Yet it is possible for the edifice of our lives post salvation to be consumed. Those who poorly stewarded the grace they received from God will suffer loss; yet they themselves will be saved.

So, each of us will have to give an account to God for our lives. Everything will be laid bare before God, who is an impartial judge. He is not a respecter of persons. He is not impressed by possessions or power, nor is He influenced by a charismatic personality. He looks beyond the surface of our actions to our heart motivation. Every secret thought will be revealed, every private sin made known; and every work of righteousness will be exposed. What reflected His glory and advanced His purposes will be rewarded. All sin and worldly-mindedness will be stripped way. Poor stewards of God’s grace will feel the weight of loss, even though they will be saved.

This future reality is the reason for the present command, found also in vs. 17. Knowing that your Father in heaven is the impartial judge of the universe, you should therefore *conduct yourself in fear during the time of your stay on earth.* In other words, live today in light of this future accounting.

What does it mean to conduct ourselves in fear? The answer we often supply is reverence or respect, which is certainly a part of it. But I think that is a little too tame of an understanding of fear. When godly men like Moses, Isaiah, Elijah, Paul, and John had visions of God, they did things like fall down as if they were dead, cry out in fear, confess their sin, and so on. There is something awesome about God that should strike us with a righteous fear.

Now the fear here is not one of rejection or condemnation. Jesus has dealt with all of that for us. We are objects of God’s love. Yet God is nothing like us. He is untamable and awe-inspiring. His presence causes rocks to split and the earth to shake. Hebrews 10:31 tells wayward Christians that it is a *fearful thing* to fall into the hands of the living God. The Christian sub-culture in the US emphasizes the love and closeness of God, which are glorious truths; yet we must maintain a place for fear, for God is nothing like us.

The best way I can think of illustrating this is with the experience most of us had as a child of our parents walking into the room when we were doing something wrong. We got that dear in the headlights look as fear grip our hearts. In that moment, we did not doubt our parents love, care, or commitment to us. Rather, we knew we had violated their love, spurned their care, and tested their commitment. We were about to receive the consequences of that action.

God sees all things and knows all things. Nothing is hidden from His sight. Therefore, we ought to let the fear of violating His love, spurning His grace, and shaming His name after He so mercifully adopted us, control our actions. We do not want to suffer the loss described in 1 Corinthians 3. A healthy fear of His majesty, the gravity of our future judgment, and desire to properly reflect His glory should control our behavior during the brief years we have on this earth.

There is a gravity to this command, for we are wrestling with the things of eternity. If we are not careful, the weight of this can crush our spirits and dissolve our resolved to obey. So, in vs. 18ff., Peter reminds us of a liberating truth: Christ has redeemed you. Our worth to God and His love for us has nothing to do with our actions. It is based on what Christ has done for us. Obedience is not about maintaining God’s favor. It is about living in the freedom Christ provides.

Redemption is a word drawn from the slave world that first century Christians would have been familiar with. A slave is not free to do their own will. Instead, they are captives bound to do the will of their master. Yet a slave could gain freedom by paying their master a purchase price. Redemption was the word used to describe this purchase that bought their freedom. The NT uses this term to describe how Jesus purchased sinners from the slavery of sin. As sinners we are captured by Satan and bound to do his will. God redeems us from that slavery by paying the purchase price. Jesus entered the slave market of this sin-riddled world to purchase a people for Himself from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation and to make them a kingdom and priests to our God (Rev. 5:9-10).

Our redemption is from the futile way of life inherited from our fathers. Sin is the universal problem handed down from one generation to the next. All the descendants of Adam are born hostile towards God and alienated from Him. We must be redeemed from this condition. The futile way of life inherited from our fathers describes the general problem of sin, and the way sin manifests itself in different times and cultures. Peter’s readers were saved out of the debauched culture of the 1st century Roman world, where sin and evil were celebrated and encouraged in many of the ways it is celebrated and encouraged in our culture. Yet Christ invades the darkness of sin with the light of His gospel, saving people from sure and certain destruction.

Peter reminds us what the price of our redemption was. We were not purchased by anything of temporal value. It is amazing how much space the commentaries I read this week spent discussing how silver and gold are not perishable and trying to figure out why Peter says they are. But that is to miss Peter’s point. He is contrasting the things the world values with the things of eternal value. Even the most precious things to the world, like silver and gold, are insignificant, temporal, and wasting away. Although they may be able to purchase freedom for a slave, they have no capacity to redeem us from the slave market of sin. No amount of money, good works, or self-inflicted suffering can deal with our sin problem. We cannot come up with the purchase price.

Yet we are not without hope, for we are not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold. Rather, we are redeemed *with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.* The consequence of sin is death. Yet starting with the first sin, God showed His willingness to transfer that consequence onto a substitute so that He could extend grace and forgiveness to the guilty party. He sacrificed an animal to cover the shame of Adam and Eve’s nakedness. In the Passover lamb and the temple sacrifices, God continued to demonstrate both the consequence of sin and His willingness to transfer guilt onto a substitute. Yet that substitute had to die. Hebrews 9 tells us that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness for sin. The substitute’s blood was shed to cover the guilty party’s sin.

Yet we need more than a covering for sin. We need it irradicated. No animal can do this. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. They are insufficient to deal with our sin problem. All they could do was point us to a greater sacrifice. Here Jesus enters the picture. As a man He did what Adam failed to do; He perfectly kept the Law of God. Then, He offered Himself as a sacrifice on the cross to pay sin’s penalty and deal with God’s wrath. His blood was the payment necessary to accomplish our salvation. We are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Jesus is compared to the lamb of a sacrifice. In the Law, only unblemished and spotless lambs were acceptable sacrifices. Any defect disqualified them. Again, this pictured the need for the Savior to be sinless. He was a spotless, unblemished lamb who came to take away the sin of the world. Like the scapegoat in the Law, our sin is placed on Jesus. He bore it away at Calvary, so we do not have to carry it any longer. His blood was the payment of our redemption. His life was the cost. We are redeemed because God loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to live our life, die our death, and accomplish our victory through the resurrection. God did this so that all who believe in Him might not perish but have everlasting life!

In vs. 22 we are reminded that this was God’s plan from the beginning. Jesus was foreknown before the foundation of the world. This draws our minds back to the 1:2, where we are told that salvation was *according to the foreknowledge of God.* The plan of salvation was established before God spoke one atom of the universe into existence. Yet that salvation had to be accomplished in time and history. So although Jesus was the foreknown Savior, He still had to appear in time and history, which He did in these last times the text says. He did this *for your sakes.* Our redemption and eternal joy were the reason Jesus suffered and died.

We are made recipients of His salvation through faith. Belief in Jesus is how we are reconciled to God. He is our only hope for salvation. Salvation has nothing to do with our works. It is solely because of God’s grace extended to us through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus has done this, God has given Him glory. His is the name that is above every name. His is the name that will one day cause every person to bow their knee and declare that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. His people long for that day, for our hope is in God alone to save us and our joy is the display of His glory over all who oppose Him.

Jesus has set us free from sin and its consequences. This liberates us to live for God. Although we should have a healthy fear for God and are aware that we must give an account for how we stewarded the gift of His grace, the ultimate motivation for obedience is the desire to hear our Father say *well done good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Master.* Jesus paid the price of our redemption so we could be free to live for and walk with God.

This is a truth we all need. Brother or sister in Christ, are you doing this well? If you are, do not grow weary in doing good. Brother or sister in Christ, are you not doing this well? Then what do you need to change to start building on the foundation of Christ with material that will last? Ask God’s forgiveness and seek His strength and guidance to spend the rest of your days living for His kingdom purposes. Even if you look back on you life and realize that for 30, 40, 50, 60 years you have been building with wood, hay, and straw, there is no reason you cannot put a golden Ridge cap on the edifice of your life. Jesus has already dealt with all your shortcomings; live in the liberty He gave you at the price of His own blood.

Finally, if you are not right with God, what are you waiting for. The price of your redemption has already been paid. Freedom awaits you, if you will turn from your sin to believe in Jesus Christ. Seek His forgiveness and ask Him to give you the life provided through His Son. God has never rejected a repentant sinner. He will accept you and cleanse you from all your sin. Be free, for whom the Son sets free is free indeed.

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.*