

“Living in Fear”
1 Peter 1:17-21
November 17, 2024 | Mercy Hill Church

Big Idea: Because we have been rescued by Jesus, we ought to live this present life with reverent fear of God, keeping in mind His coming judgment.

“Persevering as Faithful Exiles” - Sermon Series through 1 Peter

Background of 1 Peter

- **When?** Written around 62-63 A.D.
 - 64 A.D. Emperor Nero falsely accused and persecuted Christians for a fire which burned ½ of Rome.
 - Apostles Peter & Paul were killed (martyred) in subsequent years
- **Where?** Rome
- **To Who?** Christians (mostly Gentile, non-Jewish) dispersed throughout modern day Turkey, regions of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia
- **Why?** To encourage and remind the believers to stand firm (1 Peter 5:12) and persevere

1. Live in Reverent Fear of God (v.17b)

- Main clause in vv.17-21 is v.17b – “conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.” The verses before and after support this main clause.
- **Live Holy Lives** (cf. 1 Peter 1:15-16)
 - Previously in vv.15-16, Peter calls them to be holy. Here, he continues the call for Christians to live holy lives – to be set apart for God, in every aspect of their lives. To be like Christ, as children of God to resemble their Heavenly Father.
- **Live with “Fear”**
 - As Christians we are called to both love and fear God. We are reminded that God is both immanent (near, present, close, knowable, personable) and transcendent (beyond, greater, powerful, mysterious).
 - Commentary Quote: “Thus to fear God means to be conscious of his all-pervasive presence and our absolute, moment-by-moment dependence on him for light and life, keenly sensitive to our comprehensive responsibility to do all that he has commanded, fearful of offending him, determined to obey him, and committed to loving him.”
 - Michael Reeves Quote: “I want you to rejoice in this strange paradox that the gospel both frees us from fear and gives us fear. It frees us from our crippling fears, giving us instead a most delightful, happy, and wonderful fear...The Living God is infinitely perfect and quintessentially, overwhelmingly beautiful in every way: his righteousness, his graciousness, his majesty, his mercy, his all. And so we do not love him aright if our love is not trembling, overwhelmed, and fearful love. In a sense then, the trembling “fear of God” is a way of speaking about the intensity of the saints’ love for and enjoyment of that God is. The puritan William Bates expressed it like this: “There is nothing more fearful than an ingenuous love, and nothing more loving than a filial fear...The fruit of the Spirit is precisely that character which grows out of a God-fearing heart. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are the beautiful, lived embodiment of the fear of God...right fear is at the heart of holiness, making the difference between hypocritical performance and genuine knowledge of God.”

- **Live as Temporary Exiles (cf. 1 Peter 1:1, 2:11)**

- As Christians we live knowing that this world is ultimately not our home. We are “exiles, sojourners” in this life. We will regularly feel like we don’t belong, don’t fit in, or don’t feel fully at home in this world and in this life. Yet we’re also reminded that this not a permanent “exile” but only temporary.

How do we live holy lives in reverent fear of God? We need to remember the future and the past.

2. **Remember Our Heavenly Father is a Judge (v.17a)**

- How we live holy lives in reverent fear of God? We need to remember God’s coming judgment. This reminds us to live our present lives according to His purposes and with reverent fear.
 - In the Greco-Roman context, fathers were more seen as people of authority (vs. affection).
- **Judgement of Works for Christians** (cf. 1 Cor 3:11-15, Matthew 25:14-30, James 2:18)
 - Scripture clearly speaks about a future, coming judgment. Every single person in the history of the world will stand before God in judgment. Every single person will have to give an account to what they have done, what they haven’t done, what they have said and thought. Both non-believers and believers will be judged. The terrifying, sobering news for those who have not repented of their sins and have not placed their faith, trust and hope in Jesus is that they will deservingly suffer the righteous and just judgment of God and be punished. The good news, the amazing news, is that believers, those who have acknowledged and repented of their sins, and have placed their faith, trust and hope in Jesus will not. However, believers will face a different type of judgement – a judgment according to works (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, 4:5, Matthew 25:14-30, James 2:18)
 - This judgment ought to sober us and remind us that how we live and what we do does matter – even though we have been saved by grace through faith alone in Christ alone! Knowing God will judge us according to our deeds will help us to live holy lives in reverent fear of God

How do we live holy lives in reverent fear of God? We need to remember the future but we also need to remember the past.

3. **Remember You Have Been Rescued by Jesus (vv. 18-21)**

- In calling them to live with reverent fear and remembering God’s coming judgment, Peter also reminds them of the past. He reminds them of what Christ has done: specifically, he reminds them that they have been ransomed, redeemed, rescued by Jesus!
- Peter reminds them 3 aspects of their redemption, their rescue:
- **1) Rescued from the emptiness of idolatry (v.18a)**
 - Writing to mostly gentile (non-Jewish) Christians, Peter reminds them that Jesus has rescued them from the emptiness (futile, hollow, meaningless – cf. Ecclesiastes) of their former life; a life which was marked by worshiping and following different idols and philosophies.
- **2) Rescued by the priceless sacrifice of Jesus (vv.18b-19)**
 - “ransomed” (in Greek) was used for slaves in 1st century Greco-Roman times.
 - Quote: “Slavery in the ancient world was based not on race but on economics. A slave would typically receive his freedom after money was deposited in the temple of a god or goddess and then paid to the slave’s owner. The sum paid for the redemption or ransom was referred to as the “price,” and the slave was considered to have been redeemed by the deity”

- As people who were once “slaves” to idolatry (often made out of silver and gold) and sin, they have been freed not through silver or gold but by the precious, priceless blood of Jesus (i.e. His crucifixion, His atoning sacrifice on the cross for their sins and ours) – the lamb of God (cf. Passover lamb).
- **3) All Part of God’s Unfolding Plan (of Salvation) (vv.20-21)**
 - Lastly, Peter reminds them that this plan of salvation wasn’t Plan B or Plan C, but Plan A – the original plan from the beginning. All mysteriously part of God’s sovereign unfolding plan of salvation.
 - If we think of the history of the Bible and the history of the world in 4 chapters: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration/Consummation, we are in the “last times” as we await the final and 4th chapter of Restoration/Consummation.

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Reflection/Application Questions:

- What do you live in fear of? What fears guide, drive or dictate how you live and the choices you make? Do you have a reverent fear of God? Why or why not? What does it look like to have a reverent fear of God in your life?
- What are areas in your life where you need to walk and live in holiness (re: set apart for God)?
- In what ways do you need to be reminded that your present life is temporary?
- How does knowing that you will be judged by God (according to your works as a believer) shape how you might live in the coming weeks?
- How does remembering you have been rescued by Jesus give you assurance and hope today? How might knowing Jesus sacrifice for you encourage you in times of discouragement, depressions or feeling worthless?

Recommended Resource

- *Rejoice & Tremble: The Surprising Good News of the Fear of the Lord* by Michael Reeves