

## THE SURPRISING ROOTS FOR A YEAR OF ABUNDANT JOY

Sunday, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 10:00 A.M.

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**IPAD TEXT - 1 Peter 1:17-19 - “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*, [18] knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”**

Peter knew it was a good thing for Christ’s disciples to call God “**Father.**” He had been right there when Jesus **instructed** His disciples to do so. What **does** seem strange to us is the way Peter links calling God “**Father**” with walking before Him in **fear** - “....**If you call on Him as Father....conduct yourselves with fear....**”(17). One would think knowing God as **Father** through Christ’s redeeming work would **remove** fear in our relationship with God.

He’s not talking to the godless here. He’s specifically addressing those who are **close** to God - close enough to know Him as their heavenly **Father. These** people **especially** should live their lives here on earth - that’s the time of their “**exile**” (ESV), or their “**stay**” (NIV), or their “**sojourn**” (KJV) - they should live their time here on earth as **refugees**. He actually says these people should live here on earth not **avoiding** fear, but **cultivating** it. There is something about their **short time here on earth** (“**exile**,” “**sojourn**” or “**stay**”) that **requires** those who call God “**Father**” to live before Him in fear. They won’t have to do this in **heaven**. But it’s very important that they do so **now**.

I think this is a time when the church **needs** to hear Peter's command in these verses. I know we **always** need the truth of God's Word, and I know it is **always** good for us to study it. But I think there is a deeper need than usual for this particular text. We may not presently be living at a time when the church really **believes** what Peter is emphasizing in this passage. The whole current **religious culture** is geared to **not** emphasize certain Biblical truths, and this is one of them.

Our whole evangelical culture is resistant to the idea that spiritual development should be anything other than **psychologically appealing** and **self-affirming**. We're pretty addicted to **celebrating before God** that we've been conditioned to the point that we can't imagine that fear could ever be beneficial. And if we can't **see** how something will feel positive our whole culture tells us not to bother with it. That mind-set has increasingly found fertile soil in the church in the twenty-first century.

Peter's words in our text are on a direct collision path with that mind-set. Fearing God is precisely the act of allowing His truth to pierce and shape and hammer out changes in many of the ideas we naturally find most comfortable - the ideas that fit most naturally and acceptably with the culture in which we live. That's what Peter is calling us to do here. He's calling us to treasure being **aliens - refugees** - rather than naturalized, comfortable participants in the world-view of those around us.

Here's what's precious about our text. Peter is calling us to remember there is little spiritual growth in thinking only about Biblical truths with which ***we're already comfortable***. Nothing deep is going to take place in that territory. We grow when we launch into truth to which we haven't yet given due attention and weight. That's what Peter is doing in these verses, and that's what I'm calling us to do this morning.

Peter give ***two reasons*** we who call God our Father should conduct our lives here on earth with fear. One comes ***before*** the call to live in fear and one comes ***after***. The command itself is sandwiched between these two reasons.

- 1) **IF YOU CALL GOD YOUR FATHER LIVE YOUR LIFE IN FEAR  
BECAUSE HE JUDGES ALL OF US IMPARTIALLY**

**IPAD TEXT - 1 Peter 1:17 - "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,"**

These words are clear enough. In some strange way Peter is calling these **Christians** to walk in fear because they know about God's **judgment**. We can all **understand** Peter's words even if they seem challenging to **digest**. I have a hunch the average Christian has it pretty locked in his or her head that it is precisely because we **know** God as Father through Christ Jesus that we **don't** have to spend our time fearing judgment.

And we **get** that idea from the Bible - **Romans 5:18** - "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men" ....  
**Romans 8:1** - "There is therefore now *no condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus" ....  
**1John 1:9** - "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." - IPAD TEXTS

These are wonderful, solid promises from God's Word and there is nothing "iffy" or tentative about them. Peter lived in these precious words and encouraged others to always be ready to give a reason for the "**hope**" that was in them (**1 Peter 3:15**). So, yes, Peter knew the reality and blessedness of being possessed by a certain and shining hope.

In fact, perhaps the best way to understand our text is to examine what Peter says about our hope just four verses before he tells us to live our lives here in fear:

**IPAD TEXT - 1 Peter 1:13-16 - “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, *set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* [14] As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, [15] but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, [16] since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”**

Then come the words of our text - **“*And* [There’s the bridge with today’s text] *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....*”(17). - IPAD TEXT**

I hope you can see what Peter is doing here, because the ***failure*** to see it can easily cause the church to become a mirror image of the culture in which she lives. Peter is saying, “Yes, God’s grace in Christ Jesus is both marvelous and free. But it can’t just be ***claimed***. It must ***empower and re-orient and dominate*** the whole of life.”

And to make that point crystal clear he reminds us that God is going to judge, and He is going to judge *impartially* - **“And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds [not words], conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile...(17). IPAD TEXT**

No doubt you've all seen different events at the Olympic Games. And they never have all the judges at the events from the **same** country. They have an **international team** of judges so no one country gets preferential treatment in the judging. They are striving, however imperfectly, for the judging to be done *impartially*.

That's what Peter is reminding us all - **all of us who call upon God as our Father** - about the coming judgment. He says we're to remember it every day. God is going to judge us all *impartially*. In other words, it isn't **calling** God "Father" that makes any difference. It's **living** like He's my Father - manifesting that **genetic likeness** - that brings certainty and peace and hope at the judgment.

And the fact that Peter says it is those of us who **call** God Father who **need** to remember this about the way God judges tells me I tend to **forget** this truth. And that's where Peter says there is a reverent and healthy place for **ongoing fear** in my walk with Jesus. Peter is saying I am to constantly fear **living as though my ultimate passion were something other than dedicating my days - my brief exiled days - on earth to bringing glory to Father God.**

Or, to put it the way Peter does, in terms of **hope (1:13)**, I'm to fear living as though my ultimate hope - my object of passionate delight - was something **other than** the God I call upon in my prayer times as Father. I'm to fear empty words in my profession of devotion.

Perhaps we can make it clearer this way. The mark of the *ungodly* in this world is precisely that they *don't* allow their lives to be shaped by fearing the impartial judgment of God:

**IPAD TEXT - Romans 1:29-32, 3:12-18 - "They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, [30] slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, [31] foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. [32] Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them....3:12.... "All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. [13] "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. "The venom of asps is under their lips." [14] "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." [15] "Their feet are swift to shed blood; [16] in their paths are ruin and misery, [17] and the way of peace they have not known." [18] "There is no fear of God before their eyes...."**



That last sentence is the explanation of all that precedes it. What **makes** these people do the things they do is they **don't** take the righteous judgment of God into account. They don't **walk in the fear of God**. Peter says, of all people, you who make the claim - who **call upon God as Father** - and you who **know** He judges **impartially**, not according to **words** but according to **deeds** - you of all people live your brief stay here on earth **thinking** about the impartial judgment of God.

I said there were **two** reasons given by Peter to spend our **sojourn** here in the fear of God. The first was God's certain, **impartial** judgment. Then, after the command to walk in fear, Peter introduces a **second** reason:

2) **LIVE IN FEAR BECAUSE THE BLOOD OF JESUS, BY WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN REDEEMED, IS UNBELIEVABLY PRECIOUS**

**IPAD TEXT - 1 Peter 1:17-19 - "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, [18] knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with *the precious blood of Christ*, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."**

The blood of Jesus Christ is, to the believer, more precious, says Peter, than silver or gold or bonds or stocks or business expansion or foreign currency or bigger houses and condos in Florida or tax benefits or hockey or soccer. Unbelievably more precious.

***Fear living as though it won't be seen as infinitely more precious.*** Fear living as though the blood of Jesus was only one ***other*** nice thing in your life - as though you ***didn't*** get up every morning determining that, whatever else you ***didn't*** do well that day, you would certainly do nothing to marginalize the preciousness of Christ as your Redeemer and Lord.

But ***how*** can I live as though the blood of Jesus weren't precious? Peter tells us. He says in **verse 18** that the purpose of Christ's blood mustn't be linked solely to ***forgiveness***, but to ***transformation*** - ***"....knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers...."***

Do you see it? The issue of ***showing*** the preciousness of the blood of Christ to you isn't, in this verse, ***forgiveness***. It isn't just singing "Amazing Grace." The issue is ***transformation***.

Again, remember Peter is writing to **Christians** here. He knows how much we love to sing of amazing grace and blessed assurance. And that's all very true. But Peter says Christians should, when they think of the preciousness of the blood of Jesus, also **walk in fear**. They should fear **allowing the wonderful truth of justification by faith to make them careless about a deeply transformed life!**

In the great words of **Marshall Segal** - **"God doesn't only want to remove our sin. He intends to write a new story for us where our sin used to be."** That's it exactly.

Fear having the preciousness of **forgiveness** make you careless about **holiness** - **Psalm 130:4** - **"But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared."** - **IPAD TEXT**

Let these precious verses serve as a light house, steering your life away from the disastrous reefs of self-destruction. Live each day as though God judges by **deeds** and not by **words**. And live each day as though the blood Jesus shed to transform your life, was indeed the most important thing on earth to you. Then you'll quickly see how fear and grace not only occasionally hold hands on a date, but become one flesh in a beautiful spiritual marriage.

Blessed is the one who can, not only quote the verse, but knows **why** the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. You can't live your life this coming year correctly giving equal attention to everything. There is a **starting place** for wise living. And there is only **one** starting place that will be consuming enough to bring blessing into all of the rest. **Mind God all the time**. Don't follow Him with nothing other than an inherited booklet of beliefs. **Think about Him**. You'll be amazed at what will start to grow and flourish in the rest of your ordinary days.