

Discussion on 1 Peter 1:17-21

Sunday School – Sleater Kinney Road Baptist Church – June 4, 2017

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1. TEXT (1 Peter 1:17-21):¹

And if you are calling on as “Father” the one who will judge impartially according to every deed, live with fearful reverence during the time of your stay here, because you know you were redeemed, not by fleeting things like silver or gold, out of your worthless way of life inherited from your fathers, but by precious blood - like that of a lamb without blemish and spotless; that is, Christ, who was appointed before the foundation of creation, but was revealed during the last times for your sake. You, through Him, are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave glory to Him. [He did this] so that your faith and hope would be in God.

¹ This is my own translation from the UBS-5 Greek text.

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2. THINKING THROUGH THE TEXT:

Q1: What is the big point of this passage (which is really one long sentence)? How does it connect to vv.13-16? What is this passage telling you?

- It gives one more reason to *not* conform yourself to the wicked lusts you had during your earlier ignorance
- It gives one more reason to be holy, because God is holy

a. And if you are calling on as “Father” the one who will judge impartially according to every deed,

Q2: What does Peter assume a Christian will be doing?

- He assumes a Christian will make it a habit, day in and day out, to be calling upon Him as “Father”
 - o **Do you?**
 - **(1)** Don't think in terms of one marathon, four-hour prayer session
 - **(2)** Have short prayer time with the Lord throughout your day, as things come up (i.e. a running, intermittent conversation)
 - **(3)** Multiple components; **(a)** praise, **(b)** adoration, **(c)** confession, and **(d)** thanksgiving

Q3: What do you need to do in order to have the privilege of even calling God “Father?” This is a personal name, something that implies relationship between you and the Lord – what is the prerequisite for that?

- You need to become part of His family
- You need to be born again
- You need to repent and believe the Gospel
- You need to be adopted
 - o Only Christians have this privilege, this relationship, with God – and it only comes through repentance and faith in who Jesus Christ is, and what He did (perfect life, sacrificial death, miraculous resurrection)

Q4: What kind of judgement is Peter talking about?

- Believers (cf. 1 Cor 3:1-15) – we'll return to that in a moment

b. live with fearful reverence during the time of your stay here,

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Q5: What does Peter mean when he writes, “during the time of your stay here?” What is he referring to?

- He’s referring to the time away from the Lord
- Eternity is not “being in heaven forever;” it’s to be with the Lord forever
- The Bible tells us that we’ll be in heaven with Him for a *little* while, but our eternity will be spent on a new earth, as part of a new and spotless creation, where God will literally rule from a new and better Jerusalem – and we will see His face and Jesus will be the *literal* light of the world (cf. 2 Pet 3; Rev 21-22)
- Heaven is not the finish line; God’s Kingdom on a new and better earth is the finish line – Garden of Eden 2.0

Q6: Who has an English translation which reads, “fear?” Who has something like “reverence?”

- The truth is that the real sense of the phrase encompasses both – thus it should read something like “fearful reverence”
- The focus is not *just* on terrifying fear, like that of a slave before an evil and abusive master
- The focus also isn’t *just* about reverence (i.e. respectful honor)
- The real sense is a combination of both:
 - o (1) We fear God because He is the One who will judge us
 - o (2) We also reverence Him because of who He is

Q7 (Group Discussion): Peter says we should fear God because He will judge impartially, according to every deed. What does this “fearful reverence” *actually look like*, in real life? If you somebody asked you, “what does it mean to ‘live my life in fearful reverence?’, how would you explain it?

- Perhaps the best way to explain it is this: “It means you love God, and you don’t want to disappoint Him and be ashamed when He brings you home to be with Him forever”²
 - o (1) God is holy
 - o (2) I am sinful
 - o (3) He saved me from myself, and sacrificed His own Son to do it
 - o (4) I owe Him everything, and I love Him more than anything
 - o (5) I don’t want to be ashamed when I see Him face to face (cf. Rev 22:4)

² Hiebert’s summary is perhaps the best; “The attitude advocated is not the craven, cringing dread of a slave before an offended master, but the reverential awe of a son toward a beloved and esteemed father, the awe that shrinks from whatever would displease and grieve Him,” (1 Peter, 100).

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- (6) I don't want to disappoint Him or grieve Him
- (7) So, that informs how I live my life
 - Your motivation is driven by your gratitude and love for God, which produces a desire for loving obedience – you want to do what God says, because you love Him!

i. Short Excursus on Believer's Judgment:

- Perhaps the clearest passage which speaks about a believer's judgment before God is 1 Cor 3:1-15:

Q8: What motivation is driving the Corinthians' actions?

- Jealousy and strife – the church is splitting over favoritism among ministers
- This what they are building on top of Christ; He is the foundation, and the structure they're building consists of jealousy and strife!
 - This isn't a very stable, healthy or Godly structure!
- The sense is this:
 - (1) Each Christian builds a spiritual house, representing his life
 - (2) Christ is always the foundation of every Christian's life
 - (3) Each Christian has a responsibility to build his own spiritual house in a responsible, God-honoring way
- Essentially, Paul is asking you:
 - *What are you doing with your Christian life?*
 - *What are you building on your Gospel foundation?*
 - *Do you want to be holy, because God is holy?*
- Look beyond actions and ponder your motivations:
 - God will reveal what *your* Christian life is built on – and He'll go right to the heart of your motivations
 - Paul's rebuke wasn't necessarily about *what* the Corinthians were doing; it was about *why* they were doing it – they were motivated by jealousy and strife, *not* love for the Lord
 - *Are you building with eternal things? Things that will last - like gold, silver and precious stones?*
 - *Or, are you building with worthless, temporary, consumable things – like wood, hay and stubble?*
- Imagine your life weighed in the balance as a believer when Christ returns:
 - **Read vv.13-15**

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- God's judgment is pictured as a roaring fire which sweeps through this "house" that is your Christian life
 - What will be left in *your* house on that day?
 - Will all your work be consumed and burnt to ash, because it was worthless, ungodly and wasn't done out of love for God and His coming Kingdom? Is it wood, hay and stubble?
 - Or, is your work immune to this fire, because it *is* Godly, worthwhile, and it was done out of real love for God?
- The sense I get when I consider this in my own life is this:
 - (1) I don't want God to be disappointed in me
 - (2) I don't want God to be ashamed of me
 - (3) I don't want to be ashamed when He brings me home
 - (4) so, I'll work to be holy every day,
 - (5) because God is God,
 - (6) and because God is holy,
 - (7) and because God saved me from myself and from Satan
 - (8) and so I love Him and I want to serve Him

Q9: What does your mental image of God look like? Describe Him and sum Him up in one or two words!

- Mine is *holy*; others can be, *love*, *grace*, *merciful*, etc.
- None of the common answers are wrong, because we see each of them in the Bible – but each one has *slightly* different implications for how you understand what "fearful reverence" actually is
 - (1) Do you emphasize "love" so much that God becomes like an indulgent Father who lets His kids get away with anything and everything?
 - This was Eli, the high priest's, problem (cf. 1 Sam 3:13)
 - (2) Or, do you emphasize holiness and wrath so much that God becomes like a tyrant who unleashes thunderbolts at the slightest hint of every sin?
- Think about what we just talked about (living your life in fearful reverence):
 - Peter *could* have told them to live this way or God would kill them – there is NT precedent for that (e.g. Ananias & Sapphira; Paul's rebuke about the Lord's Supper),³ and there is *plenty* of OT precedent!

³ You could also consider the warning passages in the Book of Hebrews as more examples of this. I tentatively understand these passages to be warnings of temporal judgment for believers. For a thorough discussion of this position, see Andrew Hudson, "[A Warning for True Believers Who Lack Faith,](#)" in *MBTJ*

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- An explanation of fearful reverence can take several different forms or nuances, and not all of them will be wrong
- The “obey or die” approach isn’t *necessarily* wrong, if it’s presented right – it’s a possible answer, **but it isn’t Peter’s answer**
 - He pointed to another reason to live in fearful reverence:

c. because you know you were redeemed, not by fleeting things like silver or gold, out of your worthless way of life inherited from your fathers, but by precious blood - like that of a lamb without blemish and spotless; that is, Christ, who was appointed before the foundation of creation, but was revealed during the last times for your sake.

Q10: Why does Peter say you need to live your life in fearful reverence?

- Because of what God did for you by sending Christ

Q11: Why was your former way of life “worthless?”

- Because it was a life lived in rebellion against God
 - You were spiritually dead; that’s why Jesus said you need to be “born again” (cf. Jn 3)
 - You were a slave to sin (cf. Rom 6)
 - You were a child of wrath (cf. Eph 2)
 - You were alienated from God because of your evil thoughts and deeds (cf. Col 1:13-23)
 - Paul said he counted his entire life without Christ as “dung” (cf. Phil 3:4-9)

**Q12: Why does Peter call gold and silver “fleeting things” or “perishable things?”
What’s his point?**

- He’s emphasizing the priceless value of what atoned for your sins and redeemed you from your worthless way of life; gold and silver are temporary; Christ’s blood (i.e. His sacrificial death) is eternal

Q13: What OT passage is Peter referring to when He says Christians have been redeemed by the precious blood of a lamb?

- Probably Isa 53:7⁴

1:2 (Watertown, WI: MBS, 2011), 143-196. This article must be reckoned with before you settle on an interpretation of the Hebrews warning passages.

⁴ See J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, in WBC, vol. 49 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 65; Hiebert (*1 Peter*, 103-104). R.C.H. Lenski suggested Peter had the Passover in mind, but offered no support

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- Some people think it is Jesus as the Passover Lamb (cf. Jn 1:29), but the Passover lamb has *nothing* to do with atonement,⁵ and Peter's point is that Jesus' precious blood is what redeemed us out of our worthless way of life!
- Isa 53:7 speaks of the lamb being led to the slaughter, and not protesting – this is Peter's point; you've been redeemed by Jesus' precious blood, and He *let Himself be killed* for your sake

Q14: Why did Jesus describe Jesus as “like a lamb without blemish and spotless?”

What's the point?

- His moral perfection
- The OT sacrificial requirement of an animal (e.g. bull, goat, sheep) which is spotless and without blemish was an object lesson pointing to Jesus' holiness and moral perfection, not as God, but as man

Q15: If you could sum up the reason Peter gives you (vv. 18-20) for being holy, and living your lives in fearful reverence - what would it be?

- Gratitude
 - Jesus was *destined* or *appointed* before creation itself, and He was revealed in the last times **for your sake** – this is what the prophets wondered about, and angels are eager to know about!

d. You, through Him, are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave glory to Him. [He did this] so that your faith and hope would be in God.

Q15: Through whom?

- Through Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 14:6)!
 - **(1)** God raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him glory (cf. Jn 17:5)
 - **(2)** And, God did all that so that your faith and hope would be in Him
 - **(3)** He inspired a divine record of it

whatsoever (*Interpretation of the Epistle of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* [Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1945], 63).

⁵ Many Christians will immediately think of John 1:29 at this point, but it is not clear what John the Baptist was referring to in that passage. Perhaps the most helpful discussion on what, exactly, John the Baptist meant when saw Jesus and exclaimed, “Behold! The lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!” is by Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, in NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 143-148. Morris believes the Passover was expiatory (144-145; also see fn. 49-50), but I don't believe the OT evidence will support that claim. Leviticus 1-7 knows nothing about the Passover being an expiatory sacrifice. For the record, most commentators basically throw up their hands and admit they're not sure what on earth John was referring to!

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- (4) That divine record is the individual books of the New Testament
- (5) He preserved it so you can hold it in your hands and read all about it
- (6) The result is that your faith has a sure foundation (cf. Heb 11:1ff), and your hope for eternity, beyond your brief sojourn here, should be fully in God

3. THOUGHT-FLOW DIAGRAM & GREEK NOTES:⁶

I can hardly think of anybody who'd be interested in these notes. I made them for myself as I studied the passage, and I need somewhere to store them so I find them later. This is as good a place as any. Please feel free to ignore all this, if you wish!

a. Translation (1 Peter 1:17-21):

And if you are calling on as “Father” the one who will judge impartially according to every deed, live with fearful reverence during the time of your stay here, because you know you were redeemed, not by fleeting things like silver or gold, out of your worthless way of life inherited from your fathers, but by precious blood - like that of a lamb without blemish and spotless; that is, Christ, who was appointed before the foundation of creation, but was revealed during the last times for your sake. You, through Him, are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave glory to Him. [He did this] so that your faith and hope would be in God.

b. Thought-flow Diagram:

Follow-on from vv.13-16 – assumes condition for rhetorical effect	- And if you are calling on as “Father” the one who will judge impartially according to every deed, <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ live with fearful reverence during the time of your stay here,
Command	

⁶ This format is based off Richard Young's discussion on thought-flow diagrams (*Intermediate Greek* [Nashville, TN: B&H, 1994], 268-271) and the format in the ZECNT commentary series. It blends both versions, and I'm not entirely sure it gets the point across well, but I'm using it for now.

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Reason for command	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ because <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you know you were redeemed, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ not by fleeting things like silver or gold, out of your worthless way of life inherited from your fathers, • but by precious blood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ - like that of a lamb without blemish and spotless; ○ that is, Christ, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ who was appointed before the foundation of creation, ▪ but was revealed during the last times for your sake.
Parallel to v.17; subject	- You,
Personal agency	○ through Him,
What you are	- are believers in God,
What God did	○ who raised Him from the dead and gave glory to Him.
Why God did it	▪ [He did this] so that your faith and hope would be in God.

c. Translation Notes:

- Row #1: Greek text (UBS-5)
- Row #2: Parsing
- Row #3: Rendering
- Row #4: Brief syntax notes
- Row #5: Rough, ugly, but more “literal” translation
- Row #6: Smoother, slightly more colloquial translation

καὶ	εἰ	πατέρα	ἐπικαλεῖσθε	τὸν	ἀπροσωπολήμπως	κρίνοντα	κατὰ	τὸ	ἐκάστου
conj	conj	asm	2 nd , pl, p, m, i	asm	adv	papasm	prep	asn	gsm
and	if	Father	you are calling	the	impartially, without respect of persons	He who is judging	according to	the	each, every
	<i>first-class conditional sentence</i>	<i>d.o. of ἐπικαλεῖσθε</i>	<i>Indirect middle; iterative pres.</i>	<i>w/participle</i>	<i>adverb of manner; mod. κρίνοντα</i>	<i>fut. pres.; simple active; substantival</i>	<i>correspondence</i>		<i>partitive</i>

And if⁷ you are calling on as “Father” the one who will judge impartially according to every

⁷ This first-class conditional sentence should not be translated as “since,” (contra. NIV; Simon Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter and Jude*, combined ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996], 63-64; D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter*, revised ed. [Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1992], 97). For the fallacy of translating the first-class conditional sentence as “since,” see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 692-693.

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ἔργον	ἐν	φόβῳ	τὸν	τῆς	παροικίας	ὑμῶν	χρόνον	ἀναστράφητε	εἰδότες
asn	prep	dsm	asm	gsf	gsf	2 nd ,pl,g	asm	2 nd ,pl,aor,pass,imp	perapnrm
work, deed, action	in	fear	the	of the	stay, alien residence, sojourn	your	time	live, conduct yourself	you have known
obj.prep	obj. ἀναστράφητε; manner			partitive			adv.acc. of time	constative aor.;dep.middle	Adverbial, mod. ἐλυτρώθητε; complementary
deed, conduct yourselves with fearful reverence during the time of your temporary residence here,					live				
					stay				

ὅτι	οὐ	φθαρτοῖς	ἀργυρίῳ	ἢ	χρυσίῳ	ἐλυτρώθητε	ἐκ	τῆς	ματαίας
conj	neg	dpm	dsn		dsn	2 nd ,pl,aor,pass,i	prep	gsf	gsf
because	not	perishable	silver	or	gold	you were redeemed, set free, ransomed	from	of the	useless, worthless
reason		dat.of apposition	dat.of means		dat.of means	constative;divine pass.	spatial	attributive gen	
because you know you were redeemed, not by perishable silver or gold, from your									
because you know you were redeemed, not by fleeting things ⁸ like silver or gold, out of your									

ὑμῶν	ἀναστροφῆς	πατροπαράδοτου	ἀλλὰ	τιμίῳ	αἵματι	ὡς	ἀμνοῦ	ἀμώμου	καὶ
2 nd ,pl,g	gsf	gsf	conj	dsm	dsm	conj	gsm	gsm	conj
your	way of lie, conduct	Inherited from your fathers	but	precious	blood	like	lamb	without blemish	and
gen.poss.	obj.ék	attributive gen	contrast	dat.of means		comparison	gen.subj.	att.gen.	
worthless way of life inherited from your fathers, but by precious blood - like that of a lamb without blemish									

ἀσπίλου	Χριστοῦ	προεγνωσμένου	μὲν	πρὸ	καταβολῆς	κόσμου	φανερωθέντος	δὲ	ἐπ'
gsm	gsm	perppgsm		prep	gsm	gsm	appgsm	conj	prep
spotless	Christ	he has been chosen beforehand	indeed	before	foundation	of world	He was revealed	but	at the time of
att.gen	gen.of apposition	attributive;intensive;div.pass.		time	obj.prep	obj.gen	attributive;constative;div.pass		
and spotless; that is, Christ, ⁹ who was appointed before the foundation of the world, but was revealed during creation ¹⁰									

⁸ The normal gloss for φθαρτοῖς is something like *perishable*. But in this context, that simply won't do (cf. Greg Forbes, *1 Peter*, in Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament [Nashville, TN: B&H, 2014 Kindle ed.], KL 1612-1616). The real sense is something temporary and transitory – something that won't last. Those words are a bit too formal for my taste, so I went with “fleeting things.”

⁹ Most commentators and translators understand this to be a genitive of possession – the blood is Christ's. This is certainly possible, but I prefer to take it as a genitive of apposition (cf. NET), further describing and identifying who this lamb is – it is Christ.

¹⁰ The proper sense seems to be that Christ was appointed before anything was made. Peter isn't just speaking about planet earth; he's referring to all of creation itself (Danker, s.v. “3810 κόσμος,” 2). Was Jesus appointed before Earth was made, but *after* Neptune!?! Surely not! In this context, we should move beyond planet Earth and just refer to this as *the universe* or, perhaps more broadly, *creation*.

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ἐσχάτου	τῶν	χρόνων	δι'	ὑμᾶς	τοὺς	δι'	αὐτοῦ	πιστοῦς	εἰς
gsm	gpm	gpm	prep	2 nd ,pl,a	apm	prep	gsm	apm	prep
last	the	times	for	you	the	through	him	Faith/belief	in
att.gen	obj.prep	benefaction	obj.prep	w/πιστοῦς	per.agency	Christ	substantival acc.; predicate; mod. ὑμᾶς; substantival	Metaphorical spatial	
the last times for your sake. Who, through Him, are believers in									
You,									

θεόν	τὸν	ἐγείραντα	αὐτὸν	ἐκ	νεκρῶν	καὶ	δόξαν	αὐτῷ	δόντα
asm	asm	aapasm	asm	prep	gpm	conj	asf	dsm	aapasm
God	the	He raised up	him	from	dead	and	glory	to him	He gave
obj.prep	w/both participles	att., mod. θεόν; constative;simple active	obj.part.	Spatial or disass.	obj.prep		obj.part.	dat.d.o.	att., mod. θεόν; constative;simple active
God, who raised Him from the dead and gave glory to Him,									

ὥστε	τὴν	πίστιν	ὑμῶν	καὶ	ἐλπίδα	εἶναι	εἰς	θεόν
conj	asf	asf	2 nd ,pl,g	conj	asf	p,a,inf	prep	asm
so that	the	faith	your	and	hope	are	in	God
Intended result	acc.subj.inf.	gen.poss.		acc.subj.inf.	result;w/ὥστε	meta.spatial	obj.prep	
so that your faith and hope are in God								
[He did this] so that your faith and hope would be in God.								