

The High Price of a Ransomed Soul
 1 Peter 1:17-19
 Series: True Grace
 Newton Bible Church
 November 26, 2017

Intro: We have come in our consideration of the true grace described in 1 Peter 1 to the third imperative that flows out of having received that true grace. In past weeks, we have seen that the first imperative was to hope in God. The second imperative was to be holy. The third imperative is found in verses 17-19:

1 Peter 1:17-19 (ESV)

¹⁷And 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, ¹⁸knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

The third imperative that flows out of having received true grace is to conduct yourselves with fear. When considering the original language in which this passage was written the first thing that stands out is that our conduct is our choice.

- The Greek in which this was written is significantly more precise than the English words we find in our translations.
- The verb that is translated as conduct yourselves literally means to act, behave, conduct oneself, or live. It comes from the word meaning to turn back and forth, to stay or to live.
- The verb is an aorist imperative – you don't need to remember that, but it is important to realize that in the Greek, this type of verb calls for a specific, definite, decisive choice – it is a command to do this now, at once, and once for all.
- We don't have time to fully develop the Scriptural truth this morning that one of the results of accepting true grace is that we who were once slaves to sin (we formerly had virtually no choice in whether we pursued sinful behavior) have been set free from the power of sin as we submit to the control of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, we now have the ability to choose our conduct. We have already seen that this must be true since the second imperative was to be holy.
- We will see in our text that this ability results in accountability, but that is getting ahead of ourselves – our present task is identifying the nature of the imperative.

The second thing that stands out about this imperative is that the commanded choice involves fear.

- The word that is translated as fear is the Greek word phobos, the word from which we get our word phobia; an irrational fear. That's not what Peter had in mind!
- One literal meaning of that word is fear, but it also means reverence or respect
- Our tendency is to try to soften the message of Scripture and focus upon the less frightening aspects of reverence and respect

- But, if we are honest with ourselves, reverence and respect are not truly reverence and respect if they are drained completely of fear – healthy respect always includes the fear of disappointing the one that is held in esteem – even more so when that person is the object of one’s love
- Whether we like it or not, this imperative involves fear – and that fear is part of receiving true grace!

The third thing that stands out about this imperative is that our conduct is to be regulated by that fear.

- Peter is calling us to make a definite choice, and that choice is to conduct ourselves with fear. To understand what he means, we need to go back to the Old Testament where the “fear of the Lord” is a major theme – Proverbs help us flesh out what it means:

Proverbs 1:7 (ESV)

⁷The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;

Proverbs 8:13 (ESV)

¹³The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.

Proverbs 9:10 (ESV)

¹⁰The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,

Proverbs 14:26 (ESV)

²⁶In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence,
and his children will have a refuge.

Proverbs 14:27 (ESV)

²⁷The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,
that one may turn away from the snares of death.

Proverbs 16:6b (ESV)

⁶. . . by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.

Proverbs 22:4 (ESV)

⁴The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life.

- These verses inform us that the fear of the Lord is the key to long life, wisdom, prosperity, knowledge, happiness, and that it is the single most important quality a father can hand down to his children. Two other Old Testament verses help us understand precisely what it is:

Deuteronomy 5:29 (ESV)

²⁹Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!

- This informs us that the fear of the Lord is a heart attitude.

Proverbs 1:29 (ESV)

²⁹ Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the Lord

- This informs us that the fear of the Lord is a choice.
- When we examine this concept closely we see that true love and fear go hand in hand – or another way to say this is that the fear of the Lord combines the two qualities of love and respect – where there is no respect there is no true love!
- The fear of the Lord is not cringing fear – that is respect without love. Neither is it irreverent flippancy – that is love without respect.
- When I was ten years old I began working alongside my father at the GM dealership in Hillsboro, KS. My dad grew up in a culture that frowned on displays of affection and struggled communicating love to his children. As I worked alongside my dad and saw how he trusted me with difficult tasks, I came to understand that he loved me, even if he found it nearly impossible to say the words. Consequently, my greatest fear was that I might disappoint him. I was not afraid of him, but I feared letting him down. There was a fad during my teen age years of teen-agers calling their father their “old man.” I was never tempted to use that disrespectful term – I sensed the mutual love and respect between us.
- In an imperfect way, that relationship between father and son mirrored the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is not the opposite of love – it’s what love is all about – the fear of the Lord is the most positive attitude you can have toward God
- What Peter was communicating is that this fear of the Lord is what should regulate our conduct – that’s the imperative – to reinforce its significance Peter mentioned reasons why we should obey the imperative.

We are to conduct ourselves with fear because of three specific reasons:

The first reason we are to conduct ourselves with fear is because our lives are being scrutinized.

- Verse 17 prefaces the imperative with a clause that identifies this truth.
- One of the commentators I read stated that In the Greek text, **If** introduces what is referred to in Greek as a **First Class Condition** which means the statement is not a hypothesis but a fulfilled condition. One can often translate the first-class condition by inserting the words **Since** or **in view of the fact**. In the present context **if** assumes that Peter's readers (who are believers) will call God their **Father** and will call upon Him because He is their **Father**. In other words, the **if** alludes to the reality of the child of God's prayer life and worship of the Almighty One. The Greek does not suggest a hypothetical prayer life but assumes that they do in fact pray.
- Peter reminds us that the Father upon whom we call is also our judge.
- F B Meyer in his exposition of this passage linked this judgment to the Bema Seat of Christ. God's children are to be judged, not at the great white throne, but at the judgment seat

of Christ. That judgment will not decide our eternal destiny, because that has been settled before; but it will settle the rewards of our faithfulness or otherwise. There is a sense in which that judgment is already in process, and we are ever standing before the judgment bar. "The Father who judges." The Divine verdict is being pronounced perpetually on our actions, and hourly is manifesting itself in light or shadow.

- Furthermore, our Father is a completely impartial judge.
- **Aprosopoleptos** is derived from a Hebrew idiom "**to receive the face**" of someone, which meant to show partiality or favoritism. This word reflects the respectful oriental greeting in which one humbly turns one's face to the ground upon meeting another person. If the person greeted raised the face of the man, this was a sign of recognition and esteem. Here the word is the opposite or negative aspect of this well-known practice and thus means "does not receive face." That is, God does not receive anybody's face. He is impartial. Outward appearance, wealth, culture, social position, family background, education, beauty, intellect, all things that more or less sway the opinions of man, do not count with God when it comes to appraising a person's character or worthiness.
- We are to conduct our lives with fear because we call on a Father who is also our judge!
- Thankfully, our judge is also our Father! F B Meyer explains: "We call on Him as Father. Notice this reciprocity of calling. He called us; we call Him; His address to us as children begets our address to Him as Father. We need not dread his scrutiny--it is tender. He pities us as a father pities his children, knowing our frame, allowing for our weaknesses, and bearing with us with an infinite patience."
- If He were not our Father, we could not bear His scrutiny. Even unbelievers intuitively know this and seek to avoid that scrutiny. We fall into the same trap when we try to avoid or ignore that scrutiny.
- When I was in high school, the manager of the body shop at the GM dealership where I worked asked for me to be assigned to the body shop. My job was to work on the cars on which the body repairman had finished the rough body work, and to prepare those car's surfaces for painting. That meant priming the grooves left by the body work and getting the surface completely smooth before handing off to the painter. That manager very wisely and very kindly gave me as my first job a car that was headed to the auction and didn't have to be perfect. I was sure that I had gotten the surface completely smooth and the car was painted. Afterwards, the manager asked me to come look at the completed job with him. He didn't say a word as I observed with horror deep grooves in the paint where I had prepared the surface. He kindly explained that every layer of paint magnifies any imperfection, so that a tiny scratch ends up looking like a deep groove. The gentleness with which he pointed out my failure and the instruction he provided on how to avoid it in the future were deeply appreciated. He was not my father, but his scrutiny was welcomed and appreciated!
- How much more loving and kind is the scrutiny of our Heavenly Father!

- Our lives are being scrutinized whether we are aware of it or not. That's the first reason why we are to conduct ourselves with fear.

The second reason we are to conduct ourselves with fear is because our lives are incredibly brief.

- Peter alerts us to this fact by alluding to "the time of your exile" – this is another way of referring to our life this side of heaven. It is during this time that we are to conduct ourselves with fear.
- The testimony of Scripture is that even for those who live the longest, this time is incredibly brief. The older we get, the more in tune with this truth we become!
- One reason it is so important to conduct ourselves with fear during our brief lives is that the world in which we live is subject to futility.
- The word Peter used to describe that way of life is *mataios*. The way we lived as spiritually dead unbelievers was *mataios*. Here are synonyms from the Greek Lexicon entries of *mataios*. Substitute them in the sentence to get a sense of where we once lived before we were redeemed - Ours was a "_____ way of life." It was (fill in the blank) foolish, useless, worthless, fruitless, idle, empty, powerless, lacking truth, vain, profane, irreverent, thoughtless, rash, impious, deceptive, meaningless!
- That's the default mode of every person in this world apart from Christ. That doesn't mean that people don't try to fill their lives with tons of activities. One famous American who filled life with gusto was Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway grew up in a staunch Christian home - his father had even thought of being a missionary. However, Ernest had other goals for his life and left his childhood faith far behind him. He became a writer and a thrill seeker. He hunted big game, fought in several wars, married four women and became an alcoholic. Toward the end of his life Hemingway said, "I live in a vacuum that is as lonely as a radio tube when the batteries are dead and there is no current to plug into." A few years later he committed suicide.
- Our lives are incredibly short. Every moment we allow ourselves to be drawn into the default mode is a moment wasted –a moment where we could have been giving glory to God and helping others come to know Him and give themselves to Him. When we fail to conduct our lives with fear we fall into that futility. That is a double tragedy because:
- We have been ransomed from lives of futility!
- **Ransomed** is derived from [lutron/lytron](#) (which is derived from [luo](#) = to loosen that which is bound, especially freeing those in prison). The noun **lutron** is the ransom price paid for loosing captives from their bonds and setting them at liberty. The verb **lutroo** refers to the releasing of someone held captive (e.g., a prisoner or a slave) on receipt of the ransom payment.
- The Roman Empire had (by some estimates) as many 6 million slaves and the buying and selling of them was a major business. If a person wanted to free a loved one or friend who was enslaved, he would pay the redemption price, purchasing or redeeming that slave for himself and then granting him freedom, testifying to the deliverance by a written certificate.

- Peter informs us that we have been ransomed from that mataios – futility – that was handed to us at birth (inherited from our forefathers). Apart from that ransom we are bound to the default mode of futility and can do nothing to escape. It took a ransom to set us free, or as some of your translations say to be redeemed.
- A missionary in West Africa was trying to convey the meaning of the word **redeem** in the Bambara language. So, he asked his African assistant to express it in his native tongue. "We say," the assistant replied, "**that God took our heads out.**" "But how does that explain **redemption**?" the perplexed missionary asked. The man told him that many years ago some of his ancestors had been captured by slave-traders, chained together, and driven to the seacoast. Each of the prisoners had a heavy iron collar around his neck. As the slaves passed through a village, a chief might notice a friend of his among the captives and offer to pay the slave-traders in gold, ivory, silver, or brass. The prisoner would be redeemed by the payment. His head then would be taken out of his iron collar. What an unusual and graphic illustration of the word **redeem**! Let Him take your head out of the enslaving collar of sin and set you free.
- In this incredibly brief life this side of heaven, only those who have been ransomed and call God Father have been set free from the futility of this world. Expecting anyone who has not been ransomed to conduct themselves with fear is self-defeating. But for those of us who have been redeemed, times a wasting! We ought to conduct ourselves with fear because our lives are incredibly brief.

The third reason we are to conduct ourselves with fear is because our ransom was of infinite cost.

- Peter informs us that we were not ransomed with anything perishable; in fact, nothing perishable could have ransomed us.
- When Peter mentioned “perishable things like silver or gold” he may have been thinking of the Old Testament instruction for how to ransom Israelites who had been counted in a census (apparently censuses were taken to determine military capability and were rightfully seen as an expression of trusting themselves rather than God). We find that instruction in Exodus 30:

Exodus 30:11-16 (ESV)

¹¹The Lord said to Moses, ¹²“When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for his life to the Lord when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them. ¹³Each one who is numbered in the census shall give this: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as an offering to the Lord. ¹⁴Everyone who is numbered in the census, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the Lord's offering. ¹⁵The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when you give the Lord's offering to make atonement for your lives. ¹⁶You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the Lord, so as to make atonement for your lives.”

- In this passage, God provided a means for ransoming those who had been involved in the sinful process of a census, most of whom would have not chosen to be involved.

- In this specific case, God provided a means of ransom that was either silver or gold. But, this ransom only provided relief from a plague; it did not cover anything else.
- Perhaps Peter knew that some of his readers would be familiar with this Old Testament practice and would understand that while silver and gold may have been an acceptable ransom for this specific situation, the testimony of the rest of the Old Testament was that you could not ransom your soul with any amount of silver or gold (or any perishable treasure).
- Listen to Psalm 49:7-8:

Psalm 49:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life,

⁸ for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice,

- This is what the entire Old Testament sacrificial system illustrated: the ransom of a soul requires something that no perishable object may offer – there is not enough money in the entire world to pay the ransom for a soul.
- Even the sacrifices themselves pointed to this truth – the only sacrifices that would cover sin required blood – the death of an animal – and that was only a shadow of the sacrifice that was needed that only God could supply
- This is why the sacrifices had to be done over and over – nothing perishable could ransom a soul – that requires something perfect and imperishable
- Peter informs us that we were ransomed with something that was of infinitely greater worth than anything perishable – our ransom cost the precious blood of Christ
- In the original Greek sentence, Peter placed *timios* or **precious** before **blood**, which is a Greek way of placing even greater emphasis on the indescribable worth of Christ's blood.
- To capture a sense of what Peter may have been thinking about when he referenced the precious blood of Christ, we need to go back to the instructions that Moses was given for the very first Passover. Those instructions are found in Exodus 12:

Exodus 12:1-6 (ESV)

12 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ² “This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. ³ Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶ and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

Notice several things that are mentioned about the lambs that were to be slain and eaten that same evening:

- The lamb had to be without blemish; and a male that was a year old.
- That would make the lamb what every herder counted most precious; it was the very best breeding stock the family would have possessed. This alone would have made it precious.
- But did you notice the instruction to select the lamb on the 10th day of the month and take it from the flock and keep it until the 14th day of the month? Where do you suppose this lamb was kept those four days if it was not with the flock? It is possible that it could have been secluded in a pen by itself, but it is more likely that this lamb would have been taken into the home for those four days.
- Besides the mess that this would entail, anyone who has ever had children knows intuitively that if you bring an animal into the house for that length of time, you have turned that animal into a beloved pet (especially if it is as cute and cuddly as a lamb!).
- Why would God include this seemingly needless instruction in the regulations of the Passover celebration? There are at least two answers to this question.
- The first answer is that the Israelites were not allowed to sacrifice something that was not precious to them. Apparently, even the lamb's breeding potential was not enough – the lamb that was sacrificed had been taken into the family and had become a beloved pet.
- The second, and more significant answer, is that the Passover lamb was a type or a symbol of the Lamb of God that would lay down His life on our behalf. And, as any type or symbol only hints at the reality of that which it represents, the preciousness of the symbol cannot even begin to compare with the preciousness of the reality which it foreshadows. Having the Israelites sacrifice a lamb that had become the family pet suggests the high cost of a ransomed soul. That it cost the infinitely more precious blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ reveals how costly that ransom is!
- We live in an age that is prone to discount the preciousness of that cost. Vance Havner explained it this way: "We live in an age of sham and make-believe, superficiality and ballyhoo, lowered values, and marked-down prices... We have cheap salvation. Salvation is free but not cheap. We are not redeemed with silver and gold but with the blood of Jesus Who gave Himself a ransom for many. The writer of Hebrews speaks of those who count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. One translation puts it, "who treats as a cheap thing"; another, "treated like dirt."
- Our ransom cost the life of our Savior. We must not treat that precious gift like dirt! Yet that is exactly what is taking place when anyone refuses His offer of salvation, or when those who have accepted that gift live as though they had not!

This leads us to several life principles that we are called to embrace. They are directly related to the three imperatives we have been considering. They are:

1. We need to fear living as though our hope is not in God.

- Pastor Matt has reminded us in recent weeks of all the things upon which we are tempted to pin our hope. We have also seen that the only source of real hope is God Himself. Those who have experienced true grace conduct their lives in fear of living as though their hope is not in God.
2. We need to fear living less than holy lives.
 - Those who have not experienced true grace are caught in the trap of futility – living lives that are anything but holy. We were reminded last Sunday that our conduct is to reflect the difference that comes when we have been ransomed from this futility. Just as he who called us is holy (utterly different), we are to live lives that reflect this difference. Those who have experienced true grace conduct their lives in fear of living less than holy lives.
 3. We need to fear living as though Jesus' blood is not precious.
 - We have seen that anyone who rejects the offer of salvation treats Jesus' blood as not precious. We have also seen that those who have accepted that gift but continue to conform to the futile patterns of this world are treating Jesus' blood as not precious. Those who have experienced true grace conduct their lives in fear of living as though Jesus' blood is not precious.

Leslie B. Flynn told a story that illustrates the high cost of a ransomed soul: An orphaned boy was living with his grandmother when their house caught fire. The grandmother, trying to get upstairs to rescue the boy, perished in the flames. The boy's cries for help were finally answered by a man who climbed an iron drainpipe and came back down with the boy hanging tightly to his neck. Several weeks later, a public hearing was held to determine who would receive custody of the child. A farmer, a teacher, and the town's wealthiest citizen all gave the reasons they felt they should be chosen to give the boy a home. But as they talked, the lad's eyes remained focused on the floor. Then a stranger walked to the front and slowly took his hands from his pockets, revealing severe scars on them. As the crowd gasped, the boy cried out in recognition. This was the man who had saved his life. His hands had been burned when he climbed the hot pipe. With a leap, the boy threw his arms around the man's neck and held on for dear life. The other men silently walked away, leaving the boy and his rescuer alone. Those marred hands had settled the issue.

There is a greater Another, whose nail pierced hands remind us of the precious blood that was shed to ransom our souls.

- Do you know this Savior? Have you placed all of your trust in Him and accepted the free gift of salvation? If not, I plead with you to do so today. Would you be free from your burden of sin? There's power in the blood!
- If you know this Savior, are you conducting your life in fear of living as though your hope is not in God? Do you fear living a less than holy life? Do you fear living as though Jesus' blood is not precious? If the answer to any of these questions is "I'm not sure" or "not really," you must humble yourself and confess to a loving Father who is eager to forgive and help you escape the futility of this world's mold. Don't delay, do so today!

True grace has paid the high price needed to ransom our souls. May God help us to conduct our lives in fear of treating that ransom as anything but precious.