

To Have No Fear of Go

1 Peter 1:17-19
March 17, 2013
Dr. David Harrell

Will you join me this morning for our second in the series on *Banished to an island of spiritual infancy*? The last time we were together I spoke to you about the first way that that can happen, and that would be *to love God with your lips but not your life*. The second way that I want us to deal with this morning has to do with *having a fear of God*. If you want to remain a spiritual infant, have no fear of God. The text I would like to examine primarily is in 1 Peter 1:17-19.

So if you will take your Bibles and turn there in a few minutes we will examine that passage of scripture. This morning as we come together I want you to be brutally honest with yourself with regard to your own spiritual maturity. You've heard me say many times that we always need to be suspect of our spiritual maturity. Immature believers are described by Paul as "men of flesh, babes in Christ", I Corinthians 3:1. As we look at scripture we see that the spiritually immature have an internal carnality that causes them to be undiscerning, to succumb to the lust of the flesh and the temptations of the world. As you look at the spiritually immature you will see little love for Christ in their life. You will also see very little of Christ in their life. For this reason the apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Few Christians understand what it means to fear God, to fear the Lord. Particularly in our day where the gospel has been so distorted, where the gospel has been so sanitized to appeal to a culture that hates God.

The message of the Cross is hard for us to fathom. Especially for those who have no grasp of the holiness of God, nor the sinfulness of man. Therefore, they have no fear of God. The gospel is a scandalous message that offends our sensibilities, it shatters our pride and for this reason a friendlier gospel has emerged in our modern era; one that removes the offense of the cross and would have us believe that we are more *deprived* than *depraved*. As a result, Jesus is more of a Santa than a Savior, and churches become little more than a Christmas tree where spiritual children go to have fun and get their gifts and be with their family and friends. Like most kids at Christmas, they seldom get what they really want and they tire of what they do get by dinnertime.

Today following Christ is all about me and my needs, rather than God and His glory. Worse yet, many believers live as if God doesn't even exist, their heart attitude, their thought life betrays a practical atheism. They have no private devotional life. Many have no passion to live for the glory of God. They are bereft of an infant-like longing for the life sustaining nourishment of the Word of God that exposes their heart and allows them to hear the voice of God. They have no concern for personal sin, or for the sins of others. They have no desire to use their spiritual gifts in serving Christ. They have no love for the lost. They have no openness to the ministry of the body of Christ in their life or the life of their family. They have no rich joy in communing with the lover of their souls. They have no sincere love for Christ. No heart-felt gratitude for saving, transforming, and

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enabling grace. No worshipful awe of the astounding attributes of God who died in their stead. So therefore they have no inward groaning, waiting eagerly for their adoption as sons, their redemption of their body as Paul reminds us in Romans 8:23.

Many Christians live their life on the horizontal rather than the vertical. They live on the horizontal plane of self-will and self-fulfillment, rather than the vertical plane of Christ-exalting worship that begins in the heart and is manifested in the life. They live for the fleeting pleasures of the kingdom of self, rather than the glorious splendors of the kingdom of God. Like the saints in Ephesus described in Revelation 2, many have left their first love. I would encourage you to ask yourself, do these things describe me? If so, what has happened to you? While the answer will be multifaceted at a very fundamental level: *you have no fear of God*. Like an undisciplined child that has no fear of the benevolent authority of their father, you have no fear of the benevolent authority of your heavenly father and the result is spiritually immaturity. A life that dishonors Christ, a life of child-like rebellion against God that is manifested in some of the ways that I just described.

Spiritual immaturity is expected when a person first comes to Christ, but it is deplorable for those who have known Christ for many years. You expect a toddler to act like a toddler, you expect a juvenile to act like a juvenile, but if you see the same types of things in an adult we all get a little bit concerned. But not so in neo-evangelicalism of our day. Churches are filled with adults who profess Christ yet function on the level of a spiritual juvenile. Then there are many puerile pastors that live their life in the same immature way and keep the rest of their people at that same level of immaturity. Sadly, most Christians fail to see the problem. I fear that many times we are like the proverbial frog in the kettle that can only detect sudden changes and will therefore die when the temperature of the water increases. So too the church fails to detect the slow changing trends of weak and false doctrine, of ear-tickling preaching that threatens the very life of the church, a church that no longer fears God. How often do you hear the old phrase, "that is a God-fearing person," you don't hear that much these days.

I fear we have lost sight as believers that we live in a world system that is energized by Satan. God has temporarily allowed Satan to be the god of this world, 2 Corinthians 4:4. We know that, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" 1 John 5:19. Two of his greatest strategies would include the following:

1. To undermine the credibility and integrity of the church by filling it with false professors of faith. So the unbelieving world sees the hypocrisy of these so-called Christians and they scoff at the gospel.
2. The enemy influences immature Christians in such a way as to cause them to conform their lives to the culture rather than confronting the culture. Therefore they end up living as practical atheists and they have no fear of God. This is now rampant in the church.

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In his book, *The Juvenilization of American Christianity*, Thomas Bergler defines juvenilization as "the process by which the religious beliefs, practices, and developmental characteristics of adolescents become accepted as appropriate for Christians of all ages. It begins with the praiseworthy goal of adapting to appeal to the young. But it sometimes ends badly, with both youth and adults embracing immature versions of the faith." He goes on to ask: "Why should anyone care about juvenilization? Early in my college teaching career, I asked a group of my students, "What does a mature Christian look like?" They disliked the question and resisted it. One said, "I don't think we ever arrive in our spiritual growth." Another answered, "Well we're not supposed to judge one another." "No one is perfect in this life." The author went on to say, "Sadly, these evangelical college students did not believe that Christian maturity was either attainable or desirable. The churches that had nurtured these young people well enough to get them to pursue a Christian college education had not managed to inspire them with a biblical vision of spiritual maturity."

I have a hard time believing a preacher of the word of God has a reverential fear of God when he stands before his congregation looking like he just cleaned out his garage, and joking around with his congregation with a Bible in his hand. What a contrast to what the Lord expects from His messengers. What a contrast to what He considers precious in His eyes. In Isaiah 66:2, He speaks through his prophet and says, "To this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." My friends I would submit to you that there is very little trembling going on these days, especially when it comes to the Word of God.

The spiritual juvenile has no grasp for example, that Jesus Christ is the creator, the sustainer, the consummator of all things, that He is the son of the living God, a reality so powerful that it caused Peter to absolutely fall down at Jesus feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." What is missing today is an accurate understanding of the vast chasm between the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. Because my friends, that will produce a genuine fear of God that causes a man, causes a woman, to get serious about inward and outward cleansing. This is what motivates a man to destroy the idols he serves in his heart. Today, I wish to help us see from scripture what it means to pursue holiness by having a reverential fear of God, a life-dominating awe of our Sovereign Creator, our Savior and our King, because, my friends, this is foundational to Christian living.

Again, our text this morning is 1 Peter 1:17-19. Here the apostle Peter is writing to the suffering saints in Rome. He is instructing them on how to live holy lives in an environment of mounting persecution. We believe this letter was written just before or possibly at the same time, maybe even a little after that time when the emperor Nero secretly set Rome on fire so that he could rebuild it the way he wanted it for his own glory. When he did that the results were absolutely catastrophic as you can imagine. Not only were thousands of homes destroyed and lost, but also many magnificent temples and

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shrines were reduced to ashes. Moreover, millions of household idols were destroyed, they were suddenly gone. This produced great confusion in the minds of the people in Rome wondering what is it about our gods. They're not strong enough to protect us from such a disastrous fire. So with thousands of Roman citizens homeless and injured, grieving over lost loved ones, confused about their powerless idols, inconsolable over the loss of their beautiful cities, their shrines, even their culture, a seething resentment began to set in. Mourning turned to rage and rage began to turn to revenge. History tells us that Nero recognized the mounting hostility, he needed a scapegoat and so he blamed the Christians for setting the fires. After all the Romans already hated the Christians because they saw Christians as a sect of the Jews, and they hated the Jews. They knew that the Jews and the Christians wanted nothing to do with their Roman culture or their Roman gods. So they quickly turned on the saints to get their revenge, and of course this was Satan's plan all along.

So knowing all of this, the spirit of God inspires Peter to write this powerful letter to encourage and to instruct his precious little church as increased persecution threatened these dear saints who were already beleaguered, many of them homeless, poor, persecuted. In chapter 1 you'll notice in verses 1 and 2 he describes them as, "aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood."

He went on to encourage them concerning their heavenly inheritance, to remind them of the infinite value of knowing, loving, and serving Christ. He instructs them on how they need to think and live triumphantly in a world that hates them. How they can avoid losing their hope and their testimony in a world system that is bent on destroying both. His purpose in writing is summarized in chapter 5:12, "I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God, Stand firm in it."

Having struggled with his own spiritual immaturity that resulted in him denying Christ three times in the face of persecution, Peter knew first hand how important it is to stand firm in the true grace of God. My friends, at the very core of standing firm is the idea of conducting our lives in the fear of God because we know who He is, we know what He has done for us. Because the more we fear God, the less we will fear man and the more we will love Christ. In fact according to Revelation 14:6, we read that just before the Lord returns, an angelic messenger will fly in mid-heaven preaching an eternal gospel to those living on the earth and say with a loud voice, what is really the core of the gospel message. In verse 7 he says, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgement has come and worship him who made the heaven and the earth."

So it is no surprise that Peter would instruct the saints in a like manner saying in 1 Peter 1:17: "And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; knowing

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that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

Beloved, I would submit to you that persecution is looming on our horizon as well. And we will not be able to stand firm in the truth of the gospel if we conduct our lives as spiritual juveniles. So I would exhort you to examine your heart, it is time to grow up! It is time to man up, men in particular. It is time for us to set the example, to stand firm where we work, to stand firm in our families, to model for them what it means to fear God.

This morning I wish to answer the question first of all, what does it mean to fear God? Then we are going to look more closely at Peter's words because I believe that in these three verses, three dominant themes emerge. We are going to look at:

1. The object of fear.
2. The conduct of fear.
3. The motivation for fear.

So, what does it mean to fear God? Have you ever thought about that? Solomon says in Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." We see this sacred thread of fearing God woven all through the tapestry of Scripture. So what does this mean? Well, at a most fundamental level to fear the Lord means to have a deep, reverence for God expressed in submission to His will. But fools, as Solomon says, despise such wisdom and instruction. They are self-willed, they are mentally naive, they are morally irresponsible, and they are spiritually dead. They fear man, not God.

God helps us better understand this important concept by explaining it in Deuteronomy 4, God speaks through His people through Moses, He is urging Israel to obey His law. In verse 10 Moses says, "Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb." Horeb is a synonym for Mount Sinai. Now the Israelites who lived in that day would have a hard time forgetting that event because, as you will remember, that was the time when the Lord Himself descended upon Mount Sinai in blazing fire. The word of God tells us that smoke ascended like smoke of a furnace that the whole mountain quaked violently.

In Hebrews 12:18 we read, "There was darkness and gloom and a whirlwind." It was a terrifying scene. We read in Exodus there was a sound of a trumpet that grew louder and louder. Then God himself spoke with a voice of thunder. Can you imagine that? Such majesty and power caused the camp of the Israelites to quiver in sheer terror. They were so horrified that they said to Moses in Exodus 20:19, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die." My friends think about it if the sound

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of the voice of God was life threatening, what would it be like to somehow stand in His presence? The concept is overwhelming.

We read in Hebrews 12:21 that even Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling."

In Deuteronomy 4:10 again He exhorts the people to, "Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'" Briefly, I'd like to point out four very obvious truths that emerge from this text.

1. God expects us to fear Him because of His majesty and power! Those who don't, have no understanding of the holiness of God, of the otherness of God, of the transcendent glory of God. He is beyond anything that we could ever even imagine.
2. Fear must be learned from His revelation to us. We must hear His words so that we learn to fear Him.
3. Fear includes being obedient to His revealed will.
4. We are to teach our children to fear God.

So fearing God my friends is not just conjuring up some kind of emotion, working yourself into some kind of charismatic frenzy. Fearing God means that you have to know who He is based upon His revelation of Himself in His word. You must learn that revelation, you must submit your life to that revelation, obeying His revealed will and as a result, you will have a fear that is so precious to you that you will teach it to your children.

This theme is also reiterated in Deuteronomy 10:12. There we read, "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord which I am commanding you today for your good?"

Now what's amazing is that the Jews failed to do this. They forgot very quickly the God of Mount Sinai, and my how we all tend to do the same. But because of God's unfailing, covenantal love for His people, He promised to one day restore them back unto Himself. Many passages speak to this. One is in Hosea 3:5, there the Lord tells His people through His prophet, "Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king (a reference to the Messiah during His millennial reign); and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days." Here we glean more about this idea of what it means to fear God.

Notice, by God's grace, Israel *will* eventually fear the Lord when they finally confess who Jesus is. That will be a testimony of confession that is so exceedingly painful that it will

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cause them to tremble as they come towards Him. You want to know what that confession will sound like? You want to have a glimpse of what fearing the Lord sounds like? Let me read it to you, Israel's future confession. I'll read just a short portion of it found in Isaiah 53:4-6, here's what they will say, in brokenness of heart: "Surely our grief's He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried. Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." They thought Jesus was a blasphemer that deserved to die, a false Christ that God wanted them to get rid of. "But He was pierced through for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us have turned to his own way; the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

Oh dear friends, what a heart-wrenching confession. This is what it sounds like to come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness. To think that one day they will realize that all of their acts of self-righteous law keeping were to no avail, they counted for absolutely nothing. Millions of their people that went on before them were self-deceived and perished in their sins. We read more of this in Zechariah 12:10 where we hear what the Lord, whom they should have feared will do for them. There we read, "(I) will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born."

So indeed, my friends, as in Hosea 3:5 prophesied, "they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days." Oh child of God don't you see this? This is what it means to fear God. You see, they will not have a fear in that day like they had at Sinai, a fear of judgement that causes the sinful men to tremble with terror. Because perfect love casts out the fear of judgement and cause them to treasure that fear, that awe of the Lover of their soul. But in that day their fear will draw them to their Messiah. A fear that comes as a result of sanctifying grace, as a result of covenantal love; "they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days."

The fear of the unsaved evokes terror and causes a man to flee from God, but the fear of the saved evokes love and causes a man to run towards God. The fear of the unsaved will cause them to one day call out, "for the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the presence of Him who sets upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." Revelation 6:16. But the fear of the saved causes us to say, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

You see, there is a huge difference between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion. Both evoke fear. Mt. Sinai ignites the terror of offended holiness. Mt. Zion, on the other hand, animates reverential awe and a sheer astonishment of salvation by sovereign grace. As Christians we will never have to come in terror to Mt. Sinai because "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Instead, according to Hebrews 12:22-24 we, "come to Mt. Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

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to the general assembly and the church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood."

My friends even as the redeemed of Israel will one day come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness; we as the redeemed church today come trembling before Him. Are we not to work out our salvation in fear and in trembling? Why? Because it is God who is at work in us (Philippians 2:12). Unless you grasp this, my friends, you will never fear God. Dear child of God think of this! What worshipping awe comes sweeping over us when we reflect upon the majesty and excellency of Christ who has saved us! What sanctified trembling animates our tears of joy when we look upon our sovereign God who is the King of kings and Lord of lords and yet who has stooped so low as to make us His adopted children. What quivering with sacred delight to do as the Psalmist says in Psalm 2:11, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." What reverential adoration consumes us when we get lost in thinking about the splendors of heaven that await us.

Oh, the goodness, the greatness of God that should cause us all to fall prostrate before Him in fear and trembling. Dear Christian, this is the kind of fear that we must cultivate in our hearts. A fear that marvels at God's revelation of Himself as we learn more of who He is. A fear that longs to learn more of what He tells us in His word, so that we can submit our lives to Him, and so we can teach our children and warn them. Then we can say with Job, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees Thee; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes!" Job 42:5-6. My friend this is what it means to fear God!

Now we come to our text in 1 Peter 1:17: "And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth."

First we examine, *the object of fear*. Who is this? It is the One who we address as Father. Here we understand even better what it means to fear God. There is a big difference between fearing God and being afraid of Him. Here we are to fear our Heavenly Father, but not be afraid of Him. In fact the very term "Father" denotes origin, it denotes intimacy, and it emphasizes personal, relational love, that relational aspect of our union with God. We are His children. What does a father do with his children? He loves them! He provides for them, he protects them.

So we are not afraid of Him. Before salvation, He was our judge. We stood condemned in His presence having violated His law. But then, because of His great love for us, He drew us unto Himself in salvation. He made us His sons and his daughters. Now after salvation, He is our gracious heavenly Father. As a child fears his father out of respect for his father's authority and the essence of his character, he will also be in awe of his father's strength. I love to see that in little children when they look up at their dad and their just in

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awe of their dad. The little child will tremble at the thought of disobeying the father that he loves and who loves him. Certainly he wants to avoid chastening from the father, but even more importantly, he wants to avoid anything that might cause his father to be disappointed in him. You see my friends, a child fears his father not because he is afraid of him, but because he loves him. In fact, the closer he gets, the safer he feels.

This is the experience of every person who has been justified by grace through faith in Christ. Romans 8:15 Paul says, "You have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba! Father!" A term of endearment, daddy, papa!

So the object of our fear is the one Peter says we "address as Father." The term address means to call upon, or to appeal to, and that's what we do even with our earthly fathers when we are young. We appeal to them; we call upon them when we need help. We know that the father is there to protect and provide, and that is true of our heavenly father. Did not Jesus teach us to pray: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." Matthew 6:9. You see to hallow His name is to fear Him, it is to acknowledge His supreme holiness, to honor Him, to give Him glory, to give Him praise because of His consummate perfection and power, because of His infinite purity and righteousness. This is at the heart of worship.

But unlike our earthly fathers, Peter reminds us that our heavenly Father sees all that we do and records all of our deeds, both good and bad. He says He is "the One who impartially judges according to each one's work" for this reason Peter warns us to "conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth."

Here we move from the object of fear to number two, *the conduct of fear*. Or another way of putting it, the fruit of fear. Perhaps a good way of thinking of it is to use the Latin phrase *coram deo*; this refers to doing something that takes place in the presence of, or before the face of God. Do you realize that you live before the face of God? Your heavenly Father, as we see here, is "the One (who) impartially judges according to each one's work," so to conduct yourself in fear means that we must live our lives with the full awareness that we are living in the presence and under the authority and for the glory of our God. So we don't compartmentalize our lives and in private live one way but in public live another way. That is hypocrisy! If that is you, there is something wrong with your fear of God.

Do you ever consider that He is watching and He is recording, an amazing thought isn't it? He will chasen and He will reward. How tragic to see so many Christians living under a cloud of divine chastening and forfeiting eternal reward. Like a rebellious teenager who is grounded, only many times they don't even know it. All of the things that we forfeit in our lives because of our rebellion. This should evoke a healthy fear of God, not a slavish terror of eternal condemnation, because Christ has satisfied God's wrath on our behalf,

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but it should evoke a sanctified trembling, a holy caution that does not contradict what Jude says, that someday we will “stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.”

As a horseman I have a healthy fear of a horse. I respect his great power to hurt me. That fear prevents me from becoming careless. I must work in harmony with him and when we work in that way we have a wonderful relationship together. The same, at some level, can be said of our conduct in our lives before God. We want to avoid His chastening on earth. We want to avoid forfeiting any blessing in heaven. Therefore Peter says "conduct ourselves in fear during the time of our stay on earth." Now I would add here, it's not so much a fear of judgement or a fear of loss of reward, but think of it in a positive way. We conduct our lives with a positive awe, with a reverent astonishment that flows from a heart that is so overwhelmed by God's undeserved mercy that there isn't anything that we would do that would spurn our Father's love for us, given all that He has done for us.

What an unfathomable price was paid for our salvation. Jesus paid it all! And this is the kind of fear that Peter is describing. It's as though he is saying, “I don't want to do anything that would grieve my heavenly Father. Not merely because I dread His discipline, though that is true, but because I abhor anything that might cause a breach in our relationship.”

Peter knew what that felt like in ways that would be hard to imagine. As we look at scripture we see that Peter could see Christ and Christ could see him when he denied him that third time. The word of God says, "while he was still speaking, a cock crowed and the Lord turned and looked at Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord . . . and went out and wept bitterly." Luke 22:60-62. Don't you know that is a site he will never forget. Somehow I can see it myself with my own life. How many times I have denied the Lord in my life. What a powerful form of divine discipline and deterrent for sin.

The writer of Hebrews addresses our earthly discipline from the hand of our Father and His warning in Hebrews 12:5, "you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives. He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness."

On several occasions Paul cautions us about the loss of reward. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15, "each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built up on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

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In 1 Corinthians 4:5 he says that when the Lord come He will, "bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God."

He says in 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, "Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him, for we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." My friends, the Father who loves you is watching and recording.

So because of our reverential, all-consuming, astonishing awe of our Father we should conduct ourselves in fear. Peter gave a brief summary of what this looks like in the preceding verses in verse 13, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am Holy.'" In other words, live in light of eternity, and live separate from the world.

Does this describe you? Or do you live for yourself today, the here and now and live in harmony in the world as if the Lord doesn't exist? Does your life conform to the culture or does it confront it? Ask yourself, do I live *coram deo* before the face of God and friends, if none of this resonates in your heart, please hear me, you have no fear of God.

This brings us to finally to, *the motivation for fear*. Notice again the end of verse 17, "conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; knowing that you are not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

Oh child of God don't miss this! We have been redeemed! A ransom was paid to release us from the bondage of our sin, from the penalty and the power of sin. That ransom was the precious blood of the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing on earth that compares to the value of the blood of Christ. What greater motivation could there possibly be for us to conduct our lives in fear. Our obligation as the redeemed is to love our benefactor in proportion to the price paid for our ransom. Our ransom was paid, "with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

We must never forget that God cannot be merciful at the expense of justice. Every sin must be punished because God is Holy. Since we have violated His holy law we are indebted to Him. He alone is the creditor who can establish the terms of the ransom. The only ransom that could be paid is the blood of His Son, thus the Lord Jesus Christ became

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our substitute who paid the penalty. "He made Him who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Corinthians 5:21.

How can we possibly reflect on the marvel of our redemption and the love of our Redeemer without falling on our faces in reverential awe? When we really grasp what it means to fear God, once again, we will fear man *less* and we will love Christ *more*. Peter learned this lesson well as we study his life. From Scripture we know that he served the Lord faithfully for some 40 years knowing that he would eventually be crucified, according to Jesus' prophesy. That is what happened 2 years after he wrote this letter. Tradition tells us that before he was martyred for his faith he was required to watch his wife be crucified. They said that he got before her on his knees over the period of time that it took for her to die, and he kept saying to his dear wife, "Remember the Lord." Then when it came his turn, we are told that he pled with his executioners not to be crucified in the same way that the Lord was crucified, because he was unworthy of that, he wanted to be crucified upside down, which they did.

Dear friends the more that you fear God the less you will fear man and the more you will love Christ. If you have little fear of God, you will have little love for God, and you will remain in a state of spiritual infancy, undiscerning, undisciplined, unruly, unhelpful, unfaithful, and unaccountable. I humbly call you this day to repentance. If you are here today without Christ, I would have to say that you fear man, but you don't fear God, you know that in your heart. Jesus warns in Matthew 10:28, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both the soul and body in hell." May God grant you the grace to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the judge of the living and the dead. Trust Him as Savior today and walk in fear of the Lord, and then you will enjoy the infinite blessings of His love.

Let's pray together, Father we are so thankful for Your love for us. Indeed, we are overwhelmed with a sense of awe as think of who You are. And because of that, Lord we do not run from You, but we run towards You. How we long to run into the presence of the glory of the triune Godhead someday, by Your grace, for Your glory. Lord for anyone who does not know Christ, how I pray that you will be merciful to them this day. Overwhelm them with such a profound conviction that the legitimate fear that they *should* have right—now knowing that the wrath of God abides upon them—will cause them to run to the cross and beg for that mercy You will so freely give. Do Your work of grace this day, I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.