

AS YOU CONDUCT YOURSELVES THROUGH THIS WEEK, OUR FOURTH WEEK IN ISOLATION (MAYBE LONGER)...

Work through these questions 1 Peter 1:17-21 raises.

(Pastor Kyle's sermon and Pastor Bob's commentary below will help you.)

1. Do you view your "heart," as something you are to give direction to or as something that you have no control over, something that shapes you independent of you?
2. The "lens" Peter says we should view our life activities and thinking through is that we live in a foreign country. Along these lines, what are some of the thoughts/attitudes that are "earthy" in you that the Holy Spirit has challenged so far in our study in 1 Peter?
3. It is a privilege to be able to "call on Him as Father." It is also a stewardship. What is healthy about your "fear" of God, and what is unhealthy? What would you like the Spirit to do in your heart to make this healthier in you?
4. Jesus is both our Judge and Savior. How is this impacting the direction your thoughts take in the events of this week?
5. Christianity is a system of beliefs, but it is more. List some things that this faith of yours IS because of the beliefs it has taught you.

A HIGH-YIELDING, BONUS ACTIVITY

It is always good to remind yourself of three important ideas; sin, righteousness and judgment. I know, it sounds like three subject areas to avoid!! The Judge's ideas about these are very different than what we might think. Early this week, read Jesus' words in John 16:5-11. There He talks about the Holy Spirit developing convictions in us on these three ideas.

Each day see if you can discern His instruction and His thoughts flowing into your mind about sin, righteousness and judgment. He might identify sin in you in some new way or teach you something about sin that you had not thought through before. He will do the same about what is righteous and just. He will also bring to mind Jesus' future judgment. He will remind you of your hope in that judgment, that He will make wrongs right and establish forever His justice. He will also remind you of WHO matters most in your mindset and decision-making.

Each day write some of this down, new things or things that you are becoming more aware of. You will grow quickly as you make yourself aware of what He wants you to know about sin, righteousness and judgment! You might expect this to fill you with anxiety and guilt. It will not if as you do it you recall what is true about Him. As you come to know the truth about these three subject areas you will be filled with hope and a great sense of purpose. Try it. It leads to freedom!

1 PETER COMMENTARY

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.

There is an appearance before the judgment seat of Christ that Christians make. Not with respect to our sin. That has been judged at the cross. It is why Jesus died and He removed all our guilt. But, there is something real at stake in this judgment of Christians by God. We might argue the exact nature of the judgment of believers in terms of its timing, but one thing is certain, we will be held accountable with respect to our work.

Paul spoke of this judgment. He indicated that the judgment of God would be concerned with our contribution to the Church, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:9-15), and likely even to a specific local church. Both Peter and Paul use the term "works" when speaking of what we will be judged for. It seems best to see this as harmonious with Jesus' teaching regarding the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), or the minas (Luke 19:12-27). We will be held accountable for how we managed everything we have been given from the truth to our material things.

Peter begins this statement with the phrase "if you address as Father . . ." The word "if," in this case, could be rendered "since." Peter is referring to our connectedness to God and our acknowledgment that He is both a source to us of care and resource as well as an authority. Since we see Him in this way and publicly speak of Him in these terms our lives should be lived in a way that reflects this belief. Our lives should be marked by care with respect to His interests and resources. There should be evidence that His household and kingdom is what we consider to be our real home and that we regard our time here as a temporary stay.

1:18—knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,

There are some things in this verse that must motivate us and shape our thinking in this life. They are our understanding of three things that Peter's words here bring to mind. History shows that created things, including humans need to be actively guided and managed with the Creator's wisdom. Apart from His guidance the creation groans. And, the groaning gets louder. It was never meant to be lived any other way. Changing this will change us, change the Christian movement and could change the world.

Peter refers to our lives as "futile." The first thing to note is that there IS a futility that comes with the life that we have inherited as humans. This refers in part to the fact that life requires much effort that, if not expended wisely, only worsens existing challenges. The wisdom of Yahweh the Creator can change that. Apart from Him we do not have the wisdom to match our intellectual ability. We leave the world worse than it was when we entered it.

The writers of Scripture did not suggest that a mere belief in God is what we need, though that is where we start. Rather, we need intimate relationship with Him, a relationship and companionship of trust. By that we are helped each moment by His Spirit to discern the voice of wisdom in the midst of all the voices we hear. Apart from divine guidance we solve problems only to create others and all aspects of our world deteriorate.

This is true of both the conservative and the liberal. We must note that the "forefathers" Peter references refers to were those of his own Jewish heritage and that of his readers. Judaism delivered a futile way of life. There was not an absence of religion in that heritage. There was a lack of God's presence. This was true of the conservative Israelites, the Pharisees, who killed God's Son Jesus. It was also true of the liberal Israelites, the Sadducees, who joined the Pharisees in killing Jesus and also denied the resurrection and most miraculous elements God wishes to bring to bear on human problems. Ideology alone isn't what makes humans rise to living well. We rise as we practice a moment by moment relationship with our Creator. That is what He Himself has provided for us. It is what He desires and that we need. Creation needs it from us!

A second idea conveyed by "futile" is the inability of the things of this life to make any substantive difference in the quality of our lives. Things do not impart our more subjective needs for happiness and satisfaction. Nor does our ability to lengthen our lives. Yahweh's wisdom and companionship makes things like our marriages and other relationships work. Yahweh's wisdom and companionship enables us to manage wealth well. Yahweh's wisdom and companionship helps us derive what matters from our experiences, rather than just having experiences. It is in living our lives in partnership with Him that we receive a new kind of life. But life itself, even when lived with all the trappings of western civilization including religion, cannot deliver real life. It is futile to expect life lived by our own instincts to satisfy and fulfill us.

Third, we have the great opportunity to live life WITH Yahweh the Creator because we have been redeemed. Payment has been made in our behalf to buy us out of our slavery to sin and life lives in hostility to Him. But that payment was not merely money, as it would have been for a slave in the ancient world in Peter's day. The payment was made with something of value to God that will be named in the next verse.

Knowledge of these three things should help us turn continually in reverence to God. Simply knowing what He has done should shape our agenda and our years on this planet. It is this life of trust in Him and continual submission to Him that will fill us up.

1:19—but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

Our redemption, our release from the futility of this life, came about through the blood of Christ. All blood is precious in God's sight. Whenever someone dies something precious has been lost. The life of Christ was uniquely precious because it was a sinless life. He was without blemish. There was nothing about His life that was wrong and there was nothing about His life that was not wise and exemplary. It was a unique life in that it was the life of the God/man, God's one and only Son.

A human life has never been constituted as that life was, the perfect union of human and divine nature. It was a physical and spiritual marvel and miracle. Life has never been lived as that life was lived. It was the perfect life both in terms of how it was genetically composed and how it was experientially lived. Jesus was rightly related to God, to creation, and to people. His lifeblood was given for us. His life was uniquely composed and uniquely exploited. Our redemption and freedom required it by the Laws of God and God provided it.

1:20—For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for you.

The word rendered "foreknown" in the NASB is one about which two observations should be made. First, it is a perfect tense, signifying action that took place in past time with a result that continues to the present time. Second, it is a word that expresses not simply knowledge of someone's existence or the facts about them, but knowing them in the sense of having a relationship with them. So Christ, before His appearance on earth and before the appearance of the earth was "known" in this sense by God.

God related Himself to Christ in a way that continues to the present. We understand this because we believe in the trinity, that Christ shares the same essence as the Father. Peter's purpose here is not to teach or even reinforce that particular doctrine, but his statement is such that the doctrine of the trinity is affirmed.

Another subject that can be commented on in passing because of these verses is the reference to "the foundation of the world." In the cosmogony of the day that referred to the thing upon which a flat earth was set. There were various theories about how this was composed. By our understanding of the "foundation of the world" we think more of the fundamental elements of which things created are composed—of atoms with their protons neutrons and electrons. We think of natural law. So we confront language chosen by the human author based on incomplete understanding of the earth. At the same time it would accommodate the understanding of the original readers. This was allowed by the Spirit because it is language that would rightly accommodate natural revelation once it was more fully understood.

This difficulty of giving special revelation that would be absolutely true through human authors whose understanding of natural revelation was quite limited, was handled often in this way by God to maintain the character of the Scriptures. God placing His truth in understandable, readable form was no easy feat. But His method resulted in an authoritative and timeless book that will be shown to be in absolute harmony with natural revelation, once the latter is thoroughly understood. It is also an example of a statement that likely was intended by the human author to be plain literal, and ends up to be more of a figuratively literal one.

But so far, we have spoken of things which are cast alongside the main point of this verse which is Christ. The point of this verse is that the plan and person of redemption are prehistoric in terms of earth's history. So before God made the earth and before He created humanity, He knew about Satan's work in creation and the predicament humans would fall into. He embraced the Son, the second person of His own being as the Redeemer, the one who would become a man, appear on earth and die as a substitute for humans.

We who live today have come to exist on earth after Jesus appeared as that redeemer. Our faith and trust in the plan of God and in His faithfulness in executing it should be unwaivering. He has appeared "for us," literally "because of us." There was no other reason for God to become a human. This verse emphasizes the wonder of this plan and the actuality of it. The Greek expresses a contrast between what Christ was to God "on the one hand," and what He became because of us "on the other hand."

1:21—who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

It is through Christ that we have come to know and believe in God. This verse states the benefit we have received, and also states from whom and through whom it came. We have become believers in God, people whose hope for their "nakedness" (the lost blessing) is God. The human dream, since the fall of Adam has been persistently identifiable yet wrongly focused. People ache for more. There is in our deepest being a need to be restored to fellowship with our Maker. We feel it. Each human can identify a search they are on, though few would identify it as this. But this is what it is, the ultimate cause of every discontent that we experience.

Because of the work of God that He has carried out through Christ we have come to place our faith in God in such matters. Our hope is in His plan, that through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection we who believe will one day share in Christ's glory. Christ's life and teaching have made known to us this great plan of God. His resurrection is the clear and unmistakable sign that He was who He claimed to be and that His teaching was true (John 2:13-22). So through Christ our faith has come to rest in the plan of God to undo our spiritual death and so to destroy the sting of physical death. He will restore the glory lost to humanity in the fall of Adam and Eve. It will, in fact, be a greater glory than the glory lost. We have come to have hope though living in a hopeless world.