

“HONOR YOUR FATHER AND JUDGE”

1 Peter 1:17-21

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Perhaps the most seductive adversary any of us has to deal with is apathy.

Apathy is a state of indifference. It's what you have left over if you allow your hopes and passions to be squelched.

Your frame of mind changes to: “*I give up*” or “*I'm not interested*” or “*I don't care.*”

If enthusiasm is a positive mindset, and fear is negative, then apathy is a ‘nothing’ attitude. To be apathetic is to be spiritless.

Someone asked Jimmy Buffet if he was being ignorant or apathetic. He answered, *I don't know and I don't care.*

- You might think that apathy is a harmless and victimless condition. It's not!

Bodie Thoene said, *'Apathy is the glove into which evil slips its hand.'*

Apathy can lull you into a *sluggish indifference* toward something that deserves your high-adrenaline attention.

Hellen Keller said, *'The apathy of human beings is the worst evil.'*

The Apostle Peter wrote a letter to the beleaguered Christians in N. Asia Minor. The Emperor, Nero, had essentially declared open season of Christians in the Roman Empire.

Peter implored the Christians not to give up and let *apathy* lull them into indifference about God and their relationship with him.

- How do you get people to stop being apathetic?

It isn't easy. They're usually too apathetic to take you seriously.

Somehow you have to help them be what they ought to be.

- Our Scripture text this morning is 1 Peter 1:17-21.

How did the Apostle Peter confront the danger of apathy in the Christians of Asia Minor?

He actually told them to *conduct themselves with fear* during their difficult earthly sojourn.

This seems a bit strange, because he has just finished giving them all kinds of encouragements and urging them to stand strong and true.

- So why does he now tell them to be afraid?

Actually, he doesn't tell them to be afraid.

The word for fear is the same word for reverence. In fact a healthy, holy fear of Almighty God is the essence of reverence. It's a deep, respectful fear of God.

God is not our buddy or the genial “gentleman upstairs.”

Our Father in Heaven is the Lord God Almighty.

Scripture reveals that the heavenly beings are always filled with reverential awe in his presence, and never apathetic.

- For lots of people today the word “reverence” is a generic term for respecting life. It may mean advocating the rights of the unborn or preserving the dignity of the dying. For millions it means honoring the memory of their favorite pop-music hero, like Elvis or Michael Jackson. Or reverence may mean sitting by a mountain stream and celebrating one's humanity.

The clear, time-honored link between reverence and God seems to have been broken.

The idea of reverence, which belongs to God's awesome sovereign majesty, has been hijacked by an assortment of honorable but unworthy causes.

So much of what people call ‘reverence’ is nothing more than sappy sentimentality.

- How we conduct ourselves during a worship service in church is only the tiniest part of what it means to be reverent.

Reverence is about how we live in the constant presence of God our heavenly Father. .

Peter said Christians should have a deep, *reverent fear*. This means giving God Almighty his rightful place in your life during your earthly sojourn—*throughout the time of your exile*.

There is no end of distractions from threats and dangers and disappointments in a sinful world that can capture a Christian's attention.

- How do you think you would feel if you had to live in a place where you are not welcome or appreciated, and you have nowhere else to go?

The Christians in Asia Minor were considered detestable scum.

They were mildew on the fabric of society. .

You can be sure the beaten-down Christians didn't feel very positive about themselves either.

- What is our expectation as the children of God living in a secular culture that the Bible tells us is under the control of evil today (vis. 1 John 5:19)?

Lots of Christians seem to have the idea that the secular society in which we live belongs to us.

There are Christian lobbyists in Washington D.C. working to assert the rights of Christians in the affairs of the nation.

They would like to fashion the world to our liking, as if this were the legitimate home of the children of God—we belong to it and it belongs to us!

The Apostle Peter was determined to disabuse the Christians of any such notion in the section of his letter we're going to look at today.

1:17 *Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear,*

1:18 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,*

1:19 *but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1:20 *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*

1:21 *Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, as so your faith and hope are in God.*

Peter's strong appeal to the harassed Christians in the Roman Provinces of Asia in AD 64 is just as valid for us today.

In 1 Peter 1:17-21 the Apostle Peter explains why reverence toward God is so crucial while we live in this corrupt world. .

I. BECAUSE YOU HAVE A PHENOMENAL PRIVILEGE. 1 Peter 1:17

Christians have the highest privilege in the universe because we have the *prerogative of calling on God* as our Father.

The Apostle John declared that those who received Jesus and believed on his name have the right to become Children of God (John 1:12).

1:17 *Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear,*

If you are a Christian you have a vital connection with God your Father. You can call on God your Father any time.

- That doesn't mean you can treat God as "good old dad"—the way you may treat your earthly father.

Peter says in verse 17, *'you call on a father who judges'*

What picture comes to your mind when you think of a 'judge'? A loud, insulting lady named Judy who does her best to make those who appear before her look stupid (which is not a difficult thing to do in most cases)?

But there is scant similarity between God our Judge and Judge Judy.

Please don't imagine God our Judge waiting to scrutinize us as we enter His judgment chambers on judgment day. As if God says, "Crocker, ey? John D. Let's see, Africa, Canada, United States, Illinois, California, Indiana, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota—you've been around, son. Then he reaches for a huge journal or computer keyboard and says, *'Well, let's see what my angels have recorded here about your earthly sojourn.'*

As a Father watching over his children God sees it all himself.

This will be the basis of judgment when we appear before Christ's judgment seat.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, *So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due him for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.'* (2 Corinthians 5:9-10)

God's Word assures us that for those who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, God's judgment will not result in condemnation (Rom.8). But there will be solemn accountability for how we live during this earthly sojourn.

I assure you, that is a huge reason why each of us should conduct ourselves in reverent fear of God our Father.

- Peter also tells us that God judges impartially.

The original term is *'without respect to persons.'*

It's a complex word of 15 letters in the original Greek text of the NT. The central term means *face* or *appearance*—what is visible on the *surface*.

God's judgment isn't based on the superficial appearance that others see. Those things don't impress God.

God doesn't show favoritism based on external appearance, the way we do.

God doesn't give a rip about whether you're pretty or buffed.

He judges by what's on the inside.

God sees us, and he sees right through us.

On that basis, God our Father judges and disciplines His children. He is our Father, and he is the Judge.

- Christians have an overwhelming incentive to live reverently.

We have a precious privilege to call God our Father. Our Father is also the Judge.

II. BECAUSE YOU HAVE A PRICELESS PROVISION. 1 Peter 1:18-21

Peter tells us why living *as strangers here in reverent fear* is so important.

It's because of the great price of our redemption as Christians.

1:18 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,*

1:19 *but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

- What is redemption?

It's the great theme of the Old Testament.

It's about God's powerful intervention to set his people free from bondage in Egypt.

- Peter explains that for us redemption is God's intervention to set people free from bondage to an empty way of life—a life without hope and without purpose.

Redemption in Jesus Christ is what he accomplished for us on the cross by his atoning death and victorious resurrection.

- We were caught in the grip of something so powerful that there was nothing we could do to free ourselves. That is the spiritual peril caused by sin—and no one is immune.

Our whole way of life, everything about it, was futile. Nothing we did or tried to do was worthwhile.

It was just going around in circles of meaninglessness.

Today people are asking, *'Is this all there is to life? I want a reason to live!'*

- We have learned that just following stale religious traditions handed down from generation to generation inflicts an empty way of life upon us.

George MacDonald wrote, *Nothing is so deadening to the divine as a habitual dealing with the outsides of holy things. (The Curate's Awakening)*

I've known many children of Christian parents who felt trapped in the traditions of their parents.

Some of them conformed only outwardly. There was nothing inside.

It was an empty religious way of life, but they went through the motions.

Others jettisoned the traditions and have nothing to do with the church or with God.

Some traditions are nothing more than what Peter calls *the empty way of life handed down from forefathers* (v.18).

Empty containers.

- It's the truths and the timeless principles that have value, not the outer traditions which are just the conduits of the truth.

Some of the Christians in Asia had once been bound to religious traditions that held nothing of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ to redeem them from a hopeless way of life.

- There is no way on earth for us to be redeemed from our bondage to hopelessness. There is nothing on earth that could do it.

Peter explains that our redemption had been planned before the Creation of the world; even before Satan infected the human race with sin.

1:20 *He (Christ) was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*

1:21 *Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, as so your faith and hope are in God.*

This is another reason why we live with daily reverence for God. We are the beneficiaries of what was planned in eternity past and put into effect for us.

- What God has done for us through the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is awesome.

But the lives of many Christians seem empty and listless.

A.W. Tozer wrote, *'The God of the modern evangelical rarely astonishes anybody. . . He's a very well-behaved God . . . and very much one of us, and we ask Him to help us when we're in trouble and look to Him to watch over us when we're asleep. The God of the modern evangelical isn't a God I could have much respect for. But when the Holy Ghost shows us God as He is, we admire Him to the point of wonder and delight.'* (*Worship: The Missing Jewel of the Evangelical Church*)

God paid the immense price for our redemption.

That's why we live as sojourners here in this fallen world with reverent fear!

Through the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross we have been rescued from an empty, hopeless existence.

What Jesus Christ accomplished for us on the Cross is more than enough to cause us to live our lives as strangers in this world in an attitude of deep reverence toward God.

Are you trapped in an empty way of life? Is religion for you mostly conforming to empty traditions?

Is the concept of a deep reverent fear of God as your loving father something strange to you?

Have you forgotten about the priceless provision of Christ for your salvation?

You need to recalibrate your Christian life. It's out of alignment.

I invite you to do that now. If you're not a Christian, I urge you to place your trust in Jesus Christ.

- There's something I have learned to appreciate during my 16 months with you. It's the evidence that Crossroads Church doesn't attach much value to religious forms and traditions. They don't hold much of eternal value. They tend to be rather empty.

You know that what matters is a daily, personal relationship with God Almighty through personal saving faith in Jesus Christ. That's a life that is full.

That is the culture, the ethos of Crossroads. Don't let anyone or anything rob you of it.

PRAYER: *'Dear God, I'm being honest with myself and with you now. My life is empty. There is so much on the surface, but nothing inside. I want to be redeemed from this empty way of life. I accept your priceless gift of salvation. I place my trust in Jesus Christ now for the forgiveness of my sins and for eternal life. Amen.'*