

Theme: Faith in Exile

Title: Living in or with Fear? – I Peter 1:17-21

Aim: We should live w/proper reverential love for God our Father.

Intro: Too many of us live in fear for much of our lives. Fear is a natural phenomenon & it can either motivate us or immobilize us. Sometimes it's wise to be afraid & sometimes fear is unfounded. Most of the time our fear is the wrong kind of fear. We're told in Scripture (Prov.9:10) that "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...*," but what does that mean? When I was fairly young, I was somewhat afraid of my father, or more so of the punishment he rendered when I misbehaved. I hated to hear my mother say, "Wait 'til your father gets home." But as I grew up, our relationship changed. The fear was still there but it changed from dread of punishment to loving reverence. Because I knew Pop loved me & because I loved him, I feared displeasing Him or disappointing him. As an adult, I even polished my dress shoes when I was going to be w/him on a Sunday, because I knew that was what he would do. That loving reverence should only increase when it comes to our relationship w/God. Theme: Faith in Exile. We who are believers in/followers of Christ are exiles in this world that's not our home. How should we then live? We come today to our theme passage - I Peter 1:17-19 [READ thru 21]. As he addressed the Jewish Christian exiles in Asia Minor, Peter exhorted them to think about who they were in Christ & what they had in Christ & what awaited them in Christ & also think about how they should live. He called them to set themselves apart as belonging to God & to live accordingly, not as they used to live, but as the children of God they were. We are called to the same. Now Peter reminds them/us of what he has already written. I) **Because of Jesus, God is the Father of all those who believe.** Peter had written that God "has caused us to be born again to a living hope." We're born-again children of God – those (according to Strong's) "who thru Christ have been exalted to an especially close & intimate relationship w/God (who is sovereign, holy, eternal), & who no longer dread Him as stern Judge of sinners, but revere Him as their reconciled & loving Father." We who

believe know that, but are we paying attention to it? You know these exiles had been praying for God's help. You & I certainly pray for God's help, as we should, but what is our attitude, our approach to God? Do we come to God w/demands? "God if you love me You have to do this." Do we come to Him w/a cavalier approach? "Ho hum, God, You know; I don't really have time for this." Do we come to Him w/the attitude of the Pharisee in Luke 18? "I'm so glad I'm not like others. I deserve Your favor, Lord." Peter is saying, "If you call on God as Father (because He is your Father), then recognize what you're doing & who He is." Recognize that He's not only your Father, but your Judge. Though He has laid your sin upon Christ & credited you w/Christ's righteousness, He still is your Judge. He knows your life, including your sin. He would have been perfectly just to punish you. Praise Him that He didn't & won't, but judged Christ on your behalf. But He has called us to live set-apart lives, different, Christ-like. So, II) **We are to conduct our lives w/fear throughout the time of our exile.** Note that it reads "w/fear" & not "in fear." We don't need to live in fear of God, but w/the fear of the Lord. If we're in Christ then we no longer need dread or tremble for fear of judgment (which Christ has taken in our place), but we do need to live w/loving reverence for God. I believe that means living w/God in mind & w/love of God in mind. Does what I'm doing express love for God? Does my attitude express my love for God? The conduct of our lives – how we go about life, whether we're w/others or all alone, should be done out of love for our loving Father God & for His glory. We can call upon Him boldly because we know He loves us, expressed forcefully by the gift of His Son to be our Savior. Surely we want to please Him. Surely we don't want to grieve Him. He is our Father, who has redeemed us. I know that some of you grew up w/out a good relationship w/your father. Perhaps you have a difficult time thinking of God as your Father. But God is not like your earthly father. He is perfect, w/perfect love. He knows you & still loves you. No matter where you are or what your circumstances, if you are in Christ by faith, God is your Father who loves you & will carry you through. Just as God

didn't take these exiles out their exile, but was w/them, in them, for them, so God may not change your situation, but will abide w/you in it, & help you. And He invites you to be part of what He is doing in your area of exile. He wants to use you to invite others to be part of the family of God. The "time of your exile" is your entire life as a Christian – until Jesus comes or you draw your last breath. Living w/the fear of God in our hearts flows out of our recognition of what God in His love has done for us. III) **Recognize the magnitude of God's gift & provision in Christ & let that be your motivation for living.** Thru the atoning work of Christ on the cross, we have been "ransomed from [our] futile ways inherited from [our] forefathers..." Before our relationship w/God thru faith in Christ, we were going nowhere fast, w/out purpose or hope, tho we may not have realized it. These Jewish exiles were busy w/aimless conduct, which commentator David Gudzik noted was "the frame of mind which [sought] to be justified by law (Jewish tradition). It [seemed] to have an aim – gaining merit before God by works – but [was] in fact aimless because it [could not] succeed." God thru Christ did what the law could not do. He ransomed us "not w/perishable things such as silver & gold" –redemption can't be bought w/the currency of the world, but only w/divine currency, which we don't have. No amount of riches can secure a place in God's kingdom nor provide forgiveness nor right standing before God. God did not redeem (liberate by payment of a ransom) by means of perishable things, "but w/the precious blood of Christ." Gudzik wrote, "The high call for godly living makes sense in light of the price that was paid for our redemption. The precious blood of Jesus did not save us so that we could then live as if we were garbage." What made the blood of Christ so precious was that He was the sinless Lamb of God, the Son sent by the Father as the perfect sacrifice. Again, Gudzik wrote, "If Christ were not w/out blemish or w/out spot, He would not have been qualified to be our Redeemer." He was "in every respect... tempted as we are, yet w/out sin" (Hebrews 4:15). And, as Paul wrote, "For our sake He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus the Son) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might

become the righteousness of God” (II Corinthians 5:21). Note what Peter wrote in vs20. The Lord Jesus Christ was “foreknown before the foundation of the world.” That doesn’t mean that He was brought into existence just before the world was created. Rather it means that the plan to send the Son into this world to accomplish our redemption was set in place before the world & time were created. Redemption was not a last-minute reaction to the magnitude of sin, but a plan in place before time. Paul wrote this in Ephesians 1:4ff – “...***He (God the Father) chose us in Him (Christ the Son) before the foundation of the world...according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, w/which He has blessed us in the Beloved...according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us, in all wisdom & insight, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven & things on earth.***” Again, redemption was not an afterthought or reactionary thought, but a forethought. And at the right time, Jesus was made manifest. “***When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons***” (Galatians 4:4-5). Think about it, Peter was saying. “You think God has forgotten you, but He sent His Son for your sake” (& for the sake of all who believe). He made Him known in these last days for your sake. It’s through Christ as Savior that you are believers in God as your Father. You are in relationship w/Almighty, Eternal, Holy God thru faith in Christ. You thought you knew God before (as Jews) but now you are His beloved, blood-bought, blessed children, forgiven, justified, & just as surely to be glorified as if it had already happened! Peter could have quoted Paul’s words in Romans 8:32. Since he didn’t, I will. “***He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also w/Him graciously give us all things?***” Yes, you’re exiled & life is hard at best, but the God who sent His Son to redeem you is w/you & He won’t let you go. He is for you. He will carry you. How can we know? God substantiated the sureness of His redemption &

thus His active presence w/us now by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. He “raised Him from the dead & gave Him glory.” God the Father gave proof that He accepted the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf by raising Him from the grave & receiving Him by His side when Christ ascended into heaven. At His coronation He was given “the name that is above every name.” One day soon we will stand before Him in victory & gladly bow w/every knee & confess w/every tongue that Jesus Christ is Lord, all to the glory of God the Father. This God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the One in whom is our faith & hope. That faith (faith in exile) & hope will not be in vain. “Conduct yourselves w/fear throughout the time of your exile.”