

# 1<sup>st</sup> PETER BIBLE STUDY

1 Peter 1:17-21

Lesson #6

## Introduction

Going to break the lesson into two parts. Verses 17-19, and then verses 20-21. Title:

### *Christ, Our Faith and Hope in God*

#### **Verses 17-19:**

*17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*

1 Peter 1:17-21 (NASB)

In other words, if you consider yourself a genuine child of God, and address Him as your heavenly Father, then see to it that you act like you believe it. Because if you do believe it, then you know full well that He is omnipotent and omnipresent, and sees not only every action you take, but even every thought and intention of your minds. Knowing this, and really believing it's so, will surely influence our behaviors, since we also understand that He will impartially judge the lives and actions of every son and daughter whom He has ever redeemed by the precious blood of His only Son. We are most certainly not to be afraid of our heavenly Father, because our love for Him, and more so, His love for us, casts out the kind of fear that the unbeliever has of the unquenchable wrath of God and His eternal punishment. But, nonetheless, every child knows the fear that comes with chastisement for disobedience to their earthly fathers or mothers, and takes steps to avoid such occurrences by not disobeying their instructions and rules.

At this point I would like to make sure that we have a proper understanding of something. I want to make sure that we understand that every human being, whether saved or not saved, will have their work evaluated, that is judged. I know that when I was a young believer I was associated with a group that taught that physical actions and behaviors were of no meaning whatsoever. I was actually told that taking food to the poor, and offering aid to the afflicted was simply a useless act of the flesh, and had no spiritual benefit. Instead, we should just offer prayer, and let God take care of everything. Needless to say, this group also said openly that the book of James should be torn out of the Bible.

This whole concept ran contrary to everything that I read in the holy Scriptures, and I had much debate with those who were the elders concerning these issues, but was always assured that this was a proper teaching. In spite of their assurances I knew that the Scriptures taught otherwise. Fortunately the Lord providentially separated me from this group after only a few years. But I certainly learned a great deal from that experience.

Part of the problem seems to lie in the failure to distinguish between two concepts. It seems that very few understand that there is a concept of redemption from sin, which we call salvation, which is entirely based upon faith, and does not depend on any kind of works. But, that there is also another concept, and this concept is that of living in communion with God and abiding in His love. (Jn 15:10) Salvation is, and always has been based on faith alone. However, living in communion with God and in His graces has always depended upon obedience to His commandments. These are not the same thing. We are told repeatedly that by the workings of God's law no flesh will ever be justified in his sight:

*20 For no flesh will be justified in His sight by the works of the law, for through the law [comes] the knowledge of sin.*

Romans 3:19-20 (HCSB)

*16 yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified.*

Gal 2:16 (HCSB)

But, we must understand that a relationship with God involves more than a single aspect. Certainly, and firstly, it involves redemption; but to continue to abide, that is to live, in a vibrant relationship with Him absolutely requires obedience to Him. It is true that one cannot acquire redemption simply through living in obedience, but is also true that one does not attain a vibrant relationship simply because they have been redeemed. Proof of this is in the verses that tell us that the Lord chastens and disciplines every one of His children. Chastening and discipline means that there was disobedience. And this disobedience was identified by God among His own redeemed, by their actions, their deeds, their works. And furthermore that appropriate responses were taken by God based on these works.

Verse 17 is a reminder that even though we address our God as Father, He is nonetheless a Father who impartially judges the works of His own children, and either blesses or disciplines them based on those works. Redemption isn't the end of the laws of God, it's the establishment of the laws of God in the hearts and minds and subsequent behaviors of His children. (Rom 3:31) And this is why we are told to conduct ourselves in fear during our stay here on earth. It is a very foolish child who takes lightly the chastening of their father for their works of disobedience.

Just one last aspect. In the Old Testament, in Exodus, and Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, the Lord presented the children of Israel with the Law. This law was said to bring two possibilities. One was a blessing, the other was cursing, but never was it said to provide the means of salvation. From Abraham and forever more, justification in the eyes of God was by faith alone. So let us understand that our works, that is our behaviors, which means our obedience to the commandments of God, most certainly do matter as it regards our relationship to God and our experiencing of His blessing or our experiencing of His chastening. And if that's not enough we are told that there are eternal rewards, or the loss of those rewards, which also hang in the balance, and are entirely based on our works here on earth. (1Co 3:12-14; 2Co 5:10)

Therefore please do not fall for that blasphemous and heretical teaching that for those who consider themselves to be Christians that all of the commandments of God are now obsolete. Quite the contrary, for those who are truly Christians, though we know that it's not the means by which we were redeemed, nevertheless the moral and eternal commandments of God are impressed within the affections of our hearts, and written indelibly in our minds, and form the motivational impetus by which all of the children of God live and behave, as a visible earthly demonstration of His glory. (Mat 5:13-20) Hopefully we've made that point clear and now we can look at the next verses:

### **Verses 18-19:**

*18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*

A prudent child respects and pays heed to their earthly fathers. So how much more are we to fear Him who is our heavenly Father, and has purchased our redemption from the penalty of sin with the very own lifeblood of His only beloved Son? We are so accustomed to speaking of the blood of Jesus that I think we begin to take it for granted. By that I mean we lose the significance of the cost, both to Christ himself, and to God the Father, to see His Son suffer so tragic and humiliating treatment at the hands of a thankless and arrogant humanity. It wasn't valuable commodities like gold, or silver, or other goods, that God provided for the redemption of His elect, but the very precious lifeblood, flowing in the veins of His beloved Son. I make this point because it seems that we often think that the red liquid itself is what it's all about, but that's not the intent. It is written in the book of Leviticus:

*11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have appointed it to you to make atonement on the altar for your lives, since it is the lifeblood that makes atonement.* Lev 17:11 (HCSB)

It wasn't the red liquid itself, it was what the shedding of that blood meant. It meant that a precious life had been surrendered as a substitute for another. Otherwise Christ could have just shed some of His blood and not died. No, a death was required to satisfy the righteous demands of God; for the wages of sin is death, not just blood. The warning to Adam and Eve in the garden was that the disobeying of God's command was that they would surely die, not that they would surely bleed.

I think we may forget that when we speak of the shed blood of Christ, we're actually speaking of the brutal torture and murder of Christ, and the surrendering of His precious life in our place, because we are all guilty of sin, and we all righteously deserve death for those sins. Therefore, since a death was demanded, a death was provided, through the shedding of the precious lifeblood, unto death, of Jesus Christ on that cross.

And what makes His lifeblood so precious, as opposed to all others? Well, for one thing, it was the only lifeblood that was entirely innocent of sin. Of all the humans ever to be born, only one was, or ever will be, entirely innocent of sin. This was symbolically represented by the Old Testament requirement for altar sacrifices to be absolutely spotless and flawless. No animal that was in any way deformed, sick, underdeveloped or less than a perfect example of the species was acceptable as a sacrifice. The reason for this stringent requirement in the animal sacrifice is that it was to be a foreshadowing of the nature of Jesus Christ, who would be the ultimate and unique sinless, unblemished, and spotless sacrifice to God the Father as a substitute for the chosen children of God. Nothing less than perfect would qualify in the eyes of the Father as a suitable substitute for atonement.

I don't recall where it was, or who was speaking, but on at least one occasion I heard someone argue that even Jesus committed sins. Now I have no idea what this person was thinking, or where they come up with such a notion, but what it displays is an absolute and utter ignorance of both the divine nature of Christ Jesus, and the mandatory minimum standards of God the Father for His future eternal kingdom. I don't know if everyone realizes it or not, but Christ's death on the cross served only the purpose of substitutionary atonement for sin, it still left unanswered the demand for absolute perfect righteousness for kingdom entry.

No one enters the kingdom of God from a point of neutral ground. By that I mean simply being forgiven of our sins does not provide all of the requirements for the kingdom of God. It is a mandatory requirement, but it isn't the only requirement. Entry into the kingdom of God also requires perfect righteousness, not neutrality. By this I mean that not only must we be forgiven for our sins by the substitutionary atonement of Jesus, but we are absolutely dependent upon his perfect righteousness being imputed upon us, to fulfill our requirements for entry into the eternal kingdom of God.

The absolute perfect and sinless life of Christ Jesus is every bit as important to both the Father, and to us, as is His death and resurrection. Without a perfect sinless life, His death and resurrection would not provide what is necessary for salvation. Firstly, only a perfect and sinless life would satisfy the Father's requirements for acceptance as the substitutionary sacrifice for atonement, as He will not accept a flawed sacrifice. But, hypothetically speaking, even if He did accept a flawed sacrifice, there would still be no perfect righteousness available for imputation to those redeemed, which is required to fulfill the requirements of God for His kingdom. That Christ Jesus is the **one and only** suitably acceptable substitutionary atonement, **and** imputed perfect righteousness, that God the Father ever planned, from before creation, for the redemption of humanity, and the ultimate display of His glory, is the central theme of the Scriptures.

We often hear preachers today say that Jesus actually became a sinner when He was nailed to that cross. They even go on to say that He was the worst and vilest sinner that ever lived, because He carried the combined sins of all God's chosen. I believe that this tragic and blasphemous teaching comes from a flawed interpretation of a verse in second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21, which reads:

*21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

While a loose and cursory interpretation of this verse might appear to lend some merit to that thinking, nevertheless an astute and diligent exegesis reveals the obvious flaw in that simplistic conclusion. This interpretation ignores the very words of the text that say that He knew no sin. That God the Father made Him representative of sin, for the sake of bearing its punishment on behalf of others, by no means implies that He himself was tarnished by it. In fact quite the contrary. It is because He knew no sin, and retained that status unto death, that He was qualified to be the substitute for sin. Had this act made Him sinful, it would have simultaneously disqualified Him as a suitable substitute.

But now that I've started I can't stop here. These same false teachers go on to say that this is the reason that the Father couldn't look on his Son when He was on the cross. Because He was so sinful that the Father couldn't look at Him.

I cannot constrain myself from answering this charge against my beloved Savior. Yes, from the words of the Lord, as He was on the cross asking his Father why He had forsaken His presence, we do conclude that the Father, in some manner or shape, withdrew himself from the presence of his Son. As to why and how we have no answer in the Scriptures, so if we seek an answer, we're left to draw a conclusion by extrapolation from what information we do have.

I contend that to infer that this was because the Father saw the Son as sinful is neither the only conclusion nor the most logical. It is every bit as logical, and much more understandable, that the Father withdrew His presence for the same reason that any of us would withdraw our presence if we saw our dearly beloved son dying a brutal death on a cross for something that he didn't deserve. I would contend that in the eyes of the Father, there was never a time in history that He was more proud of his Son than when He was voluntarily suffering a brutal death on a cross for the substitutionary atonement of His elect. This was the Father's plan from before creation we are told in verse 20, and far from being a vile sinner, this was our Saviors finest hour, it was His reason for coming into the world in the first place, and will be the reason that we worship Him in the kingdom of God for all eternity.

I am confident that I can proclaim that the last few hours that our Lord and Savior spent on this earth were not as a vile sinner, but as a perfect, spotless, holy, and unblemished sacrificial lamb of God. Bearing by proxy only the full consequences, in His own body, for all of the sins ever committed by His beloved children, but forever remaining absolutely and thoroughly untarnished himself by those sins. I beseech you all; please do not ever tolerate, or, much worse, propagate any contrary teachings compromising the eternal, uninterrupted, sinlessness of our Lord and Savior.

It is our fullest understanding of the true value, the preciousness of this self-sacrificing act of Christ Jesus, that makes us both appropriately grateful for it, and makes us desirous to be obedient to His commandments to repent of our former futile way of life that we inherited from our forefathers. (v.18) Will we be able to continue in those old sinful practices that we learned and knew before our redemption, if we fully and rightly comprehend the cost that was paid for our redemption from the consequences of them? I hope not, but if we're tempted to do so, then we're told in verse 17 that there is an impartial judge who sees everything and judges accordingly. The writer of Hebrews says:

*"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; 6 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives."* Heb 12:5-6 (NASB)

These three verses, 17-19, might be summed up by saying that if we call ourselves the children of God, and address Him as our Father, then we need to keep in mind just how all that came about, and what it cost our Lord, God's precious only Son, to make it possible for us to use such terminology and claim such familiarity. And, keep in mind, and constantly ponder, just **why** it was that He had to suffer such a tragic ordeal. And then conduct ourselves differently than we did before we were redeemed from such sinful abhorrent behaviors. It does seem quite impossible to really grasp the significance and value of the price of redemption, and believe we are now children of God, and then still go right on behaving as before, doesn't it? The fact is that the scriptures say that we won't, if we're really among those redeemed. Do we remember what we read in verse two about being sanctified by the Spirit of God to become obedient to Jesus Christ? The effectual fruit of the new spirit is the transformation of our minds and renewing of our hearts, which is manifest in our observable obedience to Jesus Christ. (v.2)

There are few things in life that are more irritating than persistent and flagrant ingratitude. May the children of God be ever free from any such belligerence or apathy toward so great a gift, and diligently offer our gifts of praises and worship to Him who has redeemed us by His grace, through a life of obedience and the diligent pursuit of holiness. (vv.15,16)

#### NEXT SECTION

#### **Verses 20-21:**

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

Now we move into verse 20, which I've already quoted several times before. It starts out with the statement concerning Christ, that He was foreknown before the foundation of the world. If you think about it, before the foundation of the world, who was there to foreknow this information? Was it the Angels, well maybe, but it's likely that this

foreknowledge preceded them as well. This is speaking of the foreknowledge of the triune God, who formulated the plan of creation in its entirety, contemplating every detail, and including or excluding anything and everything that He either did or didn't want to be a part of that plan. There were absolutely no contingencies built into the plan. There was no plan "B" to be implemented just in case plan "A" failed.

The rebellion of Satan was not a surprise. The appearance of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil growing in the garden of Eden was not a surprise. The disobedience and subsequent fall of Adam and Eve was not a surprise. And the need for an incarnate Savior, to enter the creation and redeem fallen mankind was not a surprise, but rather a predetermined, built in, essential part of the original plan from before the foundation of the world. The holy Scripture makes this fact undeniable, both here in this verse, and in numerous others. The absolute sovereignty, and the absolute omniscience of God are displayed from the beginning to the end of the holy Scriptures. In fact these are absolute essential elements for any entity that we would call God.

I'm sure you've heard, just as I have, various preachers and teachers jokingly say that when they meet Adam in heaven they're going to give him a swift kick in the behind for eating from that tree and getting mankind into the situation that resulted. This may get a laugh or two, but in reality it displays a serious flaw in perception. The perception that Adam actually could have resisted what God the Father had predetermined from before the foundation of the world. If Christ the Redeemer was foreknown before creation, then what are the chances that He would never be needed? Was Christ just a backup plan, a plan "B" just in case man failed? Of course not, and this betrays a very man centered way of thinking, and further exemplifies what I've said so many times before, that we have all but lost our concept of the absolute sovereignty of God over all the affairs of man and angels and all creation.

Now, just so that no one misunderstands me, God warned Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree, and told them the consequences if they did, so they alone bear the responsibility for their direct disobedience to the commandment of God. Nevertheless, is there anyone who believes that there's any possible chance that they would actually end up obeying God, and thus rendering His preplanned Messiah unnecessary? We seem to have much difficulty accepting that man's personal responsibility is not at odds with God's sovereignty. It is not an either/or situation. God is sovereign, and man is responsible for his own actions. God steers the hearts of man in such a way that they willfully comply, and then He judges them for their actions when they do. If this causes you grief then you simply must get over it. It caused Job much grief, but in the final analysis he got over it, and learned the nature of the absolute sovereignty of God.

Because we're so very man-centered, we always evaluate situations from the perspective of man, and then try to hold God accountable to that perspective. This is absolutely backwards. It's like the clay pot attempting to hold the potter accountable for what he makes from the lump of clay. The problem isn't with the difficulty of formulating an answer that reconciles these two, it's with the question itself. Like Spurgeon once said, there's no need to reconcile two friends. These are not two opposing principles, they are two undeniable facts. There's no apparent answer because the question isn't valid in the first place. God is the standard to which all is held, He himself answers to no standard but His own sovereign free will, which establishes the standard. He providentially controls all things in the creation, and then He judges those things for their own willful actions. To Him, this isn't offensive nor unfair in His sight, so then, will we, the clay pots, demand an accounting from Him of His stewardship and fair use of His own resources? This is simply how it is, and it certainly puts both God and man in their proper relative places doesn't it? If our pride and self-importance causes us to reject His methods, and question either His authority or His righteousness, then it's to our own peril that we do so.

Now I realize that we've covered a lot of ground, but it seems remiss to read and study verses about the works of God that precede the foundation of the world, without at least taking a look at the broader ramifications of what that implies. And there's a world of additional things that I'd like to include, but that would take us too far off the immediate context of our study, so let's continue with the second half of this verse.

The point of our being told that He was foreknown before the foundation of the world is to show that even so, He was not revealed in full detail until the time that had been planned had finally come. And the reason for this mystery is that He was designated for revelation to a particular people who were set in a particular time period.

And His announcement was withheld in reserve for that time. Everything was providentially controlled by God so as to happen precisely on schedule. Do you remember how many times the crowds, and the religious Jews, wanted to kill Jesus, but He always said that His time hadn't yet come? His disciples didn't know what He meant by that, but He knew that there was absolutely no possibility that anyone, or anything, could have killed Him before His appointed time on that cross, because He had been predestined to be revealed as a redeemer to a group of chosen people whom the Father had selected and predetermined from before creation.

The exciting thing is that we, our generations that are born and live after His crucifixion and resurrection, and before His second coming, are a part of that group of last time peoples who were blessed to see and hear about this amazing Lamb of God who becomes the Lord over, and Savior of, a chosen remnant of mankind. But here in the next part of the sentence (v.21) we see something that's speaking more about God the Father than it is about the Son, or about man. Here we're told that the purpose of the visible Redeemer is so that through Him, we the chosen, would be believers in God.

The visible Son reveals the invisible Father, to those who were chosen to believe. The Son is the Father's express image as we're told in Colossians 1:15, and He is the visible and tangible display of God the invisible Father, who is a Spirit being, as we're told in John 1:14 and 18. The Son is God's mediator, both in justification *and* in bridging the gap between that which is Spirit and that which is corporal. We cannot become, in our very essence, what God is, there is only one of Him, so God has provided the connecting link whereby He and His created beings may share a genuine relationship. It is through Christ that we humans are afforded access to the one and only self-existent eternal God. It is Jesus the man, that we may see and touch and speak with for eternity, who facilitates our belief in God the Father.

He was preplanned from before the foundation of the world as the mediating link chosen by God to afford that necessary means of connection between Himself, an intangible Spirit, and a species of tangible, corporal creatures that He was going to create to be His own chosen family and eternal worshipers. We believe in an invisible God because we saw and heard a visible Jesus, who proclaimed that invisible God to us, and showed us, by His example, who and what the Father is, in His essence, and nature, and character, and holiness. Jesus said that if we had seen and known Him, then we had seen and knew the Father. (Jn 14:7,9)

John 1:18 says that no one has ever seen God at any time. The reason no one has ever seen God at any time is that there isn't anyone else who is composed of that divine, self-existent, invisible, Spirit essence as God; and in this form, He is not visible to corporal human eyes. And, furthermore, there will never ever be anyone who does see the Father in His natural state of being, because there will never ever be another divine being of His kind. So, that same verse goes on to say that it is for this very reason that He has sent His Son, in a visible, corporal form, so that we can have something to see and touch and hear with our human senses. And so it will ever be, for all eternity. No one will ever see God, but we will communicate with Him tangibly through His designated mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Father is in Him, and He is in us, and we are in Him. So, the Father is said to be all, in all, by the integration of all parties through the person and Spirit of Jesus Christ. (Jn 17:21-23) This is all very mysterious indeed, but very, very exciting to those who love God.

Therefore, the final result, according to our verses, is that our faith and our hope is thoroughly established in an invisible God, who displays His power and glory by raising His Son from the dead as a testimony, planned and scheduled in advance before creation ever began, that He, God the Father, would be believed and glorified and worshiped. To Him be all the glory and all the honor forever and ever. Amen.

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