

1 Peter 1:17-21 (NIV2011)

*Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. <sup>18</sup> 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 ancestors, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. <sup>20</sup> He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. <sup>21</sup> Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*

### **Sermon Theme: Living with Resurrection Hope**

I couldn't tell you how many times I've gone to visit a shut-in to minister and encourage them and they were the ones who minister and encourage me. They tell me about the good old days that they miss. They share with me the struggles they faced. Many share with me how during those hard times all you could do was trust God. They had hope. Whether you are 94 or 4 we feel the power of hope. Having something to look forward to, something that you are excited about, something you are reaching for, can help push you through when you feel like you are slogging through life. But, if those hopes crash and burn, we can feel like life does the same. Hope, or a lack of hope, is a powerful thing.

Hope. That's what Peter wants to give these Christians he is writing to in 1 Peter. These Christians are facing all types of suffering, struggling, and persecution for the faith. So it's not hard to imagine questions going through their minds like: "Is this worth it? Did I know this what I was signing up for? Will it ever end? Why does this keep happening to me? Why should I keep pushing and going when it seems like nothing helps? What's the point?" It's hard to have hope when the outlook seems hopeless.

To such Christians Peter writes in verse 17: **Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.** In other words, since you call on God the Father in prayer—that's what Christians do, they pray—your life is going to look different from those around you. You are but a stranger in this world. A foreigner sticks out. They might dress differently. They might have an accent pronouncing words in a different way. They say phrases unique to their homeland. They may have different priority values and levels so their way of thinking is different. Peter is saying: that's what you are in this world. Because you are a Christian, you are a foreigner, so you are different. So instead of trying to fit in and meld with the culture of this sinful world, be different.

Peter knows what that's going to mean. The Christians know what that means too; they were living it. Life isn't always going to be easy. You are inviting struggle and persecution to your door step. Because, in general, people don't like others who are

different from them. More often they simply tolerate them. And because we are Christians, there is a strong enmity and butting heads between unbelievers and believers (Genesis 3:15). And still we want to live like this because that's how our heavenly Father has made us to live. We are foreigners simply passing through this land. Following the ways of the world not only is against God's will but Peter describes it in v.18 as an "empty way of life." There's no value to it. It's worthless. It has no use.

So what does this have to do with hope? Think about your life. What are you hoping for? Go ahead, make a list of three things you hope for. Now look at those hopes. How many of them have anything to do with your eternal welfare? Some of them might and the ones that don't are not necessarily sinful. But we can get so wrapped up in chasing after these hopes that we forget what's most important. Then what do we do when those hopes go unfulfilled? You may stress yourself out because you aren't living up to the expectations of others. You can feel like such a disappointment because you aren't where you hoped you would be in life. You may get frustrated because you can't figure out why. Then we use the frustration, the disappointment as an excuse to follow the empty ways of the world. Instead of being content in every situation, including suffering, one might try and find fulfillment elsewhere. Stop resisting sin, because it makes you feel better; you deserve a break. You might turn to something because it helps you escape the reality of the world and fill that void even when you it's wrong. Maybe you feel like you can do what you want because it doesn't matter anymore. Instead of living as foreigners in this world, we live, act, and even react as the world around us because we see how they are enjoying life and seem to be able to fulfill their hopes.

How much time, energy, and personal resources do I waste chasing after empty hopes that are here one moment then gone? So quickly even our hopes can become little idols that we worship and expect to bring fulfillment and satisfaction in our lives instead of living as God commands. Again v.17 says: **Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.** Living in reverent fear is understanding that God is the impartial judge. He doesn't judge you by comparing you against your neighbor down the road but according to his standard of perfection. Being impartial means he doesn't have time for excuses. It doesn't change his Law or the action that has been done. This fear is understanding that God has every right to condemn me to hell because I do not trust him with all my heart when my hopes go unfulfilled. I do not love him with my entire being when trying to hold onto these empty hopes. I do not fear him when I willfully go against his Word. I've heard it said, "I wish God would tell me what he wants me to do." He does. It's right here. And he judges each one according to his or her own work.

If that were the end of the story, we would have no hope. Because no matter how determined you might be, number of promises you make to yourself and God, hopes you have of doing better, even our best efforts are stained with selfish sin. So then my life on this earth would hold little meaning chained to my failures and lost hopes.

But that's not the end of the story. God isn't setting you up for failure but gives you hope. You've been redeemed. That is, Jesus has bought you back. He sets you free. There isn't enough gold or silver in the world that could have done this. In order to save your life, life had to be given. But even all the blood of beasts sacrificed by God's people could not set free a single person free from this empty way of life handed down to us all the way back from our first father Adam. No, it had to be perfect blood from someone born without the stain of sin to his nature. It had to come from someone without the defects of sin in his actions. Oh this blood was precious. He's the Son of God. He did not deserve death. That's the consequence of sin. That's the result of not living in reverent fear to the Father. And that's not how Jesus lives. And yet he willingly goes to pay the price, to redeem us, not with gold or silver but with his holy and precious blood and innocent suffering and death. And the thing of it is, this wasn't God's knee-jerk reaction when Adam ate from the fruit and plunged this world into this empty hopeless way of life. Peter says (v.20) Jesus was chosen from before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. This was God's plan from eternity! What patient mercy. What grace. What love.

God the Father says to God the Son, "You know what's going to happen. You know our perfect creation will be ruined. You know that type of suffering they will endure. You know how it will pain us to see it happening to them. But you will bring them hope. You, God's Son, will come and save them. You will take on flesh and blood and live in their place. You will be nailed to a cross where I will punish you for every wrong they have and ever will commit. I will forsake you. Your blood will be shed. You will die. But after three days I will raise you to life again so that mankind has hope." And Jesus, trusting his Father's will says, "Yes, I will do it. Didn't even need to ask. Your will be done." And we know that it all went according to plan, that Jesus' life was perfect, that his precious blood was the perfect amount, that it was all accepted by God the Father. We know it because the tomb is empty. We have hope because Jesus dies on that cross to set you free from sin and from the useless way of living we would we lived. He's raised to life and lives in glory now so that you might be his own and live under him in everlasting innocence and righteousness.

And that's how God views you while you are a foreigner in this world. It started when the cross was marked over your head and heart, the water was poured over your head, God's Word was spoken, His name was placed on you and you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At that instant you died with Jesus, your old

way of empty living was put to death, and from that water you were raised with Jesus from that tomb given the certain hope of eternal life and made a new creation. Through Jesus sending the Holy Spirit faith that trusts, loves, and fears God is created in you. This faith now desires to live in reverent fear of the Father. It's not that you are afraid of him but because you honor and respect what he was willing to do to save you.

Instead of this empty way of living, Jesus' resurrection gives certain hope and purpose. We are living to God's glory. We live to bring all peoples to praise our God. And that's not just by doing churchy things. It's the attitude you have when helping around the house or changing a dirty diaper. It's how you talk to and about your spouse, even their little quirks. It's putting the stranger before yourself. It's being gracious and caring in our thoughts for someone who is different.

While we are foreigners in this world, we will struggle to live as God calls us to live. But he does not abandon you. Working through His Word preached and read and the Lord's Supper given and received he forgives your sins and strengthens your faith. He works to keep our eyes focused on that resurrection hope which gives us a God-pleasing perspective on these other hopes we still have. We understand that these hopes are not the end all and be all. And when those hopes crash and burn and as frustrating it can be, we rest in our Father's eternal plan, living in our resurrection hope. Amen.