

Well, we've been talking about this a few weeks now – about the wonderful privilege that we have, to live in the time that we do – this is the time that the prophets looked forward to, and now we're living it...

What's so special about it? Well, we're living in the time:

- after Jesus has been raised from the dead... ; and
- by His Holy Spirit, the Word of God is preached today; and
- the prophecies about Christ have been explained...

And so:

- we know why Jesus came;
- We know that the Christ suffered and died for **us**, for the redemption of our sins; and
- We know that He's returning again, to judge the living and the dead; and
- Those who are truly His, will share with Him in His glory...

Are you starting to get this??? Is there anyone here **today**, who's starting to feel just a little bit privileged??? And perhaps excited about their faith???

Well, last week, we had the first part of what's going to be a 3-part message – that with Privilege, comes Responsibility...

Because we've received the privilege of being saved by the grace of God, with this privilege, comes the responsibility of obedience and holiness.

And the Apostle Peter gives us 3 reasons, why we are to be holy, in **all** our conduct (Let's think of these reasons as 'motivations')... And last week, we learned about the first motivation:

1. We are to be holy, because our Heavenly Father is holy...

As the children of God, we should be growing up to be just like our Heavenly Father... Because we've had such a wonderful blessing of being saved by the Grace of God, and adopted as His children,,,, aren't we moved, to be obedient to our Heavenly Father???

Alright, so that's what we talked about last week.

2. A **second** motivation to obey God, and to live a holy life, is the **Fear** of God...

Now, if there's one thing, that I reckon isn't very well understood within the church of today, it would have to be the fear of God – it would have to be one of the least understood concepts...

On one end of the spectrum, some people picture God as something akin to a sadistic bully with a magnifying glass, focusing the sun to burn ants, and (guess what) we're the ants... You know what I mean? *I saw a 'Far Side' cartoon once – I love Gary Larson's cartoons – they really appeal to me. And for those who are listening to the podcast, the caption on the cartoon is "God at His computer." And on the screen, there's a man walking under a piano dangling from a rope, and God's finger is poised above the "Smite" button...*

And for some people, that's the way they think, when it comes to fearing God... – We have to be scared of Him – not only because He's big and powerful, but because He has a pre-disposition to delight in the smite.... Do you see what I did there – I made it rhyme... Righto, so that's one end of the spectrum... – “God's just looking for an excuse to punish us, so fear God”.

But, I hope you realise – “That's crazy talk” – our God is a God of love. He's not looking for an excuse to 'smite' us. In fact, He's done everything He can to save us.

But you know how last week, I said that one of the great problems in the Christian church, is that we sometimes tend to over-react to one error so strongly, that we shift the pendulum right over to the other side, and we create our own wrong view...

And that's often what happens, in the way that people understand 'the fear of God'... - they so over-react to the view that “God's just waiting for an excuse to punish us”, that they say “We're not supposed to fear God”... And they believe that “The fear of God, is something that's taken away in the children of God”... And they have the view, that “The fear of God” is 'Old Covenant' – something that they experienced in the Old Testament,,,, and maybe unbelievers should fear God, but for those who are saved, there is no reason to fear any more....

And they'll have a few pet bible verses, that they'll 'trot out', to try and 'prove' their case...

But the thing is, the command to fear God, isn't only found in the Old Testament...:

- In the Gospels, Jesus taught us to Fear God;
- Throughout the Book of Acts, we see the fear of God, being a part of the everyday experience of the Early Church. In fact, it says:
Acts 9: (ESV) ³¹ So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.
- And throughout the **letters** of the New Testament, the Apostles teach us to fear God.

So, don't let anyone ever tell you, that Christians shouldn't fear God... If we don't fear God, then we don't know God...

Let me explain how a healthy, reverential fear of God works:

And to do this, I'm going to begin with an example that Paul gives, on the topic of obeying the **Earthly** authorities.

In Romans 13, Paul tells the Roman Christians, that they should obey their Earthly Authorities. And he says that the earthly authorities aren't a terror to those who do the right thing, **But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain.**

Alright, so if you're doing the right thing, no reason to be afraid. But if you're doing the wrong thing, be very afraid...

Now, I'm going to take that example, and say this:

In the same way, if we are living by the Spirit – What's it mean to live by the Spirit? It means we'll be living 'in tune' with the Spirit – we will be obeying God, and living lives of Holiness. And so, as children of God, living by the Spirit – pleasing God in the way we live, we have no reason to fear...

And that's what Paul says in Romans 8: (ESV)

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

Alright, so some people will use that very same passage to try and say,

"Christians should never fear God, because we're sons of God, and sons of God don't fear God..." And so, it doesn't matter if we don't do the right thing – we have no reason to fear....

But that's precisely the **opposite** of what Paul is saying... Our obedience demonstrates that we are sons of God, and so therefore no reason to fear... If we're living by the Spirit – if we're demonstrating the righteousness/holiness of God, well it's like we're a chip-off-the-old-block – He's the Father – We're His children – no reason to fear...

And then, in Romans 11, Paul talks about how Israel (because of their unbelief) were broken off, and then he warns us, not to be disobedient like Israel, because if God didn't spare Israel, he won't spare us either, and so he says: So do not become proud, **but fear**.: (ESV)

And what Paul taught in Romans, is entirely consistent with what Peter is teaching us here, in his 1st Letter.

In V17, Peter says that if we know God as our Heavenly Father, then we also have to recognise that our Father is the righteous Judge, and He judges impartially... In essence, what he's saying, is he's reminding us of the final judgment, and he's forcing us to ask ourselves, "Is it right that if God has forgiven me of my sin, that I should just go on sinning, as if it doesn't matter?????" God forbid it...

V¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with **fear** throughout the time of your exile,

What's the time of our exile? – we talked about this a few weeks ago: We are exiles – we are aliens... This world isn't

our home. Our home, is to be in glory with Christ, and we're just passing through this life. But while we are in exile – while we are living this life, how are we to behave? **conduct yourselves with fear**

... Why??? Because our Heavenly Father **judges impartially according to each one's deeds.....**

Don't ever forget that our Heavenly Father, is also the righteous judge of the universe... And when we know that, we will always have a healthy, reverential fear of God... Not terrified to be in His presence, because He's adopted us as His children, but a healthy, reverential fear, that spurs us to obedience and holiness.

Which brings us to the third motivation to live in obedience and holiness...

3. The cost of our forgiveness (and being born again) was so high, let's never take it for granted...

You know what a ransom is, hey – it's what gets paid, to set someone free...

But what were we set free from? – the ransom that God paid, to set us free – what was He setting us free from???

And you know what – a lot of the time, we tend to think in terms of – “Well, He set us free from our sins.” – “He set us free from the punishment that we deserve” – it's like God gave us a “Get out of jail free Card” (complements of His

Son)... Well yes,,, sort of,,, but He ransomed us from much more than that...

Peter says: V¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers

The Greek word that we translate as “futile” means empty/useless/fruitless...

And here's the thing – no matter how high/grand/productive/“enlightened” our culture might seem, it's empty/fruitless/useless... Everything the world has to offer to us, is useless... Do you know why??? It's because it comes with a use-by date...

Everything the world has to offer me, expires when I die... And every physical thing in the world itself, is going to pass away when Jesus returns....

To set our heart on things of the world, is futile... Our hope – the outcome of our faith – is the salvation of our souls, and being in the glory of Christ...

So, what have we been ransomed from??? We've been ransomed from the whole world merry-go-round... We've been ransomed from a worldly, godless, pointless way of life...

When God saved us, He didn't just pay enough to rescue us from the punishment we deserve – He paid to set us free, – to set us free from the very pointless way of life, that earned us the sentence of punishment in the first place....

WOW!!! He paid, so we don't have to be the same **despicable** people we always were... What would something like that cost????

Wives: What would you pay, to knock the rough edges off your husband, so that he was a much nicer bloke???

Parents, what would you pay to take your kids from being little terrors, and to transform them into little cherubs???

Well, it wasn't a physical cost – it wasn't silver or gold that God paid... It was the precious blood of His one and only Son...

V¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

God gave His beautiful, perfect, sinless, righteous, loving Son, to die, so that we don't have to stay the same as we are...

Jesus died – not just so that we can have a get-out-of-jail-free-card... Jesus died, so that we could become just like Him... (in holiness; obedience; righteousness)

If we decide, “Right, I’m going to believe in Jesus for forgiveness, and I’m going to continue to live in the same way that people of the world live, and He’ll just keep on forgiving me”... – if that’s the level of our faith, we’re only half-way there...

Jesus died, so that we could become just like Him... By His Holy Spirit, He lives in us, and transforms us, and renews us...

Isn't that just the best motivation to live in obedience and Holiness???

V²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the 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.

He did it for us... Jesus died, but God raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory... So that our faith, and our hope, are in God...

Have you ever read the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes – I hope you have... The author of Ecclesiastes doesn't name himself, but we believe it was Solomon...

And in it, he's an old man, looking back over his life, and everything that life in this world has to offer,, and he says "Meaningless! Meaningless!" - he says it's like "Chasing after the wind"....

And the conclusion he comes to, (this wise man, looking back over his life), is that the best one can do, is to fear God, and keep His commands...

And as disciples of Jesus, let's never forget that... How we live matters.

Why is holiness so important?

1. Because our Heavenly Father is Holy, His children should also be holy;
2. If we know that God is a righteous judge, let us fear Him, and live in all holiness;
3. The cost of our redemption was so high, let's never take it for granted... The precious blood of Christ our Lord, was lavishly poured out, not just to cancel punishment, but for us to become like Him...

Let's live for Him...

Next week, we're going to have Part C of this message, as we see another expression of holiness.

Let's pray...

Oh, our Heavenly Father,
You are indeed Holy.
Help us to know You.
Give us a Holy Reverent Fear,,,

Not to be afraid of you as if we could never approach
You,
But that we would truly know you as You are...

Creator; Lord; Judge;
Righteous; Impartial;
Perfect; Holy...

And Oh Lord,
We want to thank You that you have saved us,
Not just from punishment,
But You have saved us to a new way of life—
Born again,
to a life of holiness and obedience to You...

Lord, we don't only want to be half-saved.
And it seems silly,
the way that we've tried to hold on to our old way of
life...
Chasing after the wind – meaninglessness – futility...

Lord, help us to fix our eyes on the outcome of our
faith,
The salvation of our souls,
And that we would begin preparing for this now,
By living in obedience and holiness,

With the help and transforming power

Of Your Holy Spirit,,,
In Jesus Christ, our Lord,
Amen.