

Moved to Obeying God Triune (Part 2)

1 Peter 1:13-25 (text: vv.17-25)

Reformed Church of Wainuiomata, 19 July 2020, 16:30

(Sermon put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)

Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

In this morning's sermon we looked at the first two commands given in our text (1 Pt 1:13-25).

But, this afternoon, we want to study the remaining two commands of this text (so our text this afternoon are just verses 17-25).

Here are those two commands...

- Christian, *fear God* because...!
- Christians, *love one another* because...!

1. Christian, fear God because...!

In v. 17, God, through Peter, commands us that we *conduct ourselves with fear throughout the time of our stay on earth (our exile/sojourning)*!

For all practical purposes, we could say this means that you & I will, with reverence to God, plan and live our every word and deed during our fleeting stay on this planet.

Conduct yourselves with fear/reverence before God! That's the command!

But, as we have seen with the previous two commands (in this morning's sermon), God's commands do not come without kind incentives – yes, without Him also grounding each command in a solid motive. After all, as the model “Husband,” God never forces us, His “wife,” against our will. Rather, with who He is and what He has done for us, God so works in us (so moves our hearts) that, when we obey Him, we do so willingly and gladly.

So, what is the kind incentive by which God moves you & me to also obey this command – i.e. the command to conduct ourselves with fear throughout our stay on this earth!?

Well, verses 17-21 give, not one, but *four* incentives – the first one of which has to do with God's *character* (with who God is), and the other three have to do with His mind-bending love-deeds. So, here then are the four incentives (or shall we say “grounds”) on which the command to fear/reverence God are founded:

- God is the ultimate Judge
- God has ransomed us
- God has foreordained our Saviour
- God has raised our Saviour from the dead

1.1 Firstly, then, **God is the ultimate Judge!**

The *command* says: “Fear/Reverence God in all you are and do and for as long as you are on this earth!”

The *ground* (incentive) for this command says: “...because God is the ultimate Judge!”

Yes, as v. 17 says, God is a (THE) Judge *who judges impartially according to each person's deeds!*

See why the Christian should obey the command to fear/reverence God? It has to do with who God is – with His character! He is the ultimate (most just) Judge who is not swayed by a pretty face, neither by a bribe nor by hypocrisy or fake tears! Perhaps you say, “But, hang on, pastor, God is not just our *Judge* – the Bible says He is also our *Father!*”

Well, granted, v.17 does say that God is our Father, but it also describes Him as the most competent & all-knowing Judge! And although He is the Christian’s *Father*, He does not cease to be even the *Christian’s Judge!*

And so, may the Christian never say, “Oh, because the Judge of heaven & earth is my Father, it does not matter how I now live, because He will forgive me at the last judgement!”¹

On the contrary, the person who really is in Christ, will, as long as he/she stays on this temptation-filled world, be conducting him/herself in reverence (awe) of God! See? See the first reason (kind incentive) as to why the Christian will obey the command to fear God? It is because of God’s character (because of who He is) – the most just Judge!

But here is the second reason as to why the Christian (you & I?) will fear God. It has to do with an awe-inspiring deed God has already done...

1.2 God Has Ransomed Us!

Well, verses 18-19 describe this mind-bendingly gracious deed.

God paid a ransom price for His loved ones (you & me?) And Peter wants to emphasize this fact – i.e. that the ransom price which was exceedingly *costly!* You see, even though silver and gold are very durable and costly, they remain the earthly means by which human beings will pay whatever ransom price abductors may ask of them. But God did not use these best-of-earthly means to pay our ransom price! No, our heavenly “Husband’s” love paid our ransom by getting personally involved – yes, by the shedding of the precious blood of His only-begotten Son!

See? See the *enormous cost* at which God saved us!?

Of what significance is it that “blood” is mentioned?

Well, blood emphasises the fact that God’s Son did not die a normal death – in bed because of an illness or because of old age – but because He was slaughtered, yes slaughtered like a sacrificial lamb!

And talk of God’s Old-Testament requirement that only the best of lambs were ever to be sacrificed to atone for His people’s sins – look at this “Lamb’s” status! Verse 19 describes Him as: “...*a lamb without blemish or spot!*” And how could He have been anything less!? I mean, He was the *Son of God*, slaughtered at the ultimate Passover!

Question: Wherefrom did the blood of those first Passover lambs ransom Ancient Israel?

From bondage to Egypt!

And wherefrom did the blood of Christ ransom Peter’s first readers and you & me?

¹ Cf. also Rm 6:1-2 & 13, ***What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?... What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!***

Well, let's first remember the condition Peter's first readers were in before they received Christ as their Saviour & Lord! They were caught in a dead-end with no possibility of escape! Why? Well, because they used to live in a futile/empty way of life – a way that would end in condemnation by the Judge who judges everyone according to his/her works.

So, Christ's death as sacrifice for sin set them free from the prospect of eternal condemnation! Yes, it enabled them to escape bondage to Satan and eternal death! See? See the enormous love-deed of God Triune!?

See incentive no.2? Yes, see the second reason as to why we should fear/reverence God throughout all our time of exile on this earth!? Our heavenly Father paid an enormously costly price!!

My brother & sister, remember how Isaac once asked the question, "Where is the lamb?"² Well, may we remember how John the Baptist answered that question when he pointed to Jesus and said, "***Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!***"³

Well, in 2003 a Czech movie called "The Bridge" (in Czech, "Most") was released. Since then, many a Christian preacher has used an incident from this movie to try and illustrate the high ransom price our heavenly Father has paid to set us free.

Apparently, this movie is based upon a real event that happened about one hundred years ago in Czechoslovakia.

In a sermon, already six years ago, I referred to the very gripping scene from this story. So, this time I will be as brief as possible.

It is the story of a single Czech father who takes his eight-year-old son to work with him at the railroad drawbridge where the father is the bridge tender. At the bridge, the father goes into the engine room, and tells his son to stay at the edge of the nearby lake. But then a ship comes, and so, the bridge is lifted. Then, suddenly, an hour *earlier* than scheduled, a train happens to arrive. The son sees this, and tries to warn his father, who is currently not paying attention and is unaware of the oncoming train. Then, just as the oncoming train approaches, his son falls into the drawbridge gear works while attempting to lower the bridge, leaving the father with a horrific choice. The father then lowers the bridge, the gears crushing the boy. Shockingly, the people in the train are completely oblivious to the fact that this man's son died so that they could live.⁴

My brother & sister, this is indeed a heart-wrenching story/event – and I don't want to diminish that.

However, there are several ways in which even this very gripping story falls short of illustrating completely the cost at which our heavenly Father crushed His Son to ransom you & me! Here is one great shortcoming, and that has to do with the third incentive our text gives as to why we should obey the command to fear/reverence God during all our earthly days – i.e. that, unlike the death of the 8-year-old boy in the movie, Christ's death was no accident! Rather, it was planned by our heavenly Father!

So, here, then, is the third (of four) incentives as to why you & I should fear/reverence God...

² Cf. Gen 22:7

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 1:29). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁴ My adaptation from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Most_\(2003_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Most_(2003_film))

1.3 God Has Foreordained Our Saviour

Verse 20 tells us that, although it was only “in these last times” that Christ was made manifest for Peter’s readers and for you & me, He was actually *foreknown before the foundation of the world* – i.e. from before the foundation of the world, Christ’s sacrificial death was foreordained by His heavenly Father! Yes, the painful, blood-shedding, God-forsaken death of God’s Son was the carefully and long-term-designed plan of God!

Look, is it not so that this aspect of Christ’s cross-death brings out even more the enormous mercy, love, compassion and grace which God, our Father, had/has for us!?

See? See why Eph 1:4-5 says, “*In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will...*”⁵

Mind-bending!

See? See the third reason (incentive) as to why you & I (and every Christian) should be moved to conducting our lives here on earth in fear/reverence/awe of God, our heavenly Father? In love for you & me, He foreordained His only-begotten Son’s crushing to ransom us!

Well, this brings us to the fourth reason (incentive) as to why we should fear/reverence God. You see, v.21 says that...

1.4 God has raised our Saviour from the dead

My brother & sister, v.21 says as much as this: God did not just raise Christ *from the dead*, but God even raised Him *to place of supreme honour*.

So, what does this powerful & honorary raising mean?

Well, does it not mean that God fully accepted the sacrifice made by His beloved Son!?

And what does this, in turn, mean for you & me and all who have received Jesus as their Saviour & Lord?

Well, does it not give us an enormously firm foundation for a living hope that God who raised Jesus from the dead – yes, God who showed His acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice – will also raise us to eternal life!?

See? See the fourth (and final) reason/incentive given by our text? Yes, see these altogether four incentives to move Peter’s first readers and you & me to heed the command to fear/reverence (live in awe of) God during all our fleeting days on earth?

Again, unlike an ungodly husband, God does not force us to obey Him against our will! Rather, He has cared to give us these four incentives to move our hearts to willingly, joyfully and in great gratitude fear/reverence Him, our heavenly “Husband!”

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Eph 1:4–5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles (Emphasis mine).

Well, this brings us to the second command of our text – also to the second (and smaller) point in the sermon...

2. Christians, love one another because...!

Verse 22 gives a very clear and strong command, i.e. that Christians *should love one another...* half-heartedly? No, that Christians should love one another *earnestly* and from a *pure & unhyprocritical heart!* What's more, the Greek word means to love self-sacrificially – the way Christ has loved us and gave Himself up for us!⁶

Why did Peter (in the Holy Spirit!) think it necessary to give this command?

Well, because internal coldness, dissention and disunity among Christians will definitely threaten the truth of the Gospel! That's why also our Lord once prayed (in Jn 17:13), "***I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.***"⁷

Lack of love among Christians threatens the Gospel message!

However, granted, at times there will be a *seeming* disunity when the church has to expel false preachers – preachers who are not loyal to the Gospel.

But were such preachers ever really Christian!? So, expelling false preachers, that's one thing!

But what our text warns against is Christians who are divided over matters of peripheral importance – like disliking one another because of different views on, for example, building, renovation and purchasing matters! In light of the mind-bending Gospel message, these matters are trivia! Yet, they can create (and, sadly, have created) painful disunity and schisms among Christians.

But the command (in v.22) is: "...***love one another earnestly from a pure heart...***"

Why did Peter (through the Spirit) write this command to his *first readers*?

Well, because many of Peter's first readers had come from paganism – so, they were *Gentiles!* Yet, a good part of Peter's first readers had come from *Judaism!* And the real danger was always that the Jewish Christians could look down upon the Gentile Christians as if Gentile Christians were not really pure enough.⁸

But, in the words of v.22, Peter assures these Gentile Christians that, at the time when they obediently received the Gospel truth, they underwent a purification of their souls – i.e., in each believer's heart of hearts, he/she got purified. So, now they have a new "control centre!" I mean, does not Prov 4:23 say, "***Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life***"?⁹

Well, now that these new believers have received a new spiritual heart (new inner nature), they must see to it that *that heart* will issue new & Christlike motives, thoughts and actions!

And so, the *command* is "...***love one another earnestly from a pure heart...***"

But what is the *incentive* which prompts the Christian to obey this command?

Well, v.23 gives it – i.e. that "***you have been born again...***" So, that's the foundation (reason/incentive) as to why Christians must love one another!

⁶ From *agapaō* (ἀγαπάω),

⁷ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Jn 17:20–21). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁸ We see this scenario sketched in many of Paul's letters.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Pr 4:23). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

You ask, “But how did they get born again?”

Verses 23-25 say, by the imperishable seed of God’s everlasting (and unchanging) Word! You see, human beings (and all creation) are short-lived, like flowers in the field that are here today and gone tomorrow! But God’s Word, with all its truths and promises, remains forever unchanging, firm & trustworthy!

My brother & sister, to conclude, here are the two commands of our text with their incentives:

Command number 1: “Christian, *conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile!*¹⁰”

Wainui member, is that how you are currently conducting your life? Look, here are four incentives to help you living this way:

- God is the ultimate Judge
- God has ransomed you
- God has foreordained your Saviour
- God has raised your Saviour from the dead

Command number 2: “Christians, love one another!”

Wainui family, I have seen great love-deeds performed among our members – often quietly and out of the public eye!

But, you know, having become aware of the silent suffering of some of our members, the elders decided, at our last meeting, to encourage our members to look out for one another by simply asking more often the following question: “How are you?” “How are you doing at the moment?”

Yes, I know that some members may not feel to respond with all honesty to such an “impromptu” question. However, is it not true that if we seldomly ask this question, we would be failing in one of the basic steps towards showing one another practical love? So, could we improve on loving one another in practical ways?

Well, here’s the incentive given: “*You have been born again...*” In other words, you & I now have God’s Spirit in us – which should move us to think with compassion, just like our Lord thinks about His/our family!

AMEN (2,688 words excluding footnotes)

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Pe 1:17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.