

Introduction: Travel

Thus far in our “Salvation” series we have celebrated two miraculous things: what we have been *saved-to* and what we have been *saved-from*. We have been saved to amazing things in a Christ-full heaven AND we have been saved from horrible things in a Christ-less hell. However, our salvation is not only a “ticket-to-heaven” and a “get-out-of-hell-free-card.” It’s also about being saved from something right now. What is it? Let’s go to I Peter 1:17-19 to find out.

17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as temporary residents in the fear of God. 18 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 forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

The Empty Way of Life

Peter tells his congregations in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia that the thing they are being saved from is the worst thing of all, “the empty way of life.” What is the empty way of life? The word Peter uses for empty can also be translated as “vain, futile, wasteful, or worthless.” It is used only two other times in the NT most notably by Paul in Ephesians 4:17:

*I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord,
that you must no longer live as the pagans do, in the futility of their thinking.*

Paul’s encouragement to “no longer live as the pagans do” is what Peter means by the “empty way of life.” The empty way of life is to live as the pagans do, as though God does not exist. Jesus described this lifestyle as “Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die” (Luke 19:12).

The Full Way of Life

The polar opposite of the “empty life” is the “full life” described by the Westminster Divines over 400 years ago.

“To Glorify God and Enjoy Him Forever.”

“To glorify God and enjoy him forever” is the chief purpose of humanity. It is why we have been created, why we have been saved, and why we are being saved. Glorifying and enjoying God is the best life possible in this world and in the world to come. It partly fulfills Jesus’ promise of the “abundant life” in John 10:10. However, as we all know there’s a gravitational pull away from this life which ends up in “Glorify Me and Enjoy Me Forever.” However, Peter gives us three ways to avoid the “empty way of life” and glorify God at the same time.

#1 Identify as Temporary Residents

The first is to maintain our identity as “Temporary Residents.” There’s been plenty of “self-identifying” these days, but the identity of the Christ follower is that of a “temporary resident” who lives in the “fear of God.” Peter means here that we live with utmost respect and reverence for who God is, what God has done, and what he might could do to us (Matthew 10:28). It means to adopt the mindset of passengers passing through knowing full well that this place is not our ultimate home. Peter warned in the following chapter (2:11):

As temporary residents...keep away from worldly desires
that wage war against your very souls.

We need to maintain our identity as temporary residents especially when we are tempted to behave as our pagan world does and when get our axles all wound up in the domestics of day-to-day life.

Trail & Travails of Moving

#2 Realize We Will Be Judged

The second way Peter gives us to keep us from the “empty way of life” is to realize that God is both our Father and Judge. We love to hear sermons and sing songs about the

love, goodness, forgiveness, grace, and mercy of God. However, because we are free moral agents and not his pets, God is going to *krina* us. Who said what to who now? *Krina*, is the Greek word for “evaluate, discern, assess.” Yes, there’s coming a time when God will evaluate how we used the time, talent, and treasure he has graciously given us. And yes, he will distribute eternal rewards to us commensurately. Thanks be to God, however, Peter used the word *krina* and not *katakrina* here. *Katakrina* means to condemn. As we saw last week, those who reject Christ will be condemned but those who accept Christ will be evaluated. Although we must be joyfully serious about this eventuality, we do not dread the “Day of Evaluation” because God IS our loving heavenly Father and Jesus was condemned on the Cross so that we wouldn’t be. This is why I John 4:17 tells us:

As we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So, we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

#3 Count the Cost of Our Salvation

The 3rd thing we must do from drifting into the “empty life” is to count the cost of our salvation. Listen again to v18,19:

18 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 forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

The congregations to which Peter writes consisted of three very different kinds of people: free, freed, or slaves. Although different, each group knew what Peter meant when he used the word “redeem.” Redeem was a market/finance term used for purchase. The imagery is that of slavery. Roughly 25% of the Roman Empire consisted as slaves and became so in one of the following ways: (1) were sold into it by their parents or creditors, (2) sold themselves into it, (3) were born into it, or (4) was a prisoner of war. Unlike the horrid slavery of Africans during the Colonial period, it was possible for Roman slaves to purchase or redeem their way to freedom. They could do so by: (1) Serve a designated period. (2) Do extra work for their masters. (3) Hope a benefactor purchased it for them (very rare).

Blood Purchase

Peter reminds us that Jesus purchased our freedom from the slavery of sin and did so, not with the valuable currencies of silver or gold but with the invaluable currency of his own blood. Redemption, through sacrificial blood, hearkens back to the OT system of sacrifice. Depending on the nature and degree of your sin you had to do a blood purchase, usually in the form of an animal, to be freed from it. Because it is “Impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin” (Hebrews 10:4), Jesus shed his own blood for our “eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12). So, Peter wants his congregation to count the cost of that salvation. If they can’t count, he provides the calculus: the inestimable worth of the precious blood of Jesus, the faultless and flawless sacrificial Lamb.

Conclusion:

How do we live in that enormity of that sacrifice for us? 1) We marvel at it every day, as heaven still does. 2) We live in perpetual thanksgiving of it, from here to infinity and beyond. 3) We glorify God and enjoy him forever and avoid the empty life. This is very thing Paul implored the Corinthian Christ followers to do in I Corinthians 6:20:

You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.

Tunch Ilkin

Communion

Jesus gave his very best for us. The absolute minimum we can do is give our very lives to him. One way we do so is by joyfully participating in Holy Communion.