

April 19, 2026

I Peter 1:17-21:

We Don't Want to Get "Stuck" Here

- I. Bizarre
- II. Fear
- III. Imperishable

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I Peter 1:17-21

Dear Friends in Christ,

As I thought about this sermon, I remembered the story about a husband and wife who interrupted their vacation to go to a dentist. The wife said, "I want a tooth pulled, and I don't want Novocain because I'm in a big hurry. Just pull the tooth as quickly as possible, and we'll be on our way." The dentist was quite surprised. "You are certainly a courageous woman," he said. "Which tooth is it?" The wife turned to her husband and said, "Show him your tooth, dear." You know, it's the "Life is about me!" syndrome.

I will never forget a conversation from 61 years ago with 3 other then young men. It was the time I call the roaring 60's because, in certain ways, it echoed "the roaring 20's". The four of us were talking about what we saw happening to this country; the fact that people had become overly obsessed with themselves. "Life is about me!", the god of first choice. It was the time of cultural explosions: sex any way you want it - the want of mind-altering drugs - the want to kill unwanted, unborn, babies - rebellion and lawlessness; 61 years ago! What has always been and is intensifying. You know what?

WE DON'T WANT TO GET "STUCK" HERE

I. Bizarre

The Apostle Peter writes, "And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds (the deeds that are evidence of the faith we profess), conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile (v.17)." Wow! That slaps the "power of positive thinking" in the face, doesn't it? But look at what I Peter 2:11 says: "Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul." And you really need to hear the opening words of the Epistle: "To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion (I Peter 1:1)"; that is, Christians scattered throughout the world. Exiles - sojourners – dispersed!

And many will protest: "Seriously, '...conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile (v.17b)?' But I work so hard for joy and comfort with this world! I want answers to my problems here! If God is love then why doesn't he do something about this messed up, bizarre world?" But that isn't the question. The question is, "Who made this world a bizarre mess?" If humans are so good and worthy then why do they lie, slander, gossip, cheat, steal, hate, kill; desecrate marriage and family with perversions; fry mind and body with drugs; protect the lawless; become indecent, disrespectful, and careless with others – especially careless with children?

Are we going to say that people are basically good when we look at a world that has been turned upside down and inside out - by whom?? Again and again, are we listening to the word of God? Scriptures say, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rm.3:23)." Do we truly listen to Almighty God's description of us before Christ entered our lives? This is tough – so listen:

None is righteous, no, not one; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; Together they have become worthless (of no value to God); No one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; and their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes (Rm 3:10-18).

This is about us before we knew Christ. And now that we know Christ we live with this truth: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (I Jn.1:8-10)."

II. Fear

Please listen, once again to the 17th verse: "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." How does that word register with you: "fear"?

We fear many things about this world. It has always been that way. It's the result of a world roiling in sin. Humanity has tried to reach the right path but invariably loses its way. Why? Because of sin. So, what do we do with "conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile?"

Let's start with these words from Proverbs 9:10: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight." So, what is this wisdom? Listen carefully to this word from First Corinthians 1:24: "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." And how do we understand this? As Paul writes, "And because of Him (God) you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." **The debt we owed God of a sinless life has been paid by Christ's sinless life, suffering and death** - so that as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord (I Cor.1st30-31)."

It all fits together, doesn't it? "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph.2:8-9)." If you believe that then you have the wisdom of God. Therefore, God counts you as righteous (without sin), sanctified (declared holy), redeemed (purchased by God to be His). Please take careful note of this word of God:

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world (I.Cor.1:19-20).

Tell me...please tell me...what of this world do you think will give real meaning to your life? As an adult, or a young person, or a child what do you see of this world you think is more important than your walk with and growth in Christ and His Word? If you believe that all you get out of this world is the goal of life...well...it will quickly go away and be forgotten! Remember, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away (Lk.21:33)." By the way, the heaven and earth that pass away are the earth and stars of this world. Instead of spending life trying to impress ourselves and others we want to remember God's word that says, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord!"

It makes sense doesn't it, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy one is insight." I agree from the depth of my soul with this word of God from Psalm 119:120: "My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments." Again, this fear is not a cringing fear anticipating the worst from God but reverent and respectful fear. **God didn't sin against us**. We sin against Him every day in thoughts, our words, our actions. We often try to justify or minimize sin. **We can't blame God for this world's mess**. The blame rests on humanity! But here's the most wonderful, blessed news: God opened the door and made the way for us. He sent His Son into this world to do everything necessary to earn our eternal salvation. You know the words, "Whoever believes has eternal life." Our text goes on to say . . .

III. Imperishable

Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last

times for the sake of you, 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 (vv.20-21).

God's Word doesn't leave us alone, thankfully. We make many sacrifices for life here, don't we? Some have horrible consequences. Argue, as some will, we have been "ransomed from the futile ways inherited from (our) forefathers (this world's thinking and ways...with the precious blood of Christ." I recalled the words of Reformed pastor, A. W. Tozer, not because of his theology but because of the way he said them: "The weakness of so many modern Christians is that they feel too much at home in the world. In their effort to achieve restful adjustment they have lost their Pilgrim character."

For much of the church today the focus is on the happiness God wants us to have with this world. That has never been the emphasis of God's Word. True happiness is to focus on the forgiveness of sin and eternal joy we have been given in Christ. Our purpose here is to pass that on to others - to introduce Christ to them. This comforts and guides us in our journey through this world to eternal peace and love.

You see, ***WE DON'T WANT TO GET STUCK HERE.*** Truly.

Pastor Bill Abbott