

LIVE ON EARTH IN THE FEAR AND REVERENCE OF GOD

1 PETER 01:17–21

Introduction

How can we stand against the trials and temptations of life? When we are severely attacked to such a point that we cannot understand, how can we bear it? Is there anything anywhere that can help us to bear it? Yes! There is the fear of God. If a person fears God and fears Him enough, he will stand against temptation and he will endure the trials of life.

But note: most people do not like to talk about *fearing God*. To fear God is thought to be psychologically unsound and emotionally disturbing. It is said to drive people into all kinds of emotional problems. Because of these charges, many have shied away from preaching and teaching *the fear of God*. But note: Is this true? Is it true that preaching and teaching *the fear of God* causes problems for people? One thing is sure: this is not what Scripture proclaims. Scripture proclaims that man must fear God or else he will be doomed forever. Therefore, whatever is causing man's psychological and emotional problems, it is not the *fear of God*, not the *true fear of God*.

What does Scripture mean by the *fear of God*? It means two things.

=> To fear God means to hold Him in fear, dread and terror.

=> To fear God means to hold Him in awe, to reverence the holiness, power, knowledge, wisdom, judgment and wrath of God.

What Scripture teaches is this: man must reverence God and hold God in the highest esteem and honour. Only if man reverences God will he worship and serve God.

Therefore, the fear that God wants man to have is a fear of reverence and awe, a fear that will stir man to love God with the deepest of emotions, with a true honour and esteem. But if man fails to reverence and love God, then he must fear the judgment and wrath of God. Why? Because man will have to bear the judgment of God. Therefore, fear is man's only hope; it is one of the forces that can drive him to cry out for the mercy of God.

This is the subject of this passage. We are to live on earth in the fear of God.

I. Because you call God "Father" (v. 17).

II. Because God will judge the world (v. 17).

III. Because you are a stranger and alien (pilgrim) on earth (v. 17).

IV. Because you have been redeemed (vv. 18-20).

V. Because you believe in the God who raised up and glorified Christ (v. 21).

I. 1 Peter 01:17 God is our Father

Believers are to reverence God because *they call God “Father”*. A father is to be revered: every child is to reverence his father. The word *reverence* means to hold one’s father in the highest esteem and to honour and respect him. It means to hold one’s father in such esteem that one fears lest he displease and hurt his father. This is especially true of God. God is our Father. He has adopted us as His children through the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are to reverence Him. We are...

- to honour and respect Him.
- to hold Him in the highest esteem.
- to fear lest we displease and dishonour Him and bring pain to His heart.

The point is this: if you call God “Father,” then live like it. Stay true to Him. Stand against all the trials and persecutions, temptations and evils of this life. Call upon your Father; ask for His help and strength. But reverence Him; show honour and respect by living for Him.

Mat 6:9 *“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.’”*

Mat 7:11 *“If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”*

John 1:12 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Rom 8:15 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”*

2 Cor 6:17-18 *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”*

Gal 4:4-6 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”*

1 Pet 1:17 *Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*

II. 1 Peter 01:17 Judgment of the World

Believers are to reverence God because *God will judge the world*. Note that the word “fear” (phoboi) is used. It means to hold God in reverence and awe. The judgment of God should strike fear, dread and terror within us, for it is to be the most fearful, dreaded and terrorizing experience imaginable. In fact, the human mind cannot even picture how awful

and frightening it will be to be judged and cut off from God for eternity. Two things are said about the judgment of God.

1. Every person is going to be judged. No one shall escape. Every person will come to the day when he will stand all alone in a private interview with God. In that moment he shall stand face to face with God for one purpose and one purpose alone: to be judged.
2. It is the works of a person that are to be judged. No false profession will stand in that day. When God reveals the person's works, his works will show that he never really trusted in Christ. He only said that he believed Christ, but his life and works will prove differently. It will be seen that he lived a lie. His life and works will show that he lived for the world and its possessions and pleasure.

Thought 1. We must never forget: a person is saved by faith in Christ, by a faith that lives for Christ and continues to live for Christ. A person who believes in Christ lives for Him. The person believes; therefore he lives day by day doing exactly what he believes. There just is no such thing as faith without works to *back up the faith*. If a person truly believes, then he does what he believes. His works follow his belief. This is the reason it is our works that shall be judged: our works will reveal exactly what we believe.

3. God will judge without partiality. God has no favourites. It does not matter who the person is: high or low, rich or poor, sinner or saint, good or bad, righteous or evil — all shall be judged and favouritism will be shown to no one. Peter, Paul, Martin Luther, Pope Paul, Billy Graham, Caesar, George Washington, John Kennedy, Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King, Einstein, Hitler, Stalin, Genghis Khan, Bill, Henry, Jane, Elizabeth — every human being who has ever lived, both high and low, will be judged; and we shall all be judged on an equal basis. There will be no partiality and no favouritism shown to a single person.

Mat 16:27 *“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.”*

Mat 25:31-32 *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”*

2 Cor 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

1 Pet 1:17 *Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*

2 Pet 2:9 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

Heb 9:27 *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

2 Pet 3:7 *By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*

1 John 4:17 *In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.*

Jude 1:14-15 *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."*

Rev 20:12 *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.*

Rev 22:12 *"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."*

Psa 62:12 *And that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.*

Jer 17:10 *"I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."*

III. 1 Peter 01:17 Strangers and Aliens on Earth

Believers are to reverence God because *they are strangers on earth*. The word "strangers" (paroikais) means to dwell alongside; to be passing by. It is the picture of an alien or stranger who is in a foreign country and is only dwelling there or passing by for a brief time. This is the believer here on earth. He is not a permanent resident on earth. He is only passing through the earth to a better world. This means a most wonderful thing: when a person is a stranger or alien in a foreign land, his mind and heart are home. He lives in a consciousness of home. So it is with the believer: his thoughts are upon home. He lives and walks in the consciousness of being in heaven with God. This is his attitude and his thoughts as he walks through his pilgrimage upon earth. He travels through life with his mind and heart upon heaven, his permanent home.

Heb 11:13-16 *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

Heb 13:14 *For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

1 Pet 2:11 *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

Exo 6:4 *I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens.*

1 Chr 29:15 *We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope.*

Psa 39:12 *“Hear my prayer, O LORD, listen to my cry for help; be not deaf to my weeping. For I dwell with you as an alien, a stranger, as all my fathers were.”*

Psa 119:19 *I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me.*

IV. 1 Peter 01: 18–20 Redemption through the Blood of Jesus Christ

Believers are to reverence God because *they have been redeemed*. The word “redeem” (lutron) means to set free or deliver by paying some ransom. Note three significant points.

1. We need to be redeemed, to be set free from the empty life that we have been taught to live by our forefathers. This is exactly what Scripture says:

For you...were [not] redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, (v. 18)

The life which most fathers teach is a vain and empty life. It focuses upon the world, its possessions and pleasures...

- jobs
- money
- property
- ease
- retirement
- position
- pleasure
- fame
- honour
- recreation
- professions
- housing
- enjoyment
- investments
- comfort
- authority
- recognition
- popularity
- prestige

Note carefully: these things do not satisfy the human heart. They are necessary to human life; we must have the basic necessities in order to sustain life. But physical and material things do not satisfy or fulfil the human heart. Only one thing can do that: God – the presence of God living in the heart and giving the person the perfect assurance of living forever with God. Therefore when a person focuses upon the world, its pleasures and possessions, he becomes vain. His heart becomes empty, void, unfulfilled and incomplete. The worldly heart senses a lack of permanent purpose, meaning and significance. Why?

- => Because the worldly person has little assurance that he is acceptable to God. Why?
Because his life and thoughts are not focused upon God; they are focused upon the world.

- => Because the worldly person is not sure he will live forever. Why? Because his life is not focused upon heaven; it is focused upon this world, upon getting all the possessions and pleasures he can to live comfortably.
- => Because the worldly person transgresses the law of God. He neglects, ignores, rejects, rebels and curses God. He is simply guilty of transgressing the law of God; therefore, he must bear the judgment and punishment for having violated God and His law. He must die, be exiled and cut off from God eternally. The worldly person has chosen to live without God; therefore, his desire will be granted. He will never have to live with God. He will continue on and on without God – exiled, cut off from God forever and ever.

The point is this: we need to be set free and delivered from the empty life that we have been taught to live. Our forefathers were wrong. A worldly life does not work. It only leaves us empty and void, incomplete and unfulfilled, and it dooms us to death, to an eternity apart from God.

1 Kng 22:52 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, because he walked in the ways of his father and mother and in the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin.

2 Chr 22:3 He too walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong.

Jer 9:14 “Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts; they have followed the Baals, as their fathers taught them.”

Amos 2:4 This is what the LORD says: “For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because they have rejected the law of the LORD and have not kept his decrees, because they have been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed.”

Mat 15:3 Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition [teaching]?”

Eph 2:2-3 In which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

1 Pet 1:18 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. ■