1 Peter 1:17-21 17If you call on the Father who judges impartially, according to the work of each person, conduct yourselves during the time of your pilgrimage in reverence, 18because you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, not with things that pass away, such as silver or gold, 19but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot. 20He was chosen before the foundation of the world but revealed in these last times for your sake. 21Through him you are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

I think in our world, especially in the USA there are two things that we highly treasure. The first is the idea of “freedom.” We want to be “free” to live our lives in the way we want and how we want with as little interference as possible. That is really a noble thing, but I am not sure it is a real thing. Here is what I mean.

In a society, we need to recognize that freedom always has its limits. I am free to do something, that is, I am free to do something as long as my freedom doesn’t interfere with your freedom. So, for instance, I am free to swing my arms, flail them about like a wild man. BUT, I am only free to do that when I am not around others. I cannot swing my arms in a crowd for that would hit and hurt others. For that matter, I cannot swing my arms if in the process of swinging I interfere with anyone else. See, that’s a limitation to freedom. I can’t go on the highway and drive 100 mph or drive recklessly because in truth, that endangers others and their well-being.

Now I really want you to think about what I have just said, and then I am going to tell you that in our lifetimes I can cite at least two laws that were enacted on that principle and initially we didn’t like it. To begin, there was that seat beat law. Enacted because it does and has saved lives. Enacted because it can help prevent injuries. Behind the idea of preventing injuries or death was also the fact that someone had to cover the costs of those injuries, so to save money for all, the seatbelt law was passed. And I do remember so many people railing and ranting about how our freedoms were being taken away. Isn’t it interesting that today, we really give no thought to the issue, we just get in our cars and put our seatbelts on.

Or think about how in our lifetimes, we have made a complete attitude change when it comes to “smoking.” We banned cigarette commercials and put warning labels on the product all because it was finally brought out that cigarette smoking was a leading cause of cancer. It was killing people and so for the protection of people and for the economic impact (because when people got cancer the medical bills soared) we attacked smoking. I have always found it fascinating that we couldn’t just outright ban cigarettes and tobacco because people raised such a fuss and screamed that freedoms were being taken away. For the most part, we have let the higher costs people endure be the regulator of smoking. You pay higher insurance premiums and without doubt a higher cost for your tobacco today. We know it is deadly, but we don’t stop it. Often in the name of “freedom.” Please, don’t complain when you can’t afford cancer treatment.

The other issue that we find so important for ourselves is the idea of “justice.” We want a justice system that is absolutely fair and impartial. I absolutely think that such justice is the ideal and very much desired for our lives, but again, in a sinful world, I am not sure such justice can be found. I say that because we live in a world where everyone wants to the exception to the rule. I don’t want you to steal my stuff, but I want the right to steal your stuff, seems to be a pretty normal attitude. That’s the simplest way of putting the issue. You see, we want our social status, economic status, education status, emotional status and our “but that’s what I want” status to regulate the application of the laws in our lives. We teach this idea. You have heard it. We say, “Well, that’s your truth, but my truth is different.” That’s our way of saying, “I want to be the exception to the rules.” It just the reality of our world.

Please note that our text addresses the issue of “justice.” It reminds us that ultimately and absolutely there is a “judgment” coming but it reminds us that a wonderful and awesome “exception” to the Law has been provided. Let’s consider our text under the theme: **YOU WERE REDEEMED.**

I know the world will disagree, but here is what God’s Word says. There is a Judgment Day coming. Please note we can speak of this in two ways. Each of us, if we are here before Jesus comes again, each of us will experience a “personal” Judgment Day at the very moment of our death. We will find ourselves standing before the throne of God. The other way we speak of this is the actual Day of Judgement when it is clear that Jesus is returning and all that God says of the end of this world and the beginning of his eternal perfect world will begin. Either way, in the blink of an eye, you will find yourself before the judgment throne of God to be judged according to the standards and Laws of God.

Note what our text says of God. **“The Father…judges impartially, according to the work of each person.”** There it is. There will be the perfect, holy and absolutely impartial judgment of God. He will judge everyone by his standard. God has given us his Law and that Law will stand as our judge. Absolutely impartial in every way. In regards to our judgement I always like to point to a couple of different passages because they pretty well lay it out.

My favorite is John 12:46-48. **“I have come into this world as a light, so that everyone who believes in me would not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words but does not hold on to them, I do not judge him, for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words does have a judge. The word which I spoke is what will judge him on the Last Day.”** Pay attention to what Jesus says here. He did indeed come to save the world, but He left his Word as the very standard of what will be. When we reject the Word, especially its core truths, we are going to have a problem. I hope to help you grasp how it works, this faith thing.

Make no mistake, God, in an absolutely impartial way, is going to judge each person according to the works of their lives. Remember, God only accepts holy and perfect works. He doesn’t take “almost” and he doesn’t take “but I tried.” Either you are holy and perfect or you will have a problem before God.

The next line of this section is so important. It is important because already each of us here has been terribly frightened by the fact that we are going to be judged on whether we are pure and holy or not. I say “terribly frightened” because each of us knows absolutely and without doubt we have sin, problems, uglinesses, and in fact, grasp that there is nothing holy and pure about any of us!! So the next lines are very important.

It says this: **“Conduct yourselves during the time of your pilgrimage in reverence, because you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers.”** Let’s stop there for a moment. In a nutshell, here is what this says. You have been given this life before the Lord. As you go through this journey of life do so with reverence, that is, do so with a sense of both fear and awe. Fear that you don’t dishonor the Lord and awe that you have a care and concern to hear and follow the Lord. Did you get that, “a care and concern that you follow the Lord!” This is not about work righteousness, because that is the reference found here that speaks about **“the empty way of life handing down to you from your forefathers.”**

That line tells you what the issue with work-righteousness is. It is empty. It is really rather useless. By the way, if you are going to save yourself by your own works and goodness, exactly when will you know that you have been good enough or that you have enough “works’ to your credit to get into heaven? And how do you know how many credits you have? And just who is it that sets and determines just what works are holy and pure? “I burned incense today for an hour while sitting and thinking.” What does that count for your salvation? “I didn’t stare to long at the picture of the girl in the hot pink bikini!” “I worshipped today and sang extra heartily!” “I said prayers today and only got distracted four times!” I could go on and on. Can any of you tell me the worth of any of this to your eternal life and salvation, to paying the cost, the redemption price needed to make up for your sins? Fact is, you can’t do that. If you try, I will absolutely in a heartbeat be able to tell you why you are wrong. Trust me, you don’t want to try and get saved by works.

And yet, we are told to live with reverence, to work at what is right and good and according to the Lord our God. Why? Did you miss the line? **“Because you know that you were redeemed.”** You were redeemed! Someone, somehow has bought you back, has made you a child of God and an heir of eternal life. Someone has paid the price for you! Dear people, that someone is Jesus.

Our verse continues: **“You were redeemed…not with things that pass away, such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot.”** There is it, the only hope we have. WE have been redeemed. WE have been bought back. It was done by Jesus who went to the cross to pay, totally pay for our sins. He paid the price with his perfect life, with his suffering and death for us, with His paying the debt of sin that stood against us and damned us. He was damned for us. He is the one and only solution. Bluntly put, Jesus is the only “exception” to the demands of the law. Either you put yourselves into the hands and justice of Jesus or you will stand and face the demanding and damning force of the Law of God that says you must be holy in thought, word, and deed.

Look further. **“He was chosen before the foundation of the world but revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”** I pray that I can adequately help you grasp the fullness and total marvel of these words.

Clearly the issue of faith is before us. We are simply told that even before the foundations of the world were laid, Jesus was already chosen to be our Savior. No, I can’t fully explain that, other than to say that it deals with the eternal nature and complete knowledge and wisdom of God. Even while God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was planning this very creation of ours, planning our holiness and perfection as those created in the image of God, God also knew we would need a Savior. God knew it would be Jesus, His Son who would be that Savior. Jesus came for our sake. That’s the issue of faith. Either you believe Jesus came to redeem you or you do not. Either you believe Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior or you do not.

Because **“through Jesus you are believers in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory.”** That sentence sums up the total work of redemption Jesus did. God sent Jesus to die for our sins, to pay the atonement price, the redemption cost for all the sins of all the world for all of time. God told us we would know who the Savior was because He would rise from the dead and be given glory and honor forever. Is there anyone here who does not grasp this wonder of Jesus? It is being made clear that Jesus and what he is, is the whole key to this. Jesus came to save us. Jesus came to redeem us. In Jesus, the very thing we need for eternal life and salvation is provided. But don’t forget to go back and grasp that faith is clearly a proponent of this gift of Jesus. A believer lives in reverence to God. A believer hears and follows God’s Word. Not to save themselves, but rather because they realize that in Jesus they are saved. There is always the key. IN Jesus you are saved.

Last part. **“So that your faith and hope are in God.”** That is just so simple. It is all about Jesus. But let me help you get this. I have total faith in the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation Jesus has won for me. Because of that faith, I strive to live in reverence to Jesus. I work to glorify his name. I work to speak his truth. I work to conduct my life in accord with his Word. He has called me to his Light and I don’t like and chase after the darkness. And where I, because of fleshly weakness and sickly faith, disobey and dishonor God, I am lead to repent and in that repentance know that Jesus has forgiven! Here is what faith does in our lives. I don’t claim to be holy and perfect. I claim that Jesus was holy and perfect for me and all you need to do is grasp that in my life and with reverence, I follow and believe in Jesus.

I can tell you that my attitude is not, “Jesus, I am going to do this sin and you are going to suffer all the more for me and like it and I don’t want to hear any complaints and demands from you. I will do what I want Jesus and you will just have to suffer for it, I demand it!” As you blindly live in the darkness of your sin, tell me how that is reverence to God? Tell me how that fits the issue of faith in Jesus?

I am trying so hard to help you see this wonder of Jesus. He has died for you. He has risen from the dead that you might have eternal life and salvation. Please believe in him. Please know that your salvation is about Him. Please put your faith and hope in God and not in you in any way. Lord, I do believe. Help my unbelief! Amen.