1 Peter 1:18-19 Because you know that you were redeemed….with the precious blood of Christ.

I want to start this sermon by speaking of the larger context of these verses first. The larger context is from 1:13 all the way to 2:3. It is a wonderful section filled with all sorts of encouragements concerning our Christian life. When I say it is filled with encouragements, please note that this section contains 5 different imperative verbs. Now, an imperative verb is “the mood of command or entreaty.” That is important to grasp. In other words, in this larger section we find 5 verbs that are clearly commanding us, or even better, that are clearly encouraging us in something. So let me share those five verbs with a brief summary of what they are saying.

The first imperative is “hope” found in verse 13. The verse says, **“Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”** We are being encouraged to have hope. We are being told that we are to have a “sure and certain confidence,” The important thing to note is what that hope is in. It is not in us, our works, achievements, goods, or goals. Our hope is to be in the grace of Jesus Christ, right now just partially revealed but on the Last Day, fully revealed. Did you get that? Hope is to be firm, sure and certain and the only way to achieve that is by the grace of Jesus.

The second imperative is “be holy” in verse 15. The verse says, **“Rather, just as the one who called you is holy, so also be holy in everything you do.”** The command is that we be pure, perfect, and without blemish. That is to be our life. It is not addressing the issue if we can be or anything of that nature, it is simply and strongly telling us to work at being like Jesus, in everything we do. Notice that this call to holiness is contrasted to the way we were before Jesus: **“do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.”** It is telling that this command is helping us to grasp that there is to be a difference between unbelieving you and believing you and that difference is going to be found in the fact that you are striving to do what is good and right in the eyes and revelation of Jesus. Again notice how Jesus becomes the focal point.

The next imperative is the one found in our verses. For right now we are going to skip this one, but trust me, we are coming back to it.

The fourth imperative is found in verse 22. It is “love one another.” The verse says, **“Since you have purified your souls by obeying the truth, resulting in your sincere brotherly love, love one another constantly from a pure heart.”** Aren’t those beautiful words. Something has happened to us, namely that our souls have been purified because of faith in Jesus. Note this verse says, **“Purified by obeying the truth.”** Don’t think that your obedience or your works did the purifying. It was the truth that did the purifying. The obedience being spoken of here is to the command of God to “believe in my Son.” Through faith in Jesus we have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Through Jesus we have learned of love, true love and this love changes us. God simply, because of Jesus wants us to practice this love in our lives. And if you think my thoughts here are wrong, please note what the next verse says and that these two verses are clearly connected thoughts. Verse 23 says, **“For you have been born again, not from perishable seed but from imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”** Look what God has done for you in Jesus! How could you not love?

The fifth and last imperative is found in 2:2, “crave.” The verse says, **“Like newborn babies, crave the pure milk of the word.”** This imperative is probably the most picturesque. We are like newborns and we just want to be fed and about the only thing, the best thing for us is Mom’s milk! Spiritually we are to have a craving, a desire for the milk, in this case called the pure milk of the word. One of the easiest ways to measure your faith is whether or not you have a desire and craving for God’s Word. It is the staple of our faith. It is what gives strength and wisdom and motivates in Godliness.

Now, what have you noticed about every one of these imperatives so far? Yes, they are commands or encouragements given and always clearly and absolutely connected to Jesus and his work of redemption. We are being encouraged in Christian living but that never happens without that solid connection to Jesus and his work of atonement. And just so you know, 1 Peter 1:3-12, the section just before our section, is one that just speaks directly to the Living Hope we have in Jesus. The wonder and marvel of Jesus are proclaimed and exclaimed as our salvation and hope. You cannot address faith and salvation without grasping Jesus and redemption!

Okay, it is time to go back to our verses for today and speak of that third imperative word and what it is for our lives today. Our theme will be: **LIVE IN REVERENCE.**

I am hoping that my theme gives you a clue as to what the imperative before us is. It is actually found for us in verse 17, **“If you call on the Father who judges impartially, according to the work of each person, conduct yourselves during this time of your pilgrimage in reverence.”** There is no doubt. We are being encouraged, commanded if you would, to **“conduct yourselves…in reverence.”** So let’s just start by asking a simple question. Why do we want to do that?

Answer: because of God the Father, the impartial judge. There is both comfort and terror in those words. I say “comfort” because these word tell us that God the Father is not in any way partial, prejudiced, limited, short-sighted, hateful or calloused in his judgements. God is completely fair and just. God makes no mistakes in any way. That’s good. But the terror part comes in when we hear the words: **“according to the work of each person.”** Those words tell me God is going to see things exactly for what they are, in total truth and revelation based on me and my life according to His Word!

And I recognize that those words tell me I am in deep trouble! Because God is not going to judge me according to other men and what they were, but God is going to judge me according the standard that He has established and given. That standard was given to us in the previous verse: **“Be holy, because I am holy.”**

So, are you holy? I didn’t ask you if you were good because heaven knows in this world everyone has their own opinion about what is and isn’t good. For that matter, if you really want to get the full flavor and meaning of all of this then just take a moment to contemplate what this part of our verses means: **“you were redeemed from your empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers.”**

Do you know what that empty way of life is? It is the idea that somehow or in some way we can earn and achieve the wonders of heaven by our own works and goodness. The entire world is filled with religions that proclaim this. Do this, don’t do that and you are good. Perform this, wear that, pray this many times facing this way, at least be trying and you will win. That’s work righteousness. The idea that somehow and in some way we can effect, carry out and accomplish the goal of heaven.

By the way, did you ever notice how the work righteous religions almost always get wrapped up in earthly things? There is a false theology out there called Prosperity Theology. It tells you that if you do it God’s way, with the right attitude and solid faith that God is going to give you absolutely everything you have ever desired. Ever notice it is the false teachers getting everything and swimming in the money they tell you is very much the key to your success. Send them your money and that’s when you will begin getting blessed beyond your wildest dreams. It is false!

And there are those religions that tell you that giving up everything in the world is the key. Live in poverty, don’t have material things, be humble, spend your entire day in meditation and communion with the greater powers and that will get you in. Every work righteous religion focuses on this world or the things of this world, achieving in this world, happiness, peace, love and fame. When it is the things of this world that is the focus: yes, even if the focus is your feelings, thoughts, your experiences, the WOW you get as you work for Jesus, I can pretty well guarantee that it is a false theology taking you away from Jesus. Some are blatantly work righteous and others are tremendously subtle, but if the focus is the things of this world it is most assuredly false. Our verse put it this way, **“not with things that pass away, such as silver or gold.”**

The measure is God, what God has revealed and says, what God wants and demands. God has demanded holiness and you and I cannot measure up. Ever! Because all we have and are is from this world. Adam and Eve saw to that when they disobeyed and brought sin into this world. The end result is that on our own, with worldly things or with worldly ways we are lost to God!

But note what our verse tells us is the defining difference: **“Because you were redeemed…with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot. 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.”**

Jesus has redeemed us. Jesus bought us back. He was the lamb without blemish or spot that was foreshadowed in every Jewish ritual and sacrifice ever made. It all points to Jesus and what He would do. God prepared this salvation in Jesus even before the foundations of this world were laid. God saw to the promises, the fulfillment of those promises, the completion of those promises in Jesus. That’s why Jesus came. To take care of the great problem we have. It is called “redemption.”

Redemption means that God has bought us back. God has saved us in his own unique and wonderful way. It is all revealed in Jesus. Jesus lived the perfect life we could not. Jesus became the perfect payment for our sins, alluded to here by speaking of his death. Jesus suffered and died on the cross to redeem us. The blood of Jesus saves us. And if you don’t believe that, then just ask why the blood of Jesus is called precious? It is our salvation. It is that which covers our sins, clothes us in the robe of Christ’s righteousness. It is that which changes us, washes us clean, renews and uplifts. If the blood had not achieved its purpose, I can tell you right now that Jesus would still be in the grave. But again, our verse reminds us that he was raised from the dead. Our verse reminds us of the glory and honor, the power and might, the utter position of authority that Jesus is in salvation. The end result is our faith and hope in God.

Love that phrase. **“So that your faith and hope are in God.”** I am sure of salvation because of God and his revelation of my redemption in Jesus, who is God. Remember God’s definition of faith: being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Faith means I trust in God though I have not seen him. Faith means I know of heaven though I have not visited. Faith means I am forgiven, though I sin daily and am filled with nothing but filthy rag acts. Faith means that I know Jesus lives and that because He lives I will see him, I will behold him with my very own eyes, yes, this will be even though I close my eyes in this world. Faith brings me hope.

Hope is my confidence. I strive to live according to God’s Word and I fail and fail again. My hope is sure that Jesus forgives. Now, here is where we are going to speak further to our command for today. Remember it? **“Conduct yourselves…in reverence.”**

We are to live in line with God, that’s the force of the word “conduct yourselves.” We are to do that in “reverence.” Great word here. It means “reverence” as in “awe, astonishment, wonder, or surprise.” Every day of my life I am in awe of God’s grace and mercy, his love and compassion, his wisdom and care, his forgiving because of Jesus. My desire is to approach every aspect of life in such a way that God, my loving God and Savior will be pleased. I know, that I never do please him. I know that at best, at the absolute best, God might be inclined to think, “Well, Terry, you wanted to please.” But because of his grace and Jesus, faith purifies and cleanses me so that even though I am a sinner, God looks at me through Jesus and says, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” That’s why the awe. In Jesus I am forgiven and in Jesus I am renewed to just keep conducting my life in Jesus. And there is the key. The awe and reverence is on Jesus and not me.

The word can also mean “fear or terror.” I conduct my life in fear of God. I am afraid to displease Him. I am terrified that I am not good enough, which is always. I know God is impartial and I know I am in trouble. But my fear stops at the cross of Jesus. My fear flies away as I gaze at the empty tomb of the risen Savior. Because I know the words of the angels and even the words of Jesus, as the message of resurrection went out, are for me: **“Do not be afraid.”** My fear is turned to reverence in Jesus.

That is my hope. That is my faith. It is the wonder and marvel of Jesus revealed in God’s Word. So I hope in grace. I am holy in Jesus. I live in reverence. I love in Jesus. I crave his Word. All of this through and in Jesus. Amen.