

1. In vss. 1-2 Peter addresses his hearers as God's elect, though they be earthly pilgrims. In vss. 3-12 Peter comforts them. Despite their various earthly trials, they are to rejoice and thank God Who, in His mercy, has begotten them again to a living hope in Jesus Christ. They have a marvelous prospect, an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, reserved in heaven. This salvation was foretold by the prophets. These prophecies were so wonderful that even the holy angels wished to appreciate them. Then in vss. 13-21 Peter speaks about the holiness of Christian living. He begins vs. 13 with "therefore", in view of what he had said in vss. 1-12. In vss. 13-16 Peter urges them, by God's grace, to live soberly, as obedient children, keeping themselves free from their former lusts. They are to be holy, even as God Himself is holy (Lev. 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:7). It does not mean: "Do the best you can." A Christian is holy not because of himself but because of the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses him from all sin and because he is a branch on Jesus, the Vine, Who causes him to bear much fruit. The Word of God, Law and Gospel, makes a sinner like God, holy, even though he is still a sinner. In the creed we confess: "I believe in the holy, Christian church." Its members are holy.
2. Vss. 17-21 are one sentence. Vs. 17 is a complex sentence. The main clause (and main thought) is: "Live the time of your earthly sojourn in fear." It is preceded by a subordinate clause: "If you pray to Your (heavenly) Father, Who, without preference of persons, judges according to the work of each." The main clause is followed by a subordinate causal clause which begins with "because you know." The knowledge of the Christian falls under two heads: a) What you know; and b) Whom you know. Under the first head Peter tells them about their salvation. Under the second head he tells them about their Savior. This twofold knowledge will cause them to live the remainder of their life in fear. This is not the fear of a slave because of his master. The Gospel does not make us afraid of God. The OT frequently says: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Ps. 111:10. That's why Luther often says: "We should fear, love and trust in God." It's the fear of one who believes that he is God's child. It's like the fear of Joseph who cried: "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Gen. 39:9. Though the Christian is still a sinner he carefully avoids deliberate sin.
3. Vs. 18: Though silver and gold are prized highly in this life, they are perishable. They cannot redeem us from the empty, pagan religion of our forefathers. All cultures have a pagan background. It cannot save them.
4. Vs. 19: Only one thing can save us: the precious blood of Christ. It cleanses us from all sin. I Jn. 1:9. It's like the blood of a lamb, without blemish or spot. We think immediately of the Passover Lamb, Gen. 12:1-20, which delivered God's children, and foreshadowed Jesus. We think immediately of Jn. 1:29: "Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world."
5. Vs. 20: God elected me from eternity to save me. See 1:2. God also elected His Son from eternity to carry out this salvation. He appeared at the end of time as a human being for your sake.
6. Vs. 21: Through this Jesus Christ (faith is a gift of God) you now believe in God Who raised Jesus from the dead and gave His Son glory. Who is the best known person in history? Jesus Christ. The net result of all of this is that you believe in God and you hope in God. What do you believe about God? It is summarized in the Apostles Creed. What does it mean to hope in God? It means to have the firm assurance that, no matter what happens, I am His and He is mine. Nothing will separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Rom. 8:38-39.
7. This is a fine Advent text. It prepares us for the first coming of Christ, Christmas. It also prepares us for His second coming, either when we die or when He comes again. Hallelujah!

Theme: LIVE THE TIME OF YOUR EARTHLY SOJOURN IN FEAR OF THE LORD

Introduction: Vss. 1-2 are addressed to God's elect, Christians. Vss. 3-12 tell us what God has done for us in Christ. Then vss. 13-25 tell us how God wants His elect to live in this world of sin, woe and grief. We cannot do it without relying entirely on the Triune God. That's what it means to fear God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom." The Christian is a wise man who knows how to live wisely.

I-Because you know the true God.

A-He is the one Who judges correctly. Vs. 17. God is not a respecter of persons. There is no injustice with Him. He judges each man according to his works. If his works are useless and dead he will be lost. But if his works proceed from faith in Christ that person will be saved. See Mt. 25:31-46; Jn. 15:1-8; Mt. 5:16; Gal. 5:6; Js. 2:26; Rev. 3:7-11. Works are the evidence of faith, not the cause of salvation.

B-He is the Author of an eternal plan. In vss. 1-2 Peter addresses his hearers as the elect of God. We talked about this two weeks ago when we studied Eph. 1:3-7. There is another part of this plan from eternity. God foreordained His Son (vs.20) to be our Savior. His plan for the Savior and the saved is from eternity to eternity. It is totally removed from our works and worthiness. It is all of grace and mercy.

C-He raised Jesus from the dead. The God-man, Jesus Christ, actually died in our stead. The God-man was actually raised from the dead and He said: "Because I live you will live also." Jn. 14:10. And now the Father gives His Son glory. Jesus is the most acclaimed person in history. Everybody knows Christmas and Easter because they know of Jesus. God constantly glorifies His Son.

D-The Son gives us faith. Vs. 21 of our text says that we believe "through Him." He once said: "Without Me you can do nothing." Jn. 15:5. At Jn. 5:25 He said: "The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who heard will live." He is talking about conversion. He has already raised me from the dead.

II-Because you know what God has done for you.

A-He has saved me from the empty traditions of my forefathers. Every culture, whether of Jew or Gentile, goes back to a time when people did not know the true God. We cannot be saved by what our ancestors believed. Salvation is by personal revelation from the Bible.

B-He lets you know that earthly things cannot save you. Sinful, human nature always thinks that money, goods or fame can save them. They are mistaken. Gold and silver, though precious commodities, cannot save us. Vs. 18. They will perish.

C-He lets you know that the precious blood of Christ is the only thing which can save you. It is precious because God's very life was in that blood. He gave that blood to pay for our sins. And now that blood cleanses us from all sin and guilt, even its power. I Jn. 1:9.

D-He convinces you that your faith and hope are in the true God Who is eternally just. Faith is the hand which receives what God, in Christ, did for us. Hope is the sure conviction that we will live with God forever. Life eternal belong to us now already. And we are convinced that this God is truly just. He will judge us on the basis of the works which Jesus gave us. Eph. 2:10. God prepared these works for us and we live in them.

Conclusion: We can truly pass the time of our earthly sojourn in the fear of the Lord because we know both the Lord and what He has done for us. SLAVA BOGU EDEENU!! God is the Author of three wonderful things: First He planned from eternity our salvation and also the Savior. Then He carried out this plan. And now He walks with us and makes sure that we fear Him during our earthly sojourn. SLAVA BOGU!