

Redeemed Strangers

1 Peter 1:17-21

I. Scripture reading: 1 Peter 5

II. Redeemed Strangers... [Read 1 Peter 1:17-21] We've seen pretty clearly in the apostle's instructions to the saints that there is an active element to our identity as God's people. We are not just recipients of wonderful blessings, we are also enactors of wonderful blessings for God and for the world. This morning we consider yet another facet of our life as God's people who have been granted blessings and from whom blessings are expected.

III. Our Impartial Judge... The apostle has just called the saints to minds prepared for action, to self-control, to hope placed entirely on Jesus' return and its grace for us, and to holy living as obedient children. He returns to the fact of our sonship to God here in verse 17, and this time he reminds us of our Father's role as judge over each person's deeds. We began our series in 1 Peter by seeing who God our Father really is as presented in this letter. In doing so, we saw this reminder that our Father is Judge of the world. He is not just judge of the evildoers and unbelieving rebels, he is also our judge. He is impartial, which means the family of God is included in His great scrutiny. Just because we are His children does not mean that we can escape His evaluation of our works. In fact, He will judge them all the more because "from everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded" (12:48). If you chafe at the idea of those who belong to Christ facing such a judgment of their deeds, consider the words of the apostles Paul and John [read 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12-13]. We will all have to account for our deeds, and some of us will be found out to be strangers to the Master, while others will enter the eternal kingdom "as barely escaping the flames". We do not want to be such children!

IV. A Stranger People... Realizing this essential part of our God's character and role, how shall we live? "[L]ive your lives as strangers here in reverent fear." The people of God are a strange people. They are chosen out of the world by God through Jesus. They are holy (set apart). They are newborns in a world of the dead and dying. We are strange! As with our holiness, what is given is demanded of us. We are made strange, and so we are to be strange. Peter mentions our strangeness three times in this letter alone: 1:1; 1:17; 2:11. Of course, the apostle agrees with our Master: read John 15:18-19 and 17:11,14-18.

V. Conclusion: What's the difference? A disciple of Jesus Christ – the strangest man to ever live – who does not live as a stranger in this world is perhaps the most difficult barrier to the gospel's effect in the lives of broken and needful people. When divorce rates are similar among church members and those who don't claim to follow Jesus, we have a problem. When pornography is used by Christian men nearly as much as it is used by unbelievers, we have a problem. When the entertainment choices are the same among disciples of Jesus and his enemies, we have a problem. When financial foolishness is similar among the children of light and the children of darkness, we have a problem. We are strangers, and we need to be strange. We aren't seeking to be strange because there is some kind of value in strangeness itself. Quite to the contrary, we wish we didn't have to be strange at all. We should very much like to live in a world in which submissive and loving obedience to Christ characterized everyone's lifestyle. Our hope is that we will soon live in such a world. For now, however, our strangeness is not the goal, it is the inevitable result of our absolute love for and obedience to Jesus the Christ. We'll be strange simply because loving and obeying Jesus is strange. We join countless saints of history in their strangeness and their longing for a better country to call home.