

# **Life After Rescue**

## **1 Peter 1:17-19**

**prepared by Scotty Neasbitt**

**for**

**Northwest Hills Community Church**

**June 10, 2007**

Some of you are still in the hole. Some of you are still clawing and digging your way out, but the dirt just crumbles around you. You're making no progress. You're losing strength. Perhaps, like the man in the video, you've tried meditating, you've tried pretending that the hole doesn't exist, you've tried good deeds, and you've even prayed, but you're still in the hole.

Some of you have been rescued. You've been pulled from the hole by the One who lowered Himself into the pit and dragged you into the light. But you're living as though you're still in the hole.

This morning, Peter continues his letter to a band of Christians who have been taken from their homes, moved to a foreign land, and who are experiencing persecution simply because they follow Christ. And Peter is writing to encourage them. He is reminding them of the living hope they have in Christ. He is reminding them of God's expectation that they be holy like He is holy. Already we've discussed this living hope and this great expectation of holiness. Today, in light of having been rescued from the dark, empty hole of sin and a life without God – we ask the question, "Now what?" What is life to be about after the rescue?

It is easy for preachers to bite off more than they can chew, and I was tempted to do that this week. I really wanted to finish the first chapter of 1 Peter, but then I ran into a bit of a snafu. I ran into the very big command – Peter's third imperative in fewer than 30 verses – the command to *live in reverent fear*. So, this morning, I won't be preaching to the end of chapter 1. Instead, we are going to camp on verses 17, 18, and 19. We'll deal with the remaining verses at our service on July 15.

What is life to be about after the rescue? You've been removed from the pit – you've been removed from a life of emptiness and darkness. Now what?

Let's look at our text. Verses 17 through 19. *Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

Already Peter has said we should live lives of hope and of holiness. Now he is saying we should live lives of fear. Does that make any sense? Don't we have less to fear now that we are out of the hole, now that we've been rescued from the pit?

Let's look at the first part of verse 17 again: *Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially.* What does that mean? Basically, Peter is saying that there is only one standard by which God will judge you. He doesn't have different standards for different people. Ultimately, God evaluates your life. He looks at your heart. Is it a heart of faith or is it a heart of something else?

I've said it before, but I think it is important to say again: faith is not difficult. We all have faith. But the key to true faith – the kind of faith that God is looking for – is a faith in Christ. Jesus is the subject of our faith – nothing else. Because, when we put our faith in people, places, and things instead of Christ, our faith is useless. It is a faith in Christ alone that has the power to save – that has the power to lift us from darkness into the light.

Peter is writing to a community of people whose faith is in Christ, and he is reminding them that they *call on a Father*. In so many ways, Peter is saying, you are a part of the family of God and the Father judges each of His children by the same standard: the standard of faith in Christ alone. So, where does fear come into play?

Peter is saying that we must fear placing our faith in anything but Christ. We must fear living in a way that betrays the faith we proclaim. Since God judges us based on our faith in Christ, we must fear putting our faith in anyone or anything else. So how does that look?

It touches us in every area of our life. How we live our life demonstrates to God just where we place our faith. I like what John Piper says, *“When we are tempted to conduct ourselves in a way that would show that our hope (our faith) is in money rather than God, we should fear. When we are tempted to act in a way that would show that our faith is in the pleasure of pornography instead of God, we should fear. When Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:18, “Flee fornication,” he meant, “Fear what it would mean about where your hope is if you commit fornication.” It was the same spirit that Jesus had when he said, “If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better to enter life with one eye than with two to be cast into hell.” Fear living in ways that betray your lack of satisfaction in God.”*

**BUT IT IS MORE THAN THAT.**

Look at verse 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.* Here Peter draws a clear picture of what it would mean if you believed that your salvation was achieved in any way other than by Christ’s self-sacrifice. Let me say it another way: while salvation is free, it is not cheap! Your rescue from the pit of sin was not obtained by an exchange of money; you were lifted from the hole because Jesus lowered himself into it – experiencing the fullness of what it is to be in darkness and without God – and He lifted you out simply because you said YES, when He asked if you wanted out.

Verse 18 tells us how it is we are to go about living our lives in fear. We are not talking about a phobia. We are talking about a realization that we’ve been bought back from an evil master.

Let's stop there a minute and talk about this word, REDEEM. It is a word we use to talk about the 5 cents we get for recycling a Coke bottle. But this word REDEEM is a succinct picture of what takes place when you place your faith in Jesus.

This hole that all of us find ourselves in – this empty life handed down to us by our forefathers, as Peter puts it – is a reality for everyone of us. Emptiness is the legacy that our forefathers leave us. They leave us in the dark hole with no way out. Our own sin and the very real power of Satan in the world keeps us in the hole.

But, we've been redeemed. We've been purchased OUT OF THE HOLE. And the price that God paid was not anything that can be counted like silver or gold coins, but it was the very life of Christ that was paid to release us from that which keeps us in the hole. Peter says that we are redeemed with the *precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect*. The truth is that none of us can lift ourselves out of the hole. None of us could rescue another. We have no means to rescue anyone else from the hole, because we're in the hole, too. It must be someone free of the hole AND someone willing to descend into the hole to rescue us.

Peter says that it is with *Christ's precious blood* that we are redeemed. It is with his very life that we are freed. He is a lamb without blemish or defect. He is outside of the hole. He has the means to free us, when no one else does. He alone is able; he alone is willing.

If the hole represents the darkness of our sin and its bondage, then it is the rope which represents the blood of Christ: the thing by which we are rescued.

So, what is there to fear? We must fear placing our faith in anyone or anything other than Christ AND we must fear making this infinite and inexhaustible price that Christ paid something other than precious, costly, and valuable.

There's a story of a man who risked his life to save a boy trapped in a burning building. The doorway was blocked, the room was filled with smoke, and the child could not find his way out. His rescuer stormed into the house with reckless abandon, retrieving the young man from certain death. As the boy was carried from the burning building into the open air, he looked up to his rescuer and said, "thank you for saving my life".

The man looked deeply into the boy's eyes and very simply replied, "Just make sure your life was worth saving!"

When we are saved – when we are lifted from the hole of deep despair, darkness, and sin – we are raised to new heights – we are brought into the light. So, now what? What kind of life must we lead to say to our rescuer, my life was worth saving. God very simply replies, "Live a life of reverent fear."

*Fear placing your faith in anything other than Christ. Fear making your redemption cheap. Christ is the subject of our faith. And our redemption is precious indeed.*