

Rescue from the World or Escape from Condemnation?

Matthew 13:3 – 9, 18 – 23 *Parable of the sower*. Note that the soil is what it is. The Word grows or does not grow based on the soil. (As sowers, we just need to be sure that we sow clean, bare seed, not high-tech, mixed, or damaged seed.)

What people think God feels about them is critical to building a relationship with God. How do we get across the idea that we are escaping a broken world, and that our fear is for those who have not escaped yet?

Fear passages often evoking an attitude that we are escaping condemnation:

Hebrews 10:31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. The point of the sentence is that our vengeance is puny by comparison to that of God. We don't need to exact vengeance on those who "trample the Son of God underfoot," those who, after receiving a knowledge of the truth (v26), sin willfully. The attitude of Christians is described in v19 – 25.

2 Corinthians 5:11 *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*" The fear is for unbelievers, not for ourselves.

2 Corinthians 7:1 *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*. The previous section is concerned with not being unequally yoked, about being the temple of the living God. Again, the fear is for the unbeliever (v15)

Ephesians 5:21 *Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ*. See 5:6. This is a reminder that submitting to one another is part of our faith, trusting God that this form of leadership can work in God's kingdom. This fear is not escaping justice for bad behavior, but fear of being deceived, in this specific case the fear of being deceived into an authority-based church government through which the gospel would not be well taught, driving people away.

Philippians 2:12 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*.

Adopting the attitude of Jesus (v5) involves fear when we consider what our plight would be if we had not: in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (v15).

Hebrews 4:1 *Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it*. The fear is regarding lack of faith (4:2), or being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (3:13).

1 Peter 1:17 *And if you call on the Father who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear*. Remember that you were redeemed by the blood of Christ. Fear is for those who trust in anything else.

1 John 4:18 *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.* John refocuses the statements about fear. My fear is not for me; it's for unbelievers.

Rescue passages:

Acts 2:40 *Be saved from this perverse generation.* Peter's appeal was to those who desired to be rescued.

Acts 3:17 *Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers.* Peter's appeal is not that of blame but of achieving the goal.

Acts 11:18 *When they [Jewish Christians] heard these things [Peter's account of the conversion of the household of Cornelius] they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."* (Side note: they glorified God because they knew that Peter had been as ignorant as they were about what to do with Gentiles. This is the same type of glorifying God found in 1 Peter 4:11, that we should "serve by the ability which God supplies that in all things God may be glorified.") The lifestyle of the Gentiles or their sinful pasts were not in view, only that they were granted a way of escape.

2 Peter 1:2 – 4 *Grace and peace by multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.* The key points are "given" and "escaped."

Hebrews 6:4 – 6 (Taking the positive parallel) *...for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come...* Believers are described as those who have received great things, not escaped bad things.

Titus 2:11 – 14 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.* The focus is on the good things of those who were rescued, not on the mistakes of the past.

Philippians 3:13 – 14 *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* The past is specifically excluded from the picture.