

The families of those on the missing Malaysian flight have been sent home. Since the plane's disappearance nearly two months ago they've been staying in hotels nearby. The airline wanted them close if any news broke so they would be the first to know. But as you well know nothing has happened recently. So Malaysian Airlines and the Malaysian government told them they should go and wait for news in the comfort of their own homes.

That doesn't restore hope. The airline has already announced the plane was lost in the ocean and all on board perished. The government is suspect for being slow in releasing information. The first funerals started happening without bodies to put in the caskets. The only hope now seems to be finding some trace of the wreckage so recovery of the bodies can happen. But still nothing. It doesn't seem the families can have much hope of finding their loved ones soon.

Can you feel their despair? Not really, unless you've lived through something similar. You've possibly had that feeling of lost hope though. When reality sinks in; when what you don't want to be real is real. That's our situation whether we've experienced tragedy or not. That's what the Bible shares. That's what 1 Peter shares. Peter writes that we shouldn't conform to the evil desires of our hearts. Notice though, the evil desires are there. You can't get rid of them. They put you in situations with no hope. That is until what Peter describes in the second lesson.

Christ brings restoration of hope
Redeems you from fear
Redeems you to fear

I think you should be full of fear. I should be too. Full of the kind of fear that takes away any hope. The kind of overwhelming fear that comes with being pursued down a dark alley at night. Fear that rises if you'd come home and find the door kicked in. It would be the same fear as standing before a judge knowing you're guilty. We should feel that kind of fear. Why? Because there is truly a judge waiting at the end of our lives. Peter told his hearers, **"Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear."** You've heard of God the Father, but maybe you forgot. A quick glance through your life and mine says we probably are forgetting. He's going to judge and find you and me guilty.

Each of us is in big trouble. Peter used impartial to describe how God judges. That means he doesn't consider who you are when he judges. Justice is blind. It shouldn't matter if you have lots of money; it shouldn't matter if you're famous. When anyone walks into court everyone's the same. In God's courtroom too. Don't try and make a claim to be somebody before God, as judge he won't care. Don't come into God's courtroom waving your money, God won't take it into consideration. Murderers, thieves, liars, and cheaters all will be judged the same.

If only I could go through my life and select the days and works God judged. Maybe he wouldn't judge my whole life, just the good parts. Maybe he just gets a summary. Summaries are always the best times, the days of obedience, the moments of good. Pretty much every A-1 day you and I have had. We'll put those up for judging. Even if we could find some, and that's more than questionable, it wouldn't be enough. God doesn't just pick and choose which works to judge. He's impartial, he judges them all.

Truth is if all of us were really worried and full of fear that God was going to judge us, wouldn't that cause us to shape up our lives? Instead our sinful nature plays a trick. We convince ourselves we can measure up to God's standard. However good you and I can be, that's how good God needs us to be. He measures by our standards, and those we can always get over. With my standards all my mistakes and minor indiscretions aren't a problem. What I consider minor sins aren't a problem. I set my own standard. But that's not okay. I'm not okay and neither are you if that's what we hope will happen. We should be full of fear of God.

Christ brings restoration of hope and redeems you from fear. You and I have been rescued and redeemed. **"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, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."** To redeem you and me from our fear of God Jesus took our place under the judgment we deserved. He had to know our fear of God. Carrying all our sins Jesus was fearful of God and his judgment. He stood under that judgment, the judgment of God for all the sins of our entire lives. God brought it all down on Jesus. He had to because sin has to be punished and it has to end with death. So Christ Jesus died, faced death on your behalf and mine.

If Jesus were still dead today we would have no hope. If his bones were somewhere in Jerusalem, if his tomb was still shut up tight with a stone, our hope wouldn't be restored. Christ restores our hope and redeems us from fear by showing us what he set out to accomplish is done. He didn't stay dead. He rose again. His resurrection and the glory God gave to him showed he was no longer considered paying for sins. Your sins and mine were paid and that's now over. We are redeemed and free from fear.

With a couple inches of plate glass between me and him my brain told me there wasn't anything to fear. But my body sensed a little fear anyway. The grizzly bear at the zoo is huge and I probably looked like a meal for him. Because the plate glass was there I didn't have any real reason for fear. But I still have a healthy fear for grizzly bears. I have a respect for what they can do with their mammoth claws and huge teeth. That kind of respect and awe is the kind of fear Jesus redeemed us not from but for. He redeems you for fear.

Peter wrote to people who knew what he was talking about. They knew the heavenly Father. They knew Jesus. They knew what he had done for them. This wasn't new information, but they needed reminding. What Peter wrote had an effect on them. Because they knew God the Father and that he judges human beings they could live, not in fear, but for fear. Fear that was a respect for God. Truth was God already judged them in Christ. That changed how they'd live their lives. They had a fear for God, a healthy respect and awe towards him that came from being redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Now their lives concentrated and focused on Christ and their redemption.

Fear so often paralyzes, but it can also be reverent and healthy. They trusted in Jesus and Peter said, **"through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."** Trusting in Jesus brought them to the right kind of fear; a fear God wanted them to have. They could remember God revealed Jesus to them in their time. They could also recall he had been revealed before that. In fact Christ **"was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."** From the beginning Jesus was chosen to accomplish what he did. All this led to a healthy respect, awe, and trust for the one who planned their forgiveness and then carried it out long before they ever could do anything.

We're just like Peter's hearers. We know what God has done for us in Christ. It isn't new but it does need reviewing. We can look to it over and over for our living hope. We can never buy our way into God's grace or forgiveness. No money, fame, or anything worldly will gain position before God. He can't be bought. No corrupt ransom we offer can save us from our corrupt life. Only blood can save, the precious blood of Jesus. Not only did it come from our Savior but he shed it for us, people he considered precious. That's you and me under Christ. The immense price paid for our lives should keep us in holy fear, otherwise we risk taking it for granted and making it seem that Jesus paid in vain for us.

Christ's love is our motivation for holy fear filled living. Not fear of judgment or punishment, but healthy respect and awe for God and his grace to us. God's not expecting our lives to pay him off. Christ Jesus redeemed us for a holy and reverent fear of God to live serving him. Our reaction to the one who is greater in every respect from us is natural. Christ Jesus restores our living hope and that encourages and empowers us to new living. Lives changed as we live under God's greatest blessing. With living hope we bring honor and glory to God in this life. We go back to his Word, we trust in its power, we make use of the Word and Sacraments to grow our faith. Christ brings a restoration of hope having redeemed us for a proper fear of God in our lives.

The families of those on the Malaysian flight continue to know fear. They've been constantly afraid for weeks that their loved ones are likely dead. That kind of fear leads to a lack of hope. Christ redeemed us to take away that kind of fear and any fear we might have of God who will judge us. He redeemed us with his own blood so we would have a healthy respectful fear of God to live for him each day. Christ Jesus brings for us restoration of our hope.