**Redeemed from Aimless Conduct**

*1 Peter 1:17-21*

**Introduction**

1. Peter calls his readers to fear of God and obedience with knowledge of what they were redeemed by, and what they were redeemed from – **1 Peter 1:17-19**
   1. **(v. 18)** – redeemed from aimless conduct received from their fathers – **(v. 17)** – conduct yourself in fear before God lest you turn back to that conduct.
   2. **(v. 19)** – the price to get you out of that bondage was nothing less than the death of God’s perfect Son – don’t make His death in vain. (**cf. 2 Corinthians 6:1; Galatians 2:21**)
2. Peter describes their former way of life as ***“aimless”*** – *mataios* – “useless, of no purpose” (THAYER).
   1. Their life was meaningless, and without an end goal in sight.
   2. They were living, but they weren’t living for anything. Their life lacked purpose, and substance. (**cf. Ecclesiastes 1:2**)
3. Life without Christ is life without meaning. Those who have not come to Christ to live by faith and hope in Him are wasting their life away.
4. Peter writes to those who have been obedient to Christ, but he warns them about turning back to their former ways that were meaningless and instead encourages them to fully embrace the purpose found in Christ.
5. Christians must consider the futility of their lives prior to Christ and realize the great blessings in being redeemed by His blood.
6. Aimless Conduct
7. Ignorant Conduct
   1. It appears Peter is writing to a primarily Gentile audience:
      1. **1:18** – aimless by tradition of fathers doesn’t seem to describe Jewish living – that was given by God.
      2. **2:10** – once not a people, but now God’s people. (**cf. Ephesians 2:11-12**)
      3. **4:3-4** – past lifetime doing the will of the Gentiles.
   2. He speaks of their ***“former”*** living describing it as ***“ignorance”*** – **1:14**
      1. ***“Ignorance”*** is especially descriptive in scripture of the Gentiles – **cf. Acts 17:30; Romans 1:28; Ephesians 4:18**
      2. This is not a mitigating factor as though it merely spoke of information of which they were ignorant due to lack of availability:
         1. **Ignorance** – *agnoia* – “as inexcusable failure to accept a truth *lack of recognition, lack of knowing better*” (ALGNT)
         2. **Ephesians 4:17-18** – a choice of ignorance in rejecting God due to the hardness of their heart (***“blindness” – “hardness,” NASB)***
         3. **Romans 1:18, 21, 28** – suppressed truth, futile thoughts/foolish hearts darkened, did not like to retain knowledge of God.
   3. Conduct in life is aimless, or futile and without purpose when it is not based in revelation from God:
      1. **Jeremiah 10:23** – man is not meant to direct his own steps.
      2. Example of Athenians – **Acts 17:16-21**
         1. **(v. 18)** – Epicurean and Stoic philosophers – two major groups attempting to answer life’s greatest questions.
            1. **Epicureans believed** – pleasure as life’s aim, materialists, denial of immortality, denial of future judgment.
            2. **Stoics believed** – self-denial as life’s aim (asceticism, apathy, indifference), fatalists (governed by the Fates), denial of immortality.
         2. **(vv. 19-20**) – interest in Paul’s teaching.
         3. **(v. 21)** – Luke’s explanation of their interest – they valued information based on its novelty, not substance.
         4. Their guesswork on life’s greatest questions only left a void they sought to fill with the newest philosophy, while in the meantime they structured their lives on shots in the dark, leading to meaningless conduct.
         5. They had rejected the revelation of God and were left to wander aimlessly in the dark (**cf. 1 John 2:11).**
      3. **Psalm 119:105** – God’s word takes the guesswork out of it, and in relying on its light we are able to make meaningful, true decisions with purpose.
8. Desire-Centered Conduct
   1. ***“not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance” (1 Peter 1:14).***
      1. ***“do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance” (ESV, RSV)***
      2. The idea is that in rejecting revelation from God (ignorance) they were left only with their desires for guidance in life.
      3. **Lusts** – *epithymia* – “neutral in meaning; the ‘desires’ can be either good or bad -- the context will tell.” (Reese, 23)
         1. God designed us with certain urges and desires.
         2. However, His revelation regulates those to godly exercise in the desires.
         3. Rejecting revelation leaves you with the desires themselves which aren’t inherently wrong, but which inevitably lead to sin when they are not governed by God’s will. (**cf. Galatians 5:16-17**)
   2. Desire-centered conduct – simply doing what one desires to do – leads to no higher aim than self:
      1. This is devastating because we were created for someone else – **Genesis 1:26; Romans 1:21-23** – created to bear/reflect God’s image bringing Him glory, but looking only inward we lack purpose, and ascend no higher than the rest of creation.
         1. ***“lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:4)***.
      2. **2 Peter 2:12** – by being given to our desires we are reduced to being like natural brute beasts.
      3. Desire-centered conduct misses the purpose of the whole man – **1 Corinthians 6:12-14** – the stomach is made for food and vice versa, but it is only part of the body the whole of which is meant for the Lord. (**cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23**)
   3. To live a desire-centered life is to give yourself to the current state of being that will vanish away and neglect the part of your being that exists for eternity – **1 John 2:15-17** – it is ***“aimless,”*** and void to give yourself to that which utterly vanishes away in the end.
9. Traditional Conduct
   1. The desire-centered conduct of **verse 14** is not entirely random on an individual level – ***“your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers” (v. 18)***
      1. Normal word for tradition – *paradosis* – “a handing down or on” (VINE)
      2. Here – *patroparadotos* (1x) – “inherited from ancestors, handed down from one’s father or forefather, traditional” (ALGNT)
      3. In large part, the way in which one conducts himself outside of some direct revelation he gives himself to will be affected by the environment in which he is raised – what did his father do?
      4. Many see value in continuing in what has been handed down to them – family values, culture, etc.
         1. Where the philosophers of **Acts 17** valued hearing the newest thing some value the things which have always been done by those who have lived before them – THIS IS NO BETTER.
         2. TRUTH IS WHAT’S VALUABLE, NOT THE NOVELTY OF A THING, NOR THE ANTIQUITY OF A THING.
   2. Tradition for the sake of tradition is useless – **Mark 7:1-23** – Human tradition may be a liberty, but to emphasize it as though it had spiritual substance is to elevate it in importance to supplant God’s word, and it leads down a path that is contrary to God’s word.
      1. **(vv. 1-5)** – Mark gives emphasis to the origin of such practices – ***“traditions of the elders,” “things which they have received and hold”***
         1. **(vv. 2, 5)** – finding fault with Jesus’ disciples based on these traditions.
         2. They have put great stock into these traditions – they view them as spiritual substance and are deeply concerned when others don’t observe them.
      2. Jesus shows the vanity of traditions in spiritual contexts **(vv. 6-23):**
         1. **(vv. 6-8)** – it is vain fear **(cf. Isaiah 29:13)** and ignores divine revelation.
         2. **(vv. 9-13)** – it supplants divine revelation and acts as though it is without substance.
         3. **(vv. 14-16)** – Jesus appeals to truth – spiritual defilement doesn’t come from eating physical things.
         4. **(vv. 17-23)** – what defiles a man comes from the heart – the heart is what matters **(cf. Romans 2:29).**
   3. People who think they are spiritually minded, and pleasing to God based on traditions they hold which are handed down from men are leading aimless lives.
   4. Examples of traditions – Sunday night services, Wednesday night bible study/format, lord’s supper format, etc. – What gives our worship, service, and lives lived for God meaning is not anything less or more than what He has revealed. To structure our lives on what is merely handed down on a human level is to lead aimless lives.
   5. Examples of traditions on a personal level – “I’m Church of Christ like my parents were,” “I go to church every Sunday and Wednesday because its what my family has always done,” I was raised not to do XYZ and that’s why I don’t, I was raised to do XYZ and that’s why I do, etc. – If tradition is your reason, then its meaningless!
   6. Traditions which perpetuate sin – **1 Peter 1:14, 18** – how many people participate in things that are wrong, and abnormal thinking they are wholesome just because that’s always something their ancestors have done?
   7. Only one source of traditions matter – **2 Thessalonians 2:15** – handed down from God through the inspired word.
      1. These are spiritually substantive and will not lead us in the wrong direction.
10. A Calling with Hope
11. Contrast:
    1. ***“your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers” (1 Peter 1:18)***
       1. This was a life that was going nowhere – no aim, no goal, and no spiritual power.
    2. **Ephesians 1:18-20** – a calling with hope, glorious inheritance of riches, exceedingly great power.
       1. This is a way of life which has promise of reward.
       2. The promise is of an inheritance which surpasses anything earth can offer.
       3. It is a way of life which has full dependence on the mighty power of God to work in us for the end of our hope – our salvation.
12. Born of Incorruptible Seed
    1. Consider the significant change – **1 Peter 1:18, 22-25**
       1. **(v. 18)** – what was handed down to you from your fathers was aimless – void, ineffectual, purposeless.
       2. **(vv. 22-25)** – the truth, incorruptible seed, the word of God, word that endures forever, word that preached the gospel – i.e. this is not merely handed down from men, but from the eternal God – it has objective value because it is the eternal truth.
          1. It is not aimless, purposeless, void, or ineffectual.
          2. **(v. 22)** – purified soul.
          3. **(v. 23)** – born again – new life, spiritual regeneration (from death in sin). **(cf. Titus 3:5)**
          4. **(vv. 23-25)** – source of birth – incorruptible, eternal word of God – to be born of something as such is to bear the same characteristics – eternal life.
    2. Where their lives were aimless before, now they are filled with hope – **1 Peter 1:3-5**
       1. **(vv. 3-4)** – something to live for.
       2. **(v. 5)** – something to live by – faith – **(vv. 20-21)** – by God’s redemptive work through Jesus we live before Him with faith and hope – faithful trust and expectation based on what has been done in Jesus’ death and resurrection – ***“through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”* (v. 3).**
    3. Born of incorruptible seed, of God, to incorruptible inheritance – **1 Peter 1:3-4**
       1. **2 Corinthians 5:1-5** – the inheritance is of a heavenly immortal body. (**cf. Romans 8:17, 18, 23** – redemption of our body.)
       2. This life of faith grows us spiritually, transforming us and preparing us for that immortal body – **1 Peter 2:1-2; 1 John 2:15-17; 3:1-3** – the activities of the flesh are transient, but the will of God abides.
    4. The epistle calls for a faith that endures through trials and sufferings – **1 Peter 1:6-7; 5:8-11** – the suffering is not an end in itself, but is transformative, thus preparatory.
       1. **5:10** – He called us to eternal glory.
       2. **5:6-7** – required humble submission for exaltation.
       3. **5:8-11** – faith in suffering refines and prepares us for the day when He will complete us in glory, delivering us from all that is corruptible.
13. A Living Stone in God’s House
    1. Born of God through the incorruptible seed of His word, we like a newborn depend fully on Him for sustenance – **1 Peter 2:2-3** – this growth is further described with focus on its aim.
    2. To say a primarily Gentile audience is born of Him is significant. The context continues to demonstrate the implication of such language – they are a part of God’s house, His spiritual family/people – **1 Peter 2:4-5**
       1. **(v. 4)** – ***“Coming”*** – present tense – answers to **verse 2** – in growing by the spiritual milk you are coming to Him.
       2. **(v. 5)** – the growth is edification as part of His house – Spiritual, i.e. not physical Israel, but God’s true people.
       3. Context – ***“rejected…but chosen”*** – **cf. Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14**
          1. All three passages consider the need to trust in God rather than man, the Isaiah passages specifically times where man was trusted rather than God – rejected – **Isaiah 28:14-15; Psalm 118:8-9; Isaiah 8:13-14**
          2. The nation of Israel did not put their trust in God but put trust in man (themselves).
          3. **1 Peter 2:4-6, 9-10** – God would build a spiritual house based on the Messiah as the chief cornerstone – it would be built on devoted submission **(v. 4),** full trust and faithfulness **(vv. 5-6),** thankful praise (**v. 9**), and cherished fellowship (**v. 10**).
       4. It is no longer Israel that is God’s nation, but the church – **(vv. 9-10)**
          1. **(v. 7) (cf. Psalm 118:22**) – **Matthew 21:42-44** – ***“a nation bearing the fruits of it”*** – the church.
    3. Not ***“aimless conduct”*** but ***“a nation bearing the fruits of it (the kingdom)”***:
       1. **1 Peter 2:5** – a priesthood that offers spiritual sacrifices to God – NOT VAIN BUT ACCEPTABLE THROUGH JESUS.
          1. **Romans 12:1-2** – transformed lives by the mercies of God and in response to them – living sacrifices.
          2. **Hebrews 13:9, 15-16** – the sacrifice of heartfelt praise to God, as well as showing mercy to man.
             1. **1 Peter 2:9** – ***“proclaim the praises of Him”*** – tell people about all the praiseworthy things about God.
          3. **Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 John 3:16-17** – the sacrifice of love for our brethren.
          4. **Philippians 4:14-18; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7** – the sacrifice of cheerful giving from the heart to the Lord’s work.
       2. All this done in trust, built on the chief cornerstone of Christ – **1 Peter 1:6** – ***“by no means be put to shame”***
          1. I.e. not ***“aimless,”*** but resulting in victory and reward.
          2. **Matthew 7:24-25** – building our lives on this rock we will stand in the end with Him (**cf. Psalm 1:5-6).**
14. Sojourners and Pilgrims on Our Way Home
    1. These who had been born of God to an inheritance were instructed how to live – **1 Peter 1:15-17** – Holiness before God.
       1. **(v. 17)** – ***“conduct…throughout the time of your stay here…”***
       2. They were given such instruction to holiness because where they live now is temporary – i.e. not their home.
       3. **John 17:14-17** – they are not of the world but being in the world need to be set apart from the world by God’s word.
    2. They are called ***“sojourners and pilgrims”*** – **1 Peter 2:11-12**
       1. Both terms connote the idea of residing as a stranger or foreigner in a place that is not one’s home.
       2. They reside on earth temporarily as foreigners who recognize heaven is their home – **Philippians 3:20-21**
       3. This perspective is appealed to as a reason for a particular way of conduct:
          1. **(v. 11b)** – abstaining from fleshly lusts – a part of the temporal worldly existence (**cf. 1 John 2:17**).
          2. **(v. 12a)** – honorable conduct that even the Gentiles can recognize – (**vv. 13-17** – some would assume the perspective of unrecognized citizenship would be negative to society – not using the liberty for vice) (**cf. Titus 2:9-10** – adorning the doctrine of God)
          3. (**v. 12c**) – good works – broad but like before noticed by the Gentiles – this would necessarily include activity outside of the community of believers – doing good to all! (**cf. Galatians 6:10**).
          4. What kind of conduct is this? ***“Aimless conduct?”*** (**1 Peter 1:18**) NO! – **1 Peter 3:8-9** (inherit blessing)
    3. Being a sojourner and pilgrim can be difficult – **1 Peter 4:1-4** – living for the will of God, strangers are considered strange!
    4. What does it mean to be a stranger and pilgrim? – **Hebrews 11:13-16** – all else is a byproduct of us being on our way home!
       1. **(v. 13)** – assurance and embracing the reward to the extent of living differently.
       2. **(v. 14)** – having a heart for home and knowing where it is.
       3. (**vv. 15-16**) – never forgetting where you belong and never doubting the worth of heaven and God’s presence.
    5. “I am a poor wayfaring stranger while trav'ling thru this world below, There is no sickness, toil or danger in that bright world to which I go. I'm going there to meet my Sav-ior, I'm going there no more to roam; I'm going there to see my Savior, He said He'd meet me when I come; I'm going there to see my Savior, Who went before me long ago; I'm going there to see my Savior, Who shed for me His precious blood; I'm only going over Jordan, I'm only going over home.” (Wayfaring Stranger)

**Conclusion**

1. The Lord has done so much for us by the redemptive work of Christ. We must always meditate on these blessings lest we forget to express our gratitude to God, and lest we forget and turn back to what we’ve been redeemed from.
2. Before Christ our lives were aimless. They were empty, meaningless, and hopeless.
3. However, when Christ came and shed His precious blood, and we allowed Him to wash us in it, He redeemed us from that aimless life and transformed us, giving us purpose, and hope.