

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON REDEMPTION: A STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF REDEMPTION AS ARTICULATED IN 1 PETER (1:18-21) AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE WITHIN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

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Abstract

This study offers a theological reflection on the concept of redemption as articulated in 1 Peter 1:18–21, situating the Petrine understanding of redemption within the broader framework of New Testament theology. The passage presents redemption not merely as liberation from sin, but as deliverance from a futile way of life through the precious blood of Christ, foreknown before the foundation of the world and revealed in history for human salvation. By employing exegetical analysis and theological synthesis, this study explores the imagery of ransom, sacrificial blood, and Christ’s preexistence, highlighting how these motifs interact with Old Testament redemption traditions and early Christian soteriology. The study argues that 1 Peter offers a distinctively ethical and eschatological vision of redemption, one that grounds Christian identity, holiness, and hope in the redemptive work of Christ. This reflection contributes to New Testament theology by emphasising redemption as both a salvific event and a transformative reality shaping Christian existence in a hostile world.

Keywords: Exile, Futile, Redemption, Ancestral Conduct, and Ransom Imagery

Introduction

Redemption stands as a foundational category in New Testament theology, expressing the saving action of God in Christ through metaphors of ransom, deliverance, and sacrificial substitution. While Pauline writings have often dominated scholarly discussions of redemption, other New Testament voices, particularly the Petrine tradition, offer equally significant yet underexplored theological insights. The passage of 1 Peter 1:18–21 provides one of the most concentrated treatments of redemption in the New Testament, framing salvation within the lived reality of believers addressed as “exiles” amid social alienation and suffering.

Despite the centrality of redemption in Christian theology, the concept is often inadequately understood and insufficiently integrated into the lived faith of many Christians. In numerous church contexts across Nigeria, redemption is frequently interpreted in narrowly utilitarian or

material terms, such as deliverance from poverty, illness, or spiritual oppression, while its deeper biblical meaning, particularly its ethical, communal, and identity-forming dimensions, is underemphasized. This reductionist understanding risks obscuring the New Testament portrayal of redemption as liberation from “futile ancestral ways of life” (1 Pet 1:18), a transformation that reorients believers’ identity, allegiance, and moral conduct.¹ If Christians are truly liberated, the occurrences of certain vices among Christians will not occur.

Furthermore, Nigerian Christianity exists within complex socio-cultural realities marked by strong traditional religious influences, ethnic identity consciousness, systemic injustice, corruption, violence, and, in some regions, religious persecution and displacement. In such contexts, many Christians continue to navigate tensions between inherited cultural practices and the call to holiness and reverent living emphasized in 1 Peter. The persistence of syncretism, ethical

¹ H. Wayne House. “Creation and Redemption: A Study of Kingdom Interplay.” *Journal of Evangelical Theology Society*, Vol 35, num 1, (March 1992): 10-11.

compromise, and prosperity-driven spirituality raises critical questions about whether redemption is being understood as a decisive break from former ways of life or merely as a spiritual resource for personal advancement.

Additionally, Nigerian Christians increasingly experience conditions similar to the Petrine audience, social marginalization, insecurity, and suffering for faith, yet the redemptive framework of 1 Peter 1:18–21 is rarely employed as a theological resource for interpreting suffering, shaping communal resilience, and grounding Christian hope in the salvific work of Christ.² The absence of sustained theological engagement with Petrine redemption within Nigerian ecclesial discourse contributes to a gap between biblical theology and practical Christian living.

Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the lack of a robust, biblically grounded, and contextually relevant understanding of redemption among Nigerian Christians, particularly as articulated in 1 Peter 1:18–21 and situated within the broader New Testament theology. This gap hinders the formation of a Christian identity marked by ethical integrity, perseverance amid suffering, and faithful witness within Nigeria's pluralistic and often hostile religious environment.

This article seeks to analyze the theological contours of redemption in 1 Peter 1:18–21 and to assess its significance within the broader context of New Testament theology. Employing close exegetical analysis alongside comparative theological reflection, the study argues that Petrine redemption complements other New Testament perspectives while offering a uniquely integrative vision that binds Christology, ethics, and eschatology together. In doing so, the article contributes to ongoing scholarly discussions on redemption by highlighting the theological depth

and contemporary relevance of the Petrine witness.

Definition of Redemption

In this passage, redemption is defined not primarily in economic or legal terms, but as deliverance from a “futile way of life inherited from the ancestors.” The means of this redemption is sharply contrasted with perishable wealth, emphasizing instead the “precious blood of Christ,” depicted through sacrificial and Passover imagery. By invoking Christ's pretemporal foreknowledge and eschatological vindication through resurrection and glory, the author situates redemption within the eternal purpose of God, thereby linking soteriology with eschatology. Paul clarified in Romans 8:1–17 that God's agents in the new creation are those who, under the guidance of the Spirit, are God's children and heirs rather than slaves to sin (vv. 9–14). Paul describes the new life of those who have the Spirit as divine filiation by the Spirit. Human life now has a purpose and the capacity to participate in divine filiation.³

Moreover, redemption in 1 Peter functions as the theological basis for ethical exhortation. The redeemed are called to holiness, reverent conduct, and sustained hope, suggesting that redemption is not merely an accomplished event but a transformative reality shaping Christian identity and praxis. This ethical orientation distinguishes Petrine redemption from narrower forensic interpretations and situates it within a communal and missional framework.

Literary and Theological Context of 1 Peter

According to the gospel accounts, Peter was a man of extremes who received some of the harshest rebukes in the New Testament despite his intense dedication and commitment to Christ.⁴

² Silicy Mburu Muriithi. “1 Peter.” In: *African Bible Commentary*. One-Volume Commentary Written by 70 Scholars. Edited Okunboh Adeyemo. Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006.

³ Mary Sylvia Nwachukwu. “The Human Being and the Redeeming of Creation (Rom. 8:18-30).” Pg 253, Accessed

Dec. 22, 2025. <https://www.cabanalive.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Acts-13-16-The-Human-Being-and-the-Redeeming-of-Creation-MarySylvia-Nwachukwu.pdf>.

⁴ Katy McIlvaine. “An Exhortation To φιλαδελφία While Sojourning As Exiles In The World: An Exegesis Of 1 Peter

He writes his epistle to the church in Asia Minor with "sweet grace and comfort, the result of deep humiliation and rich experience," and with a spirit "most humble, meek, gentle, tender, loving, and lovely."⁵ Peter addresses his epistle to Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pet 1:1), all provinces of the Roman Empire.⁶ The book claims Peter's authorship (1 Pet. 1:1). If the writer is Peter the apostle, he must have written 1 Peter before his martyrdom under Nero.⁷ Peter writes his epistle using "massive material from the Jewish tradition."⁸ He makes reference to Scripture twenty times in addition to nine explicit citations,"a remarkably large number for an epistle of its length."⁹ The frequent reference to the Old Testament suggests a Jewish audience. But Christoph Stenschke is in favour of Gentile audience.¹⁰ The concept of exile (1 Pet. 1:1 and 2:11) resonates well with the Jews, who familiar with the Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom exiles in Assyria and Babylon in AD 722 and 586 respectively. The primary subjects Peter covers in this epistle are suffering, hope, and obedience.¹¹ Peter writes his epistle with a "constant dialectical process between dogmatics and ethics."¹² William Danker rightly

observes Peter's stress on the fact that the new community is an authentic continuation of Old Testament Israel,"¹³ God's chosen people who sojourn in the wilderness. Believers are called to holy living and right relationships both "within, to the Christian community, and without, to the hostile world."¹⁴ In fact, Peter's main argument is about leading a moral life while traveling as a foreigner.¹⁵ Additionally, this paper seeks to examine 1 Peter 1:22-25 and its contribution to the theme of deliverance while sojourning as exiles in a hostile environment.

Redemption within the 1 Peter's Paraenetic Structure

Paraenesis is a moral exhortation intended to either persuade or dissuade a given audience.¹⁶ The theology of redemption in 1 Peter is inseparably embedded within the epistle's paraenetic (exhortative) framework. Rather than functioning as an abstract doctrinal assertion, redemption serves as the theological ground for ethical instruction, shaping the conduct, identity, and hope of the believing community. In 1 Peter, soteriology consistently precedes and undergirds

1:22-25." A Paper to Mike Kruger In Partial Fulfillment of NT-522 Hebrews To Revelation. (17 MAY 2018): pg. 3

⁵⁵. Philip Schaff. *Apostolic Christianity: From the Birth of Christ to the Death of St. John: A.D. 1-100*, vol. 1 in *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, (2002), 201, 255

⁶. Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 113-115. They give succinct explanations of the regions and how Rome acquired them: Asia was given to Rome by King Attalus III of Pergamum in 133 BC; Bithynia was given by King Nicomedes IV in 74 BC, and Pontus was joined in 65 to become Bithynia et Pontus; Galatia was established in 25 BC; and Cappadocia was acquired in AD 17.

⁷. B. van. Elderen. "Peter, Simon." *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, edited by Merrill C. Tenney, vol. 4, Zondervan Publishing House, 1975, pp. 733 -739

⁸. Karen H. Jobes. "The Syntax of 1 Peter: Just How Good Is the Greek?" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13 (2003): 159 -73

⁹. Buist M. Fanning, "A Theology of Peter and Jude," In: *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, Ed. Roy B. Zuck

and Darrell L. Bock, Chicago: Moody Press, (1994): 437-471.

¹⁰. Christoph Stenschke, "Reading First Peter in the Context of Early Christian Mission," *Tyndale Bulletin*, 60, (2009): 107- 126.

¹¹. Robert W. Thurston. "Interpreting First Peter." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 17, (1974): 171-182

¹². van W. C. Unnik, "Christianity According to 1 Peter." *The Expository Times*, 68, (1956): 79-83.

¹³. Frederick William Danker. "1 Peter 1:24-2:17: A Consolatory Pericope." *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche* 58 (1967): 93

¹⁴. Mark Boyley. "1 Peter - A Mission Document?" *Reformed Theological Review* 63 (2004): 72-86

¹⁵. Karen H. Jobes. *1 Peter*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, (2005), pg. 39.

¹⁶. Philip L. Tite. *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*. Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, Volume: 67, (01 Jan 2009): 57, 57-107, <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004175075.i-370.11>.

paraenesis, demonstrating that moral exhortation flows from the redemptive act of God in Christ.

As scholar Paul Achtemeier notes, "the concept of redemption in 1 Peter is closely tied to the idea of salvation from the power of sin and death."¹⁷ This passage asserts that believers have been redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet 1:19, NIV), highlighting the costly and efficacious nature of Christ's atonement. According to Ramsey Michaels, the idea of redemption in 1 Peter is not just a matter of individual salvation, but also of corporate identity."¹⁸ Salvation for the believer is not limited to only deliverance from the power of sin, it is deliverance to "glad and total obedience to the will of God" and as a people "bound in covenant relations to their delivering God."¹⁹

This structure is evident in the immediate literary context of 1 Peter 1:13–21. The call to "set your hope fully on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:13) and to "be holy in all your conduct" (1:15) is anchored in the redemptive reality articulated in verses 18–21. Redemption from a "futile way of life inherited from the ancestors" provides both the motivation and the rationale for reverent living during the believers' time of exile. Ethical obedience, therefore, is not a means to redemption but it's necessary outworking.

The moral significance of the admonition is further enhanced by the contrast between the "precious blood of Christ" and perishable ransom (gold and silver). The desire for holiness is increased, and the severity of the believers' calling is reinforced by the expensive character of redemption. In this way, redemption creates a new set of values that reorients behaviour toward obedience to God and relativises previous life

patterns. Beyond personal morality, the paraenetic role of redemption also encompasses communal love (1 Pet. 1:22), submission (2:13–3:7), and endurance in suffering (2:19–21) in a common redemptive experience. Thus, redemption serves as the cornerstone of a countercultural ethic, allowing the community to live obediently in the face of rejection and marginalization.

Exegesis of 1 Peter 1:18–21

"Redemption" (*ejlutrwvqh*) and its semantic field - The verb *ejlutrwvqh* ("you were redeemed") derives from *lutrovw*, commonly used in the Greco-Roman world for liberation through the payment of a ransom, especially in the manumission of slaves.²⁰ According to Douglas W. Kennard, Redemption is the exchange of ownership by paying the price. He further notes that redemption is applied when a person is freed from the previous owner.²¹ The term "ransom" is understood better in the present Nigerian society, where people are kidnapped regularly, and ransom is demanded for freedom. When a kidnapped person is released after the payment of the ransom, he is set free (redeemed) from the shackles of the kidnapper. In the Septuagint, the term is closely associated with Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Exod 6:6; Deut 7:8),²² imbuing it with covenantal and salvific overtones. Peter's use of the aorist passive emphasizes divine agency: redemption is God's decisive act, not human achievement.

The statement *ejlutrwvqh*, which means "you were redeemed," presents the metaphor of freedom through payment, assuming a state of servitude and the need for a ransom. Audiences familiar with slavery, debt, and manumission practices, all of which were essential to the

¹⁷. Paul J. Achtemeier. *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*. Fortress Press, (1996), Pg. 134

¹⁸. Michaels, J. Ramsey. *1 Peter*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49, Word Books, (1988). Pg 64

¹⁹. Donald G. Miller. "Deliverance and Destiny: Salvation in First Peter." *Interpretation*, vol. 9, num. 4 (October 1955):413-425

²⁰. Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of*

the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

²¹. Douglas W. Kennard. "Petrine Redemption: Its Meaning and Extent." *JETS*, Vol. 30, num 4, (1987):399. 399-405

²². Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, trans. John E. Alsup, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, (1993), 123–24

Roman Empire's economic realities, will find great resonance in this image.

The verb *lutrovw* is a member of a family of expressions that indicate the cost of securing release, such as (*luvtron* and *ajntivlutron*). It often refers to the sum of money needed to release slaves or prisoners in Greco-Roman legal circumstances.²³ However, the Septuagint, which emphasizes Yahweh's redemptive deed on behalf of Israel (Exod 6:6; Psalm 77:42), has a significant influence on Peter's language. The economic metaphor is transformed into a theological affirmation by this intertextual background: God is the redeemer who works on behalf of the helpless. The Greek word (*lutrow*) used by Peter here expresses the idea of a ransom, whereby a conqueror may free a prisoner by defeating his master in a battle.²⁴ And the cost of the redemption is the blood of Christ.

The aorist passive form emphasizes that the recipients do not negotiate or earn redemption. This portrayal of divine initiative provides a counter-narrative to the dominant economic hierarchy for believers in exile who lack social clout. Regardless of one's place in the imperial economy, redemption bestows freedom and worth.

“Futile Ancestral Conduct” (*mavtaio~ uJmw`n ajnastrofh~ patroparadovtou*) - The phrase “futile ancestral conduct” is striking. The adjective *mavtaio~* denotes emptiness, ineffectiveness, or purposelessness, often with moral or religious connotations (cf. Isa 44:9; Rom 1:21). *ajnastrofhv* refers to one's entire way of life, not merely individual actions. The compound adjective *patroparadovto~* (“handed down from the fathers”) underscores the inherited and communal nature of this former existence. Could this be referring to the Jewish tradition of the fathers or even the Jewish legal system that could

bring salvation (cf. Heb. 7:11-12; 18-19), or is it used in reference to Gentile paganistic traditions?

The language of “futility” (“uselessness”) naturally aligns with critiques of idolatry and pagan religiosity, suggesting that the audience included Gentile believers whose pre-Christian lives were shaped by inherited cultural and religious practices now deemed void in light of Christ. It, however also agrees with the description of the Jewish Legal system mentioned in Hebrews 7:11-12 and 18-19. Whichever is the case, such conduct is useless in the face of the precious blood of Christ that reconciles man to God. Having been redeemed, one cannot be held captive by the futile regulations, nor should one go back to such captivity, irrespective of the situation. By portraying salvation as liberation from futile ancestral conduct, the epistle challenges believers to reassess inherited traditions in light of the gospel. Redemption redefines who they are, how they live, and where their hope lies. As a redeemed people in exile, believers are called to embody a transformed way of life that bears witness to the costly and purposeful work of God in Christ.

The Cost of Redemption and the Precious Blood of Christ

Peter's assertion that redemption is accomplished not through material wealth but through the “precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:19) underscores the incomparable value of Christ's sacrifice. The imagery of the “lamb without blemish or defect” directly alludes to the Passover lamb in Exodus 12:5 and the suffering servant in Isaiah 53:7. These Old Testament references reinforce the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death, portraying Him as the ultimate sacrificial offering whose blood provides atonement for sin.²⁵

This concept of redemption through Christ's blood is echoed in other New Testament writings. In Ephesians 1:7, Paul states, “In him we have

²³. Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000

²⁴. Douglas W. Kennard. “Petrine Redemption: Its Meaning and Extent.” *JETS*, vol. 30, num. 4, (1987): 400

²⁵. Jobes, Karen H. *1 Peter*. Baker Academic, (2005):128

redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." Similarly, Revelation 5:9 proclaims, "You were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation." These passages affirm that Christ's sacrifice is both universal and efficacious, securing the redemption of all who place their faith in Him.²⁶ Some people have come to believe that Christ's blood also secures deliverance from physical unfortunate circumstances. This explains why some people will use this expression, "I cover this road with the blood of Jesus." When an accident occurs despite the covering of the road with the blood of Jesus, will that mean that the blood was not effective enough? This is a misunderstanding of the use of the blood of Jesus.

The use of blood imagery highlights the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, where atonement required the shedding of blood (Lev. 17:11). However, while the Mosaic Law mandated repeated sacrifices, Christ's redemption is presented as a once-for-all atonement. The author of Hebrews affirms this when stating, "He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). Peter's emphasis on Christ's blood as the means of redemption situates his teaching within this broader New Testament understanding, reinforcing the superiority and finality of Christ's sacrifice.²⁷ Peter sharpens the economic imagery by contrasting what redemption is not accomplished by: *ouJ fqartoi'~, ajrgurivw h/ crusivw* ("not with perishable things, silver or gold"). Silver and gold function as universal media of exchange and symbols of security in the ancient world.³ By characterizing them as *fqarta* ("perishable"), the author relativizes their value and exposes their inability to effect true liberation

Exile, Eschatology, and Hope

The eternal and eschatological purpose of God is where 1 Peter 1:20–21 place redemption. For the benefit of the community, Christ was revealed "at the end of the times" despite being "foreknown before the foundation of the world." Therefore, redemption is both eschatological in revelation and pre-temporal in divine intention.²⁸ Hope and faith are rerouted "toward God," who upheld Christ's splendor and resurrection. This eschatological perspective is crucial for exiles. While redemption reorients hope beyond current marginalization, it does not guarantee instantaneous social restoration. The redeemed community is in a state of transition, having already been redeemed but still awaiting ultimate confirmation. Their involvement in God's redemptive plan, which is realized in Christ, shapes their identity rather than their displacement.

Old Testament Foundations of Petrine Redemption

The concept of redemption articulated in 1 Peter 1:18–21 is deeply rooted in the Old Testament's theological vocabulary and narrative patterns. Rather than introducing a novel soteriological metaphor, the author of 1 Peter appropriates and reconfigures Israel's redemptive traditions to address a dispersed and marginalised Christian audience. By invoking ransom language, sacrificial imagery, and covenantal deliverance, 1 Peter frames salvation in continuity with Israel's Scriptures while extending their significance christologically and eschatologically. This grounding in the Old Testament is especially significant for a community described as "exiles," whose social displacement parallels Israel's own experiences of alienation and restoration. Redemption, therefore, is not merely individual

²⁶ Paul J. Achtemeier. *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*. Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, (1996):103

²⁷ Michael J. Wilkins, "Peter's Theology of Discipleship to the Crucified Messiah (1 Peter 2:18–25)." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* vol. 21, num. 3 (Fall 2017):62

²⁸ Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians, Volume 1*, Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, (2007): 279–80

deliverance but participation in a long-standing divine pattern of liberating a people for covenantal obedience.

Exodus and the Paradigm of Divine Ransom

The Exodus stands as the foundational redemptive event of the Old Testament and provides the primary conceptual background for Petrine redemption language. In Exodus 6:6, Yahweh declares, “I will redeem (*lutrwwsomai*) you with an outstretched arm,” establishing redemption as God’s decisive intervention on behalf of an enslaved people. The Septuagint’s use of *lutrovw* in this context supplies the linguistic and theological framework echoed in 1 Peter 1:18 (*ejlutrwvqh*). This Exodus paradigm is not merely historical but paradigmatic: redemption entails liberation from bondage, the formation of a covenant people, and the call to live in holiness (Exod 19:4–6). Similarly, 1 Peter links redemption directly to ethical transformation (1:15–16), suggesting that the redeemed community, like Israel, is constituted for obedient living amid a hostile environment.²⁹

Exile, Restoration, and Eschatological Fulfilment

Old Testament redemption is frequently articulated within the context of exile and promised restoration (Isa 40 - 55; Jer 31 - 33). Redemption is portrayed as God’s act of bringing his people home, renewing covenantal relationship, and restoring identity. In Isaiah 52:3, Israel is told that redemption will occur “without money,” a theme resonant with 1 Peter’s insistence that redemption is not accomplished by silver or gold. Peter’s eschatological framing (1:20 - 21) aligns with these restoration motifs. Redemption is both already accomplished in Christ and oriented toward future vindication. For the benefit of the community, Christ was revealed

“at the end of the times” despite being “foreknown before the foundation of the world.” Therefore, redemption is both eschatological in revelation and pre-temporal in divine intention.³⁰

Ethical Implications: Holiness and Reverent Living

In 1 Peter, ethical exhortation is inseparably grounded in redemptive theology. The call to holiness and reverent living in 1:15 - 17 finds its theological rationale in the redemptive declaration of 1:18 - 21. Redemption does not merely rescue believers from a futile past; it establishes a new moral horizon in which conduct is shaped by divine holiness and eschatological accountability. For a community identified as *parepio`dhmoi* (“exiles”), ethical distinctiveness becomes both an expression of redeemed identity and a form of faithful witness in a hostile social environment. Peter’s ethical vision is therefore not legalistic but relational. Holiness thus flows from belonging to a holy God who has acted decisively in Christ. Reverent living emerges not from fear of punishment but from awe before the costly nature of redemption.

In view of the ground of redemption and the identity of the redeemed, Peter gives the imperative “be holy in all your conduct” (1 Pet 1:15). He employs the noun *ajnastrofhw*, a term denoting one’s entire pattern of life, suggesting a life style rather than a habit. This comprehensive scope is crucial. Holiness is not confined to cultic observance but encompasses daily social behaviour, speech, and relationships. The grounding of this command in God’s own holiness (“for it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’”) echoes Leviticus 19:2, where holiness is presented as covenantal imitation.³¹ Redemption from “futile ancestral conduct” (1:18) marks a decisive break with former value systems. Ethical transformation, therefore, is not

²⁹. Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, trans. John E. Alsup, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, (1993): 122–24.

³⁰. Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians, Volume I*, Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, (2007): 279–80

³¹. Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, (2005), pgs 109–11.

additive but reconstructive. In the epistle of First Peter, believers adopt a new way of life consistent with their redeemed status. For exiles navigating cultural pressure to conform, holiness becomes a marker of belonging to a different moral order.

Reverent Fear and Pilgrim Ethics

Peter exhorts believers to “conduct yourselves with fear during the time of your exile” (1:17). The term *fovbo* here does not signify terror but reverent awe arising from recognition of God as impartial judge and gracious redeemer.³² This reverence is intensified, not diminished, by redemption. The costly ransom paid in Christ’s blood heightens moral seriousness, underscoring the weight of redeemed life lived before God. The temporal phrase “during the time of your exile” frames ethical conduct within the pilgrim experience. Ethical restraint and integrity are portrayed as appropriate responses to a transient social status. Reverent living thus reflects eschatological awareness: believers live responsibly in the present because their ultimate evaluation lies with God.

Contribution to New Testament Theology

The Petrine articulation of redemption in 1 Peter 1:18–21 makes a distinctive contribution to New Testament theology by embedding soteriology within a theology of exile. Unlike Pauline treatments that emphasize justification and reconciliation in juridical or relational categories, 1 Peter frames redemption as liberation that reconstitutes identity for a marginalized, pilgrim community. Salvation is not only deliverance from sin but emancipation from inherited ways of life that once defined social and moral existence. This integration of redemption and exile enriches New Testament ecclesiology. The church is portrayed not as a settled *koivwnia* (fellowship), but as a pilgrim people whose redeemed identity relativizes social status, ethnicity, and cultural

tradition. Redemption thus functions as the theological basis for communal resilience and ethical distinctiveness amid displacement.³³

Petrine theology contributes to New Testament Christology by appropriating ransom language while resisting mechanistic or transactional interpretations. Although redemption is described using economic imagery, its “price” is not material wealth but the “precious blood of Christ.” This reconfiguration challenges simplistic notions of atonement as divine commerce and emphasises the costly, self-giving nature of Christ’s salvific work.

In contrast to the Gospel of Mark 10:45 and Pauline writing of 1 Timothy 2:6, where ransom language is explicitly substitutionary, 1 Peter integrates ransom imagery with sacrificial and Passover motifs. The result is a christology that unites liberation, purification, and covenant renewal. This synthesis broadens New Testament atonement theology by demonstrating the flexibility and richness of redemptive metaphors within early Christian discourse.³⁴ Additionally, a significant Petrine contribution lies in the inseparability of redemption and ethics. In 1 Peter, salvation does not merely change status before God, but demands comprehensive moral transformation. Redemption from “futile ancestral conduct” implies that salvation entails a decisive break with inherited negative value systems, a theme less explicit elsewhere in the New Testament. Christians are called out of a system that negates godly value into a system that projects the holiness of God.

This emphasis adds depth to New Testament ethical theology by presenting holiness not as adherence to law but as the lived expression of redeemed identity. Holiness is relational and eschatological, shaped by reverent fear and sustained by hope in God’s future vindication. In this way, Petrine theology resists both

³². Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, (1996): pgs 117–18.

³³. John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, (1981), 90–95

³⁴. Leonhard Goppelt. *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, Translated by: John E. Alsup, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, (1993), pgs. 129–32.

antinomianism and moralism, offering an integrated vision of grace-enabled obedience.³⁵ Finally, 1 Peter contributes to New Testament eschatology by framing redemption within a tension between realised salvation and future hope. Redemption is accomplished (“you were redeemed”), yet its full significance is oriented toward the eschatological revelation of Christ’s glory. This balance prevents both triumphalism and despair, particularly for communities experiencing suffering and marginalisation.

Conclusion

This study has argued the idea that redemption in 1 Peter 1:18 -21 plays a crucial theological and paraenetic role in the epistle and greatly influences the more general features of New Testament soteriology. The Petrine narrative reframes salvation as liberation from an entire manner of existence characterized by misdirected loyalties, warped ideals, and estranged identity, rather than only rescue from guilt or judgment, by depicting redemption as deliverance from “futile ways inherited from the ancestors.” As a result, redemption is essentially transformative, reconstructing the identity of believers as redeemed individuals whose lives are now focused on God with respectful obedience and hope.

Petrine’s idea of redemption provides a solid foundation for comprehending salvation that is still extremely pertinent for modern theological discourse by grounding Christian identity and behaviour in the expensive and meaningful redemption achieved in Christ. In the unfolding narrative of God’s redemptive work in the world, redemption, as expressed in 1 Peter 1:18-21, is not only the cornerstone of Christian faith but also the enduring inspiration for pure living, reverent obedience, and hopeful endurance.

For Nigerians forced from their homes due to religious violence, whether through insurgency, banditry activities, communal conflict, or state

hostility, displacement often entails a loss of social identity, security, and belonging. Peter’s assertion that believers have been redeemed from “futile ancestral ways” directly addresses this crisis of identity. Redemption establishes a new identity that transcends land, ethnicity, and inherited social systems. For displaced Africans, this means that forced migration does not erase dignity or purpose; rather, their primary identity is anchored in God’s redemptive act in Christ. Here, Petrine’s doctrine reframes displacement as neither theological failure nor divine abandonment. Rather, God’s redemptive purpose continues to unfold in exile. Displaced believers are reassured by redemption that their suffering is not pointless but rather part of God’s redeeming story, which ends with resurrection and justification.

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