

Ignorance, Obedience, Holiness And Reverence!

In my last sermon 'Prepare your minds for action, Be self-controlled', in 1 Peter we looked at only one verse: v13. This was basically most of the verse, with Paul using that all important link word, "Therefore," pointing back to everything that he had just said in v 3-12. To all of those glorious realities that we now have in Jesus. And also to that eternal hope that we now possess because of Him!

So, in light of all of those things, "Prepare your minds for action," because there is an ever present and all too real war. A war that we are part of. Ephesians 6:10-13 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." No, physical attacks are not our greatest dangers. It's those unseen forces of darkness which manifest themselves against us in so many ways! Yes, these hold the greatest danger for us. "Prepare your minds."

Romans 12:2 "therefore do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Like those Prophets, we "search intently" the scriptures. We are to leave no stone unturned in our desire to know God, and what He requires from us. 1 Timothy 4:8 Physical training is good. But the transformation through Godliness has benefit for both this life and the next. So we are to be. "Self-controlled," ready for action v13. "So that we can pray" 4:7. And so we can be "self-controlled and alert" 5:8 "Because our adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking souls to devour."

And finally, the older translation says "gird up your loins." So "gird up the loins of your minds." Search out every corner of your mind and your life for anything and everything that might hinder your journey that you are on, as you prepare to meet the King in the air!

And that's where we pick up the letter this morning. 1 Peter 1:14-17: 'Ignorance, Obedience, Holiness, And Reverence!'

V13 "Prepare your minds for action, be self-controlled. Set your hope fully on the grace to be giving you. When Jesus Christ is revealed." V14 "As obedient children do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance."

Friends, It's an interesting word. "Ignorance." This is how it is defined in the old Collins Dictionary: "Destitute of knowledge. Uninstructed. Uninformed. Unlearned." Can you see that as an ordinary man himself, with his own demons and history of ignorance, inspired by the Holy Spirit, Peter takes it as a given that all of his hearers and readers too, have a past of which they are not only ashamed, but also from which they must change. Even like an old set of clothes that need to be changed out of!

Beloved, many of you now about much of my past, much of which I am not proud. Even much of which I am not proud since Jesus came into my heart. And I certainly don't glory in that old person and my old way of life. And yet, in His great mercy, and sovereignty, God has even used those things, yes, even those wretched things of my past for His glory and his Kingdom! In a sense, I still speak that same language and understand that community of surfing of which I was part, and which also was a large part of my life before I was saved, for so many years!

Friends, whatever your past and background is, God can use them for His glory. There are people who understand you and who you understand. You speak their language. You have a ministry to

them. If you would but be open to Christ's leading. It might simply be to your family and friends. Or it might be further afield. To a craft group or a hobby group or a sport group. But whatever it is, it needs simply to be met with a desire to serve our Lord! And no, Peter is not condemning his hearers for their past. What he is doing, is explaining that if they are to truly follow Jesus, they can no longer be that person!

Brothers and sisters, I have said it many times over the years, Satan will use your past against you. He will bring it up time and time and time again. Telling you that even if God does exist, you are kidding yourself. That He would ever want such a one as you. So give it up. Walk away. You are wasting away your time and your life with this Christian stuff. Life is too short the devil would have us believe. "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die" the scriptures tell us. But of course we know he lies. Indeed. He is the father of lies! All falsehood and deception has its root in Satan. Walk away. You'll be better off, he tells us. Even better still, kill yourself and you will be at peace. Yet again, we know he lies! But friends there are also times when The Spirit of God brings our past to mind, not to condemn us, but to change us. To transform us. Remember Romans 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." You see, Satan would use our past against us to condemn us, whereas God will use our past to change us, that those things may be used for His glory!

We cannot claim "ignorance" anymore, even if ignorance were a defence against guilt, which it isn't. No, we cannot claim "ignorance" anymore. We are no longer destitute of knowledge. We are not uninstructed. We are not uninformed or unlearned any longer. We have free and unlimited access to the scriptures. Each week they opened up in our worship. Each week the Bible is opened up as we pray for others and our nation. It is opened as we confess our sins, and as we are taught. No we can no longer claim "ignorance" of the Word of God. Beloved, that will not be a defence when we stand before the Almighty. But praise God, that we must recognise and acknowledge that our past life is no longer who we are. That because of Jesus' suffering and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are no longer children of ignorance and disobedience. We are longing, even desiring and seeking to be as v14 describes "Obedient children."

But Brethren, there may well be parts of us that find the concept as adults, who have lived for many decades and have children, grandchildren, (and for some even great grandchildren,) yes, there may be parts of us that find the concept of being "obedient children", when we are 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 even 100 years old, a bit hard to cop. Or perhaps even finding it hard to reconcile the reality of being adults of such ages, with being "obedient children!"

If you remember, last week's message was chiefly about self-control. And without doubt, "Obedience" goes hand in hand with self-control. So the goal of that "preparing of our minds for action", that self-control, is clearly "obedience" to God. We saw earlier in v2 in this series, that love for God is expressed in "obedience" to Jesus. Well, here Peter just reiterates that truth. He speaks to us of a childlike past. Of "evil desires", and "ignorance" towards its` parents. And as I have already explained, he is telling us here, be aware, and beware of that past. And don't go back there! "Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance, but just as he who called you his holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written, be holy because I am holy."

Friends, Peter is presenting us with the two possibilities of human existence. A life of "evil desires and ignorance" or a life of "obedience and holiness." As those handouts upon our table declare, there are only two ways to live. One leads to death and hell, the other leads to life and heaven! Yes, Peter exhorts us to "be holy, because God is holy." And he actually commands us "to be holy in all that we do." Brothers and sisters, it seems clear to me that he is placing one way of living in

opposition to the other. Jesus Himself said that “You are either for me or against me.” Not friend or indifferent, but friend or enemy. Because one style of living is in opposition, yes is opposed to God, while the other seeks to live in His likeness, so to speak. Walking in the footsteps of His Son! But what does it mean for us “to be holy?” I have explained in the past that when God blesses, He pours out of His goodness, as He pours out of Himself. Even His common mercies are poured out upon the saved and the unsaved. Yes, God sends the rains to fall and causes the sun to shine, upon “the good and the wicked”, the scriptures say.

Yes when He blesses, He pours out of Himself. But when He makes something holy, He claims it as His Own! The word Holy is defined as belonging to. Being dedicated to. Being separated from. Set apart. Different. And of course there was only ever one person who did this completely, even perfectly, and that person was Jesus! Friends, God is calling us to be like Himself. To be like His Son. And again, Jesus Himself called us to “be in the world but not of the world”. It's the complete opposite of what cults and false spiritual gurus and heretics do. They segregate their blind devotees from the world and from God's Truth by secluding them in some cloistered or secretive society. They build tall walls with locked gates to keep God's Truth out, so that those disciples of Satan, can indoctrinate their lost and misguided followers lives, with their lies and heresies. Yes, all of their, Follow me, teachings, and all will be well. Yes, they permeate their minds with their dark ways of evil, and then they can possess their lives, and steal away, (not only their finances,) but their eternal souls! They separate and destroy families with their secret agendas. They even steal away their minds.

In contrast Peter tells us in v13 to “Prepare your minds for action”. Be prepared with the Truth of God as your sword and your shield. Paul tells us from Ephesians 6:1 to “put on the full armour of God.” So be saturated with the covering protection of God through His Word. Again before us from Peter. “Be holy, because I am holy.” You belong to Me; God is telling us. I have made you in My image so reflect My character. Even as I am eternally set apart, eternally different from everything that is evil and sinful, I have chosen you out of this world to be, and live, not like this world of “ignorance and disobedience” and rebellion. But “to be holy, even as I the Lord your God am holy.”

He continues in verse 17 and as I read it, see if you can spot the keys to living that life of holiness: V17 “Since you call on a father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here. In reverent fear”. It would appear to me, that this holy life, which Peter draws us toward, using the scripture of the Old Testament, firstly, equates to living our lives before the God who is not swayed by the outward appearance of our lives or our words etc, but sees into the very marrow of our bones, and into our heart. The “work”, that he is talking about here, is the journey of our life. The older translation calls us, not “strangers”, but sojourners. Those people who are travelling through on their way to their ultimate destination. So this “holy life” is evidenced in our separateness or the distinctiveness, of the way in which we live!

Malachi 3:17-18 “They will be mine”, says the Lord Almighty, “In the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And again you will see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.” You see, in Malachi's day, such was the depth of the evil and wickedness of the people, (even those who called upon God's name,) that there was no “distinction” between the people of the world and the people of God. What we see in Malachi's day is a melting pot. Yes, a multicultural blending of all things, including religion! God commanded His people when entering the promised land to be separated from the people they were driving out before them. To be different. Yes “to be holy.” But now, in Malachi's time, there was no “distinction” between the people of God and the people of the world. And sadly, even tragically, there is a mindset throughout

Christendom today, that we should be less different, that we should indeed be less “distinct.” Yes we should be in a sense, even like the world, because then they might like us. They might even come and join us. Yes, let's make worship, not like worship. Let's make church not like church at all. Let's even call it something else. There are those who even stop the sermon, halfway through it and then have a cup of tea in the middle. They call it cafe church. Can you believe it? But Beloved, here is one simple but profound truth. Yes it is eternally profound. You will never lead anyone to Christ, by being *less like him and more like the world!*

And here are two other truths. People will not come, if we are just like the world. Because the world does itself far better than we do or can.

And finally, God will not bless the work if we do that which is contrary to his word! We are called to be “obedient children”, not disobedient, children. Not children of “ignorance”, but children of understanding and knowledge. Yes, God will judge each person's work impartially. He cannot be swayed by our clever sounding arguments, nor is he fooled, by our outward professions. He looks into the heart! The sword of Jesus` mouth separates bone from marrow. His blazing eyes pierce into the very soul!

So the first key to living a “holy life”, is recognising that Almighty God is All knowing and “impartial”. And the second key, “Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear”. Again, it`s the idea is of the Sojourner, the Pilgrim, just passing through. And for the Christian, they are just passing through a place of many dangers. Many things that would turn the traveller to the right or to the left. Because even though God has made the world with great beauty and wonders, for the Christian, the Pilgrim, the Sojourner just passing through this world from this life to the next, it is filled with things and tempting's (when they are mixed with our old nature,) that Satan will use to get us to take our eyes off the prize and ultimately, off God! So we must live our lives as “sojourners in reverent fear”.

Listen to the wonderful way the Old Collins Dictionary defines the word “Reverence”. An emotion awakened by the intelligent appreciation of the greatness and authority of another. Awe mixed with respect and esteem. Isn't that great? An emotion awakened by the intelligent appreciation of the greatness and authority of another. And of course that other is God! Proverbs 9:10 explains that this “fear of the Lord, is the beginning of wisdom. And knowledge of the Holy One, this is understanding”.

So if we put these two explanations together, we can see, that when we have been awakened by the Spirit of God, we are given an intelligent appreciation of the greatness and the authority of The Almighty. And that having taken place, more and more, we reflect upon His greatness more and more. We acknowledge His authority more and more. We are shown who we are and who He is. That we are but dust, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Yes, that He is the Eternal Living God. And we are but “a mist which appears and is gone”! Therefore we bow before him in submission, and as “obedient children”, we seek to honour Him by “living in reverent fear”!

Beloved, this is completely opposed, to that evil familiarity which so pervades much of Christendom today. The words “Reverence and Fear” do not even seem to be applied to God today in much of what is preached! “Reverence and fear”, acknowledge God's Greatness and Holiness. His separateness. They acknowledged that He is God and we are not. That “He dwells in unapproachable light”. That sin cannot dwell or even stand in His presence. Yes, serving and living in “Reverent Fear”. Isaiah 6:3-5 “ And they were calling to one another “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of His glory. At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and

the temple was filled with smoke. “Woe to me”, I cried, “For I am undone. For I a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the king, the Lord Almighty”.

Yes, “I am undone”. Isaiah was unravelling at the seams as his whole life was laid bare before the King, and his eyes beheld the glory of the Lord Almighty. Beloved, there is this tendency today to even think of God as being a One just like ourselves. That we walk shoulder to shoulder with Him. Yes, that me and God are mates. Can you imagine? Even suggesting such a thing to Isaiah? Whose eyes had beheld the glory of the Almighty. He said, “Woe am I, for I am undone”. I'm unravelling at the seams. He would have been horrified. Surely you must be mistaken, greatly mistaken my friend, he would say to us. For we are not talking about the same person. “My eyes have seen the king”.

Dear friends, God is not like us, we can only desire to be like him. In Holiness, Reverence, And Fear. In these things, “we offer Him our lives as living sacrifices, this is our spiritual act of worship”. Romans 12:2: No Beloved, we cannot claim “ignorance” of God or His Word any longer. Like Isaiah, we have in effect “seen the King”. Indeed He meets with us every Sunday morning as we gather together to give Him praise, honour and worship. Not only this, but He has also placed His Holy Spirit within us to guide us into what is right and true, and to reject all that is false and wrong! No not “ignorant” and disobedient, living in darkness, but “born again” with new eyes, and new mind. And new souls. Living with the light of Christ in our hearts. In “holiness and reverent fear”, as we “offer ourselves as living sacrifices”.

Praise God! Let's pray.