

THE SANCTIFIED WALK OF STRANGERS

Last time we noticed how that Peter, in his first epistle and its first chapter, introduced his letter by way of addressing "elect strangers" who have a living hope for an ~~eternal~~ eternal inheritance. These rejoiced in the gospel of their salvation--a salvation which caught the attention even of the angels of heaven.

To these elect strangers, who possess a glorious inheritance, comes directives concerning their sanctification or holiness in this earth. I Peter 1:13-25 speaks of the sanctified stranger. Because he is an elect stranger, because he has an eternal inheritance in heaven, therefore he is to walk in a very definite way in this earth. Elect strangers can not simply live as do ~~the~~ the citizens of this wicked world. They have rather a higher calling: to serve God aright.

In verse 13, Peter calls this elect stranger to do three things: gird up his mind, be sober, and hope to the end. Of these three ideas, the last is central. One is to hope to the end for the grace to be brought to us at the revealing of Jesus Christ in the last day. To hope "to the end" means literally to hope "perfectly" or "entirely". This hope is placed on the inheritance; on heavenly glory. But it is emphatically an exclusive hope. One with this hope can not have others as well. He can not hope for the heavenly--and hope for many earthly things. This is his "hope to the end". It also is a certain, undoubted hope. It is going to be realized beyond any shadow of doubt. And it is maintained even unto the end: of one's life or of time. Elect strangers are to ~~as~~ profess this hope in the earth.

Related to this, there is a "girding up of the loins of the mind." The figure comes from the manner of dress in Peter's day. Men would wear long, flowing garments. These would be fine--except when one would walk any distance or attempt to work. Then one would have to gird up these robes, tie them about the waist so that they would not interfere with one's activity. ^{So} the Christian is to deal with his mind. The mind of natural man is cluttered by all kinds of corruption. It would interfere with the proper life of the Christian. There are thoughts there which interfere. A mind "girded up" is one in which all these sinful thoughts and ideas are, as it were, tied up so as not to interfere with the godly walk. Whatever is there which interferes, what ever causes one to stumble, must be tied out of one's way.

And this one is to be sober. Here, the figure represents that state which is the

opposite of drunkenness. A drunkard is one who stumbles from point to point. He has lost control over himself. He becomes the laughingstock of mankind. So there are spiritual drunkards as well. These stagger from opinion to opinion; from one false philosophy to another. These know not the truth of the Word of God. Yet it is required of elect strangers that they be spiritually sober. One must know the truth of God's Word through careful and diligent study. He must have proper, spiritual convictions. He must not waver under every wind of doctrine. Such is spiritual sobriety.

These three must be evident in elect strangers.

Such are then compared to obedient children. Children are under the influence and dominion of their parents. Where a proper relationship exists, there obedience is evident. Obedient children fulfill the requirements of their parents. So also children of God. They belong to Him and are called to obey. That obedience involves both a forsaking of the old and sinful walk, and a proper walk of holiness before Him.

Peter warns against the "fashioning" of ourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. He refers to the position of one before repentance. One is then formed in the same mold as the wicked about in the world. There is a joy in all manner of fleshly lusts. There is a seeking of those things sinful and condemned by Scripture. These lusts of ignorance are not those done without awareness of the truth. On the contrary, this is a wilful ignorance whereby one deliberately rebels against God's Word. It is the ignorance that refuses to see and acknowledge the glory of God. And children of God must be warned about such ignorance. It is very easy to imitate yet the world about us--in seeking their entertainments, pleasures, lusts, materialism. Obedient children are not formed after this mold of the world.

But obedient children reflect the spiritual characteristics of Father. Our heavenly Father is holy. Peter quotes from Lev. 11:44 and other passages from Lev. which insists: "Be ye holy, for I the Lord God am holy." Holiness suggests separation: from that which is wicked and corrupt, unto that which is good and right. Holiness is a consecration to God and a desire to serve Him. This is the fruit of the work of God in His children. These no longer look like the world, but they want to look like Father. As God seeks ever His own glory, so His children seek His glory too. Elect strangers have a definite way to walk.

And holiness shows itself in every manner of "conversation"--and conversation is here one's entire walk or mode of life. One has his work, his family, his schooling, his choice of friends--all of this is included in one's "conversation" The whole of this must be holy. Holiness in the life of the child of God is not to be limited then to one aspect of living, as, for instance, that one regularly attends church on Sunday; ;but holiness must involve the whole of one's life. All of this is true because our God is Himself holy.

In verses 17 through 23, Peter calls attention to the fact that so-journers are to walk in all godliness because of their relationship to the Triune God. In verse 17 he mentions the fact that one calls on "Father", that is, the Triune God--with perhaps the emphasis upon the First Person Who especially knows and judges men. You, says Peter, call upon Father. So also Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father Who art in heaven." This suggests a blessed relationship between God's people and God Himself. He is not simply their Creator, but especially "Father. He has made us His sons through Jesus Christ His Son. There is, then, a personal relationship between these elect strangers and Father. This emphasizes that Father, as father, has proper authority over his children. Further, it means that Father provides--for a father must cloth, house, and protect his children. Finally, as Father, He guides and comforts his children.

Upon God, as Father, we call. One does that in private devotions. He does that publically when he worships God in Church. He cries to Him for help and guidance. This calling upon Father is not a doubtful thing. The child of God does it--and when he does, he is conscious that it has definite implications for him.

He who calls on Father, understands that Father also judges. He is not a God Who does not care. One can not treat Him as though He is Santa Claus--One of whom all things can be asked. But this same Father judges the heart of a man. He Who comes to Father, knows that Father also ~~kn~~ sees the heart and understands the intent of every petition I present to Him. And God judges: finally in the last day when Jesus comes again, but also even now. Nor does God judge with respect to persons. That is, God does not give favorable judgments to the rich--but poor judgements to the poverty-stricken. He does not judge favorably the important and prominent, but unfavorably the insignificant. He does judge according to one's work--not his person. That should give each pause for thought as he calls upon the Name of Father.

And knowing all of this, we pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. Again this Word of God serves to remind us of the fact that we are not citizens of this earth. The Christian is a "sojourner"--one who is only here for a short time. While here, he passes this time in "fear"--not dread, but the holy fear which dreads offending the righteous God.

Now Peter continues to point out the reasons for living as children of God in this world. It is not only that God knows and judges--and we desire to do that which is right before Him; but also, there is the amazing fact that Christ died for His people. Because of the work of the Son, we would serve Him. What did Jesus do in order to deliver His people? Peter speaks of a "ransom" or being "redeemed". The word suggests, first, that one is captured or kidnapped. Such is true of man on this earth. Our first father, Adam, sinned--and we are all captured, as it were, by sin and death. Redemption suggests, then, that payment must be made to release one from bondage. As a kidnapper might be paid a ransom, so there must be made a payment for those who would be delivered from sin and death.

Our ransom became necessary because of the "vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers". Here, again, one's conversation represents all of his walk and life. That is "vain" or empty. It is devoid of all spiritual value. All men are dead in sin. From such bondage one must gain release through payment of ransom, in order to enjoy eternal life.

But what kind of payment must be made? This Word of God emphasizes that it is not, emphatically not, through gold or silver. These represent anything of earthly value. It represents all of the material possessions of man; all of his worldly goods. All this, the best that man can offer, is not sufficient to deliver from sin and death. Why not? First, because all these things already belong to God Who made them. How foolish to try to pay to Him what is already His! Besides, these things are corruptible. These all pass away. The payment required demands death in hell eternally. Corruptible, finite, things will never satisfy. For God's eternal wrath must be satisfied.

The only thing that could have delivered from sin and death is the precious blood of Christ. His blood represents His life. In the O.T. we read in Lev. 7:26-27, "The blood thereof is the life thereof." Christ's "blood" is the giving of His life on the cross.

Now the apostle Peter returns to the pilgrims or strangers who recognize the value and preciousness of Christ, the Corner stone of His church. And he calls attention to them in striking contrast to those mentioned in verses 7 and 8. There were the disobedient who stumble upon the Stone who is Christ. But...so he begins verses 9 and 10,..but you are a chosen generation, etc. These who are so beautifully described are the elect strangers who are addressed in this letter. In verse 9 they are called a "chosen generation" a "royal priesthood", an "holy nation", and a "peculiar people". The words are quite similar in meaning, though there is a distinction between them. A "generation" emphasizes a certain line of birth--from father to son. A "nation" points to the unity of a particular group as it is bound together politically. A "people" suggests that this is a group in distinction from many other groups.

But each term suggests the fact of unity of these elect strangers. These are not just another earthly nation. Here we have presented the people of God, the church, as they stand forth a unique people. Elect strangers are not a motley crowd; they are rather a unified body.

Peter reminds us in verse 10 that it was not always so. These were not always a people. He refers to Hosea 2:23 in the Old Testament where the prophet said, "And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people." Such is the case with God's church. Originally they were a part of divided, and wicked, men. They were of those divided by wars, crime, corruption of every sort. They were born into the world as sinners--dead sinners. But now God has fashioned them as His people. God unites them in Jesus Christ that they may serve as His people in the midst of this wicked world.

This people whom God has formed has a unique office: they are prophets, priests, and kings of the living God. Peter says that these are a "royal priesthood" in verse 9. The idea of a priest is that he sacrifices before God. So did the priests in Israel in the Old Testament. But especially a priest is one who serves--serves God with all his being. That is true for the Christian--as priest he serves God alone with all that he is and all that he has. But at the same time, this is a "royal" priesthood. There is in him that which is "royal"--he is a king. God makes His people to have proper rule over all that which God entrusts to their care.

And these are prophets--for they "show forth His praise". Each child of God speaks the Word of God and extols God's great Name.

In this glorious office, Christians have been restored through Christ. Adam in Paradise

was such an officebearer of God. When he sinned, he lost that office. Now God has restored it through the perfect work of Jesus.

Peter continues by contrasting the position of the Christian before regeneration and conversion and after these. Before, they were in darkness--the darkness of spiritual ignorance of course. But more--they were in the darkness of sin and death. They had been very really separated from God and all of His blessings.

Nor did they have mercy. "Mercy" is God's desire to lift a sinful people and raise them to the heights of glory. But wicked man did not have that. These did not even deserve mercy. They had rebelled against God.

But God brought these into His own marvelous light. These were called by God--and when God calls, something happens. God called these to new life, to repentance and confession. He did not interview the sinner--to find out if he was willing to enter the light. But powerfully God called these from darkness and thus brought them into light. So Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus came from the grave at the call of Christ. Thus also one is brought to the light of fellowship and blessing before God.

And the result is that these experience the rich mercies of God. He desired to bless them--and now He has. Thus these are made a "peculiar" people. They are not "odd" or "strange", but a "unique" people. Of all men on the earth, these are distinctly God's. He purchased them through Christ's blood--thus they become God's possession.

These, according to verse 9, have known now the "praises" or virtues of God. They have seen the love of God shown in Christ who dies on the cross. They seek the justice and righteousness of God, manifest through that same cross. All of these perfections of God they have themselves experienced when they were saved.

And these they now "show forth". Isaiah says in 43:21, "They shall show forth my praise." What else can one do? He who has enjoyed such blessings of God must necessarily tell that of which God has done. This is done in the church, through the preaching. It is done also in speaking one to another; in encouraging one another in the way of the Lord. The Christian seeks to find every opportunity to declare the greatness and glory of His God.

So often we fail to live up to this calling. We don't want to offend anyone. We don't want to cause ecclesiastical ripples. Yet remember the calling of those who are brought

into the light of God. They are to walk as children of that light. They are to show forth the wonderful works of God--no matter what the consequences. These may face persecution. They may face death because of their testimony. But as a special people of God, these will want to praise and glorify the name of their God in all things. Do we do this?

Next time I expect to discuss with you the remaining verses of I Peter 2. Tell then, May God bless and keep His people through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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1. The ground of the Christian Church which teaches grace.
2. The fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer.
3. The three kingdoms ascribed to God in the Christian religion.
4. The author of the Heidelberg Catechism.
5. The command that forbids adultery.
6. The point of origin grace which teaches that there is a gracious testimony of sin.
7. The year when the Council of Dort was convened.
8. The names which the Council of Dort applied.
9. The first point of division.
10. The division between the Heidelberg Catechism.
11. The year when the first point of division.