

Nov 10th 2013 Series in First Peter #4 "Becoming Like The Father. 1:14-16

Last night we celebrated our daughter's 40th birthday, and as I reflected on her life and the lives of our two boys, I thanked God for the way He enabled us to be used by Him to shape their lives in so many ways. For I see in them some family characteristics relating to certain values they hold, goals they aim for, and life directions they embrace which have their roots, at least partially, in what they saw and experienced in us as their parents. And that pleases me.

In a much greater way when God looks upon us this morning, as His children, He too is pleased when He sees the ways that we are revealing His characteristics as our Father in our lives. For that 'taking into ourselves the character of God' and living it out before others, says Peter in verses 14-16, is a vital part of us being God's children.

1 Peter 1:14-16

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'

Now "as obedient children" can be taken in two different ways here. Peter could be saying, 'like obedient children' act in the following manner. Act like obedient children and don't conform to evil desires etc.

Or he could be saying to these Christians, 'as you are already obedient children' don't conform to past evil desires.

I favour the last suggestion because of what Peter has already said about these believers in v2

who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:

To be obedient to Jesus Christ is linked with being sprinkled with His blood which is of course our conversion experience. So when you became a Christian it was because you were first obedient to the Holy Spirit's call upon your heart, for He convicted you of your sin and called you to repent and trust in Jesus for His forgiveness. When you did that it was your trust or

belief in the power of the blood of Christ to totally cleanse you that resulted in your salvation. Of course if you have never consciously admitted your sin and the peril you are in to God and sought the forgiveness Christ's death offers, then at the very best you could be described as disobedient and still outside of God's forever family.

John proclaims the same truth in John 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

So when Peter says to them, "As you are obedient Children", he is not suggesting that they are perfect Christians, completely obedient to God in all things, but that by their initial obedience to the call of Christ they have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness with its ways and demands into the Kingdom of God with its ways and demands.

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

Consequently it would be absolutely foolish for them to conform to the evil desires they had when they knew nothing or very little about Christians things. Obviously those desires are still around them, otherwise Peter would not have warned them about conforming to them, but the fact is that they are the old life. Part and parcel of the kingdom of darkness. They attack our Faith as children of God and we have to stand against them in order to protect our new status as God's children.

But as well as giving a negative direction Peter then goes on to give a very positive one. Something as God's children we should automatically be aiming for.

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'

Our Heavenly Father is Holy. Everything about Him is Holy. And as our Father He expects us to exhibit the family characteristics. There are times when I meet with someone who knows both me and my boys, and they talk with me about how pleased they were with things that one or other of my boys had done that had really impressed them. And then they say, 'they reminded me of you—like father like son.'

And I believe that God the Father is delighted when the Angels look at groups of His people and say Like Father like sons. Like Father like daughters. Especially when we are seeking to be holy in all we do, because our Heavenly Father is holy.

Yet the concept of being holy is something many of us struggle with. I used to think that to be holy you had to go into a monastery and shut yourself off from the world. Spend all your time praying. Something I could never do.

But this verse doesn't say that. Instead it calls us to be holy in all we do. In our every day conduct amongst Christians and non Christians we are to aim for holy behavior.

But we still need to get a handle on what holy behavior actually is, and to do that we need to turn back in the OT to the book of Leviticus. For that is where Peter is quoting from; particularly from chapter 19 and onwards. 19:1-2 says

The LORD said to Moses, 2 'Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

The children of God had been freed from Egypt and were now being born as a Nation by God in the desert. He needed them to be holy which means being set apart unto God as a people known for their purity. For that to happen this nation had to be different from all the other nations they would encounter. So in this chapter and those that follow God gives them some very practical rules to follow and behaviours to avoid.

Other nations might not respect their parents or keep a Sabbath for God. But you, my holy people, must.

Other Nations may have many gods to worship but you must have no idols or pay regard to any other God than Me.

Other peoples may be so concerned about getting everything out of the harvest for themselves that they stop the poor from benefitting in any way from what the harvesters may leave, but you, my people are to go out of their way to care for the poor.

The instructions go on and on. Other people may commit adultery without shame, support prostitution, practice obscene and depraved sexual acts, degrade the sexuality of women, commit homosexual acts, but not God's people.

Other people may seek out mediums and spiritists and fortune tellers, and cut themselves for the dead and put tattoo marks on their bodies but not God's people.

Other people may use dishonest standards in their business but not God's people. Other people may seek revenge and show partiality to some and not others but you, my people, are to love your neighbor as yourself and to care for the stranger in your midst.

Read through these chapters of Leviticus some time where you will find the call to 'be holy because I, your God am holy' and you will find all these instructions and more. And you will see that holiness is reaching after God's standard in all the practicalities of life and not the standards of the world around us. To be holy is to be seen as different because we belong to God.

The Israelites were not very good at being holy like that. They took on the gods and the attitudes and practices of the nations around and they soon became weak and corrupt just like everyone else. And unfortunately the Western church in our age has slowly but surely moved in the same direction.

The difference between the church and our Society is becoming more and more blurred particularly in the area of marriage, divorce, sexual practices, abuse of children, and care for the poor and the strangers in our midst. And each one of us who belongs to Jesus is the church. And the call to us is to be holy

The other Thursday a little girl at Breakfast club wrote this on the white board. I love Curch. It doesn't even look like church without the h? And I thought to myself that the missing h could so easily stand for holiness. And what Peter was saying to these people and what God still says to each of us is that we are to guard and to seek to increase our holiness, for without it we no longer look like the church God has called us to be in this world in which we live.