

New Living

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Date: 18 February 2024

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[0 : 00] I remember it vividly, although it was, I think, around about 44 years ago now, something like that. I was like 10 or 11, and I was on my first school excursion.

We were away for something like four days. We had travelled about 400 kilometres from home. We were just north of here near Newcastle.

And each of our grade were billeted out. We were distributed to families from the school that we were connecting with. This is before there were things like child protection laws and things like that. And I remember staying with this family, and it was the end of a very long day. It was the first night. There were so many things that were familiar with this family to my own, but there was a whole bunch of stuff that was different as well.

And I remember we had dinner, and the mum said, do you want to call home and just tell your parents that, you know, you're okay? And so I rang home to tell them that I was okay, and as soon as my mum answered the phone, I just burst into tears.

[1 : 15] I didn't know what happened, where it came from. I just started blubbing. And I was told that it was called homesickness. And it's like, and I mean, these people may be sick.

You know, like, what is this homesickness? In case you're not sure what it is, it's an emotional distress. It's the feeling of emotional distress when you're away from home and in a new and unfamiliar environment, even though there were many things that were familiar to that environment for me.

Maybe some of us here feel that experience on a regular basis, given the fact that Australia is not your first home. But it is the Christian life according to the Bible.

It's what we touched on last week in 1 Peter, as Peter describes the life of the Christian as resident aliens. We are exiles, foreigners.

That is, the Christian is not a tourist in this world. We live, in fact, to serve our neighbours for the good of society.

[2 : 29] And in that sense, we are resident aliens. This is not our home. We are homesick for our true home. We live as homesick people longing for our true home.

This was true for the first residents, sorry, the first recipients of this letter from Peter, as they themselves were struggling under the oppression of a Roman society, standing against their trust in Jesus Christ.

And it's true for the Christian today in our society, and for Christians everywhere, from every culture and society, from the time that Jesus ascended, and until we reach home, we are homesick.

When you become a Christian, you don't just turn over and you leave, or simply become a little bit more spiritual. In the Bible, 1 Peter says that, as we just read, we are reborn.

Reborn. A whole entire new life has begun. The old is gone, and new has come. The resurrection power of Jesus Christ, the same power that saw him go from death to life, comes into our lives.

[3 : 54] And so what does the pilgrim resident alien life look like? That's the journey we're on here in 1 Peter, as we look at this new life.

But one way that Peter answers that, is as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. For it is written, be holy, because I am holy.

So that's what we're looking at this morning. We've got three things. If you've got the St. Paul's app, you can download it. If you want to just take notes, feel free to do that as well.

But what is holiness? How does holiness grow? And who makes the holiness possible? So what is holiness? That's the first thing.

We start to answer that question by looking again at verses 15 and 16. Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. For it is written, be holy, because I am holy.

[4 : 57] Now, when we hear the word holiness, which is not a word that's generally used in society much at all, unless somehow it's a slight, but we automatically think in terms of morality.

It's morality. It's moral things. It's ethics. And we think of things like the Ten Commandments or the Golden Rule, the Great Commandment, that sort of stuff.

Holiness, according to the Bible, doesn't mean less than morality, but it does mean something fundamentally more than just morality. The clue to that is Peter's quote in verse 16.

Be holy because I am holy. What Peter's doing there is he's quoting from Leviticus in the Old Testament.

And there are at least five times in Leviticus that God says to his people Israel, words to the effect of, be holy because I am holy.

[6 : 01] Now, but the interesting thing about the book of Leviticus is that it's talking, Leviticus talks about holy things, not so much holy people.

That is, Leviticus does not include a list of the Ten Commandments or the moral codes. You've got to go to Deuteronomy, you've got to go to Exodus for that. Leviticus talks about holy tables and holy pots and holy utensils.

That is, holiness is much more than just morality and ethics. You know, what after all is a holy pot? More curiously, what is a unholy pot? I googled unholy pot and up comes marijuana.

The word holy in the Bible means separate or set apart. This is why God can easily call himself holy. He is set apart from everything and every being.

[7 : 17] That is, he stands outside of creation. He creates creation, but he's not part of creation. He is unique. That is, God himself, by himself, exists in his own category.

There is none like him. And when God says, I am holy, he is saying, there is nothing, no one like me at all. And so, to look at Leviticus, to understand what holiness is, a holy item, like a pot or a table or a spoon, is set apart for God's exclusive use.

It's used for God and worshipping God. So, when Peter quotes Leviticus here to tell people that they should be holy in living the pilgrim life, the implication is that he's going beyond and deeper than ethics and morality.

Holiness is fundamentally belonging to God. That's what it is. Not simply a moral code.

The core of holiness is very personal. Very personal. A very, very personal God.

[8 : 47] Not law codes. Not moral rules. They're not at the core of holiness. Belonging to a personal God is at the core of holiness.

So, that means it is actually possible to be moral out of a sense of duty or self-worth or meeting expectations of others or just simple pragmatism and yet still not belong to God.

You can be moral for selfish reasons. It's possible to be moral but not long to God. It's possible to do good things and to live a good life and still not belong to God.

You see, belonging to God is primarily a heart issue. It's not an activity first and foremost. There are only a few people in my life where I can say that their claims of love on my life are so great that I belong to them.

That's my wife and my children. There are things that I do now that I would most likely not do if it wasn't because of those love relationships.

[10 : 13] If it wasn't because of those love relationships there was things that I currently do that I would not choose to do. To belong to God means to live on his terms, delighting in him, reserving ourselves for him, obeying him, honouring him.

Belonging to God means duty becomes delight. delight. It is not enough to be moral. To be holy we must belong to God.

Imagine a scenario where you have a single poor woman who has one child. This woman teaches her child good ethics, good things to care for the poor, to always tell the truth, to have a great work ethic, work hard.

And she does everything for her child as she's growing up. She works long hours in hard conditions and sacrifices much to provide for her child. And so, such a point where she works and works and works and is able to send this child into a university and as soon as this child gets their university degree and then from there they do well, they get into a great job, the child calls her up with the great news, I've got this fantastic job, getting paid well, I can afford some great rent.

So, from here on in, I'll be in touch occasionally. Christmas time, birthdays, I'll send a card.

[11 : 57] But from here on in, I'm living life my way because I don't actually need you anymore. because I'm doing what you told me to do, I'm taking care of the poor, I tell the truth and I work hard, thank you for that.

Mother starts to cry, it's confused, they're really upset. And the child, what's your problem? I'm doing the things that you've told me to do, I am loving the poor, caring for them, I'm telling the truth, I'm working hard, what is your problem? Why are you upset with me?

Now if you've got any emotional intelligence at all, you would understand that child doesn't have emotional intelligence. It's unthinkable, horrible for someone to treat their parent like that, and yet that's the way we often think about morality, it's often the way we think about holiness, we just do things, live a certain way, but without a relationship.

For anyone to say that it's really important that I am moral, but I don't need God, you're not holy. Holiness means you belong to God, and so the core of holiness is intentionally, intensely relational. [13 : 26] relational. This leads to another very important discovery. We now have the key principle in which to apply holiness to every single part of our lives.

The opposite of belonging to God is to live for yourself. The opposite of belonging to God is to live for yourself, you, what you want in life, your preferences.

And so the principle of holy living is to live for yourself, sorry, is to not live for yourself, but to live for God.

1 Corinthians 6, 19 puts it like this, you are not your own, you are bought at a price, therefore honour God with your bodies. The Christian has been bought at a price, they are owned by another. That means that there is not a single situation in life, not a single situation in life where we make a decision based on personal preference, not a single decision, nothing in life, anywhere where I think about what is my need first.

[14 : 51] you live for God and others. It's really interesting, I find that Peter in the first place quotes from Leviticus.

In the book of Acts, we read that God really had to push home to Peter that it wasn't necessary for him to keep the entire Levitical code. As a Jew, Peter was committed to the rules about food, clothing, ceremonies.

He even was insisting that new Christians, Gentile Christians, needed to submit to this same law code as well in certain areas. And then God gives Peter a vision and tells him, in Acts chapter 10, and tells him that all these laws have now been fulfilled by Jesus.

Jesus has perfectly obeyed and so you are clean and you are now acceptable to Jesus. it took Peter a little while to get that.

But he finally got the principle of holiness. Every part of your life is holy. Every part is to be holy.

[16 : 10] And to be holy is to belong to God first and foremost. The particulars of Leviticus, are fulfilled by Jesus but the principle still applies to the Christian now.

Every part of your life belongs to God. Every part. Every part. the principle of living for God and others and not self is to push its way into every corner of our lives.

So I ask you the last, just think of the last big decision that you've made. I'm not asking you, did you pray about it? I'm asking how have other people responded to it?

What wisdom and guidance did you get from God's word about it? So, second point is how does it grow?

If that's what holiness is, then how does it grow in our lives and in this new life we have in Jesus? Jesus. These verses tell us that holiness grows in three ways.

[17 : 43] The mind, the will, and the heart. So first of all, let's focus on the mind. Notice verse 13. With minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

it is clear that the mind, with the mind the intellect is engaged. Minds that are in fact alert as we're told here and fully sober.

To be fully sober is not to mean that you don't drink alcohol. To be fully sober the word means judicious. It means to be careful.

It means to be thoughtful. It means to be sensible. It means to be prudent. It's the, if you like, in the first century it's the mindset of the scholar. The other statement is for our minds to be alert.

In the original New Testament language that reads as gird up your minds. I think some of the early English translations have the idea of gird up your minds.

[18 : 51] It's quite a vivid statement. Back in those days when this was written, everyone wore dresses, well technically robes. If you need to do something active, what you did was you got your robe, you pulled it up and you stuck it in your belt, your girdle, you stuck it in your belt in order to be able to do the active thing.

So how alert and fully sober work together in this passage is that the Christian needs to be thinking, thinking, thinking, pouring over God's word, his requirements, the gospel, again thinking, thinking, thinking towards action.

Not just blowing our brains out more and more with more and more theology, but towards action. Thinking very carefully about the implications of faith in Jesus in every single corner of our lives with the purpose or the goal of doing it, practicing it.

It tells us here to set our hope, to set our sights, if you like, on the grace that is coming with Jesus at the end of all things.

in other words, be alert and fully sober, engage, engage your brains, put it into practice, the Christian life into practice, with the end goal in focus.

[20 : 37] Fix your mind on the finish line and all its rewards and keep thinking about it and all its implications over and over and over again and push all those implications down.

into practice. Put it like this, are you a Christian? Do you know that the Bible says that God made this world to be perfect paradise, a perfect place of love and glory?

And yet everything is broken in our world because humanity turned away from its creator. life. But God, at infinite cost to himself, entered history, his story, as Jesus Christ and died on a cross to pay the debt of humanity's sin.

He will one day return and remake everything so that it all becomes perfect once again. everything. What that means is that whatever happens to you in life, whatever happens to you in life, it will end up okay.

It will all be good in the end. Better, in fact, in the end. The best thing that can ever happen and the worst thing that can ever happen to you will live, is that we will live forever with him in perfection and glory.

[22 : 13] That is the worst thing that can happen to you, namely death, is the best thing that can happen to you because of Jesus. I want to ask you, do you have peace in that right now, confidence in that right now?

If you do not, and if you are constantly making decisions to shore up that peace and to grow in that confidence your way, it's because you're not thinking.

It's because you're not thinking. Don't believe the self-serving narrative of our time that says Christians, or more broadly religious people, well, they have faith, but everyone else thinks.

That is absolute nonsense. Absolute nonsense. Think. The Bible says that you will not be holy. You will not have peace. You will not have security and certainty unless you think. And primarily think.

[23 : 39] Pour over God's word to us. Have the gospel in front of you again, day in and day out. I think we've said this multiple times in the last three to four years.

If you are not doing that a minimum of four times a week in God's word, you are not thinking. you are not growing in holiness. You will not have certainty.

Thinking, however, is not the only thing. The will must also be engaged in order to grow in holiness. Have a look at verse 14. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

obedience. To be holy does in the end require obedience. As I said, it requires a movement from thinking towards action.

So it requires obedience. Peter here is addressing Gentiles. They didn't know the Ten Commandments or the rest of the law, but now they do. And now that they do, he says they need to conform to it.

[24 : 48] We should note, though, that even as Peter says obedience is required, notice he calls them obedient children. As obedient children.

Again, it's highly relational. Not obedient slaves, not obedient workers, not obedient servants, obedient children. He's talking about the kind of trusting obedience that children give to parents, parents who they rely upon and love.

Another great example of this in terms of obedience is in 2 Samuel 23. It's one of these narratives that you potentially could fly straight over and not notice the beauty of it.

When David became king, the Philistines were so worried about David. They were like, this guy is going to be a formidable force to reckon with.

As soon as he was crowned king, the Philistines decided we're going to invade his country while he's still celebrating or while he's a little bit unsure of himself as king, new in the role as the head man.

[26 : 05] They came in real strong. David, in this moment, responds in the way that they probably predicted he would. with a few hand-picked men known as David's mighty men, he escaped into the wilderness.

He did a runner with a few choice guys. The Philistines came in, they took over the key parts of David's kingdom including David's hometown, Bethlehem.

So Dave's out there in the wilderness, one hot day, he laments his situation and says with words to effect, if only I had a Frank Green full of the water from the well that I drank out of as a kid in Bethlehem, if only I had that.

It was a hope, it was a longing of things to be reversed. It wasn't a command and three of these key dudes are there going, hmm, strap their swords on, grab the water jug, fought their way through the Philistines to Bethlehem, filled up the water jug from the well, came running back, fought their way back through the Philistines and gave the water jug from Bethlehem to Dave.

What did he do? Tipped it on the ground. Tipped it all on the ground. Why?

[27 : 41] I am unworthy of this kind of devotion. I am unworthy of this kind of devotion. That's his point. And the point that I want to say in the call to obedience here in 1 Peter, when you're really devoted to someone as these three men were to their king, belong, when you really belong to someone as these three men were to their king, you will do anything to delight that person.

You will do anything to honour that person. When we have this kind of relationship with another, namely Jesus, there is no difference between a command or a request or even simply a sigh. they heard a sigh from David and they risked their lives for him. You don't look at the rules and the regulations and work out which ones do I need to keep nowadays, God?

If we have to ask ourselves questions like, so, calculating my giving, should it be pre-tax or post-tax? Or asking questions, how regular do I need to be at church in order to be considered regular?

Plus, can I add to that, the thousands, the tens of thousands of questions that are really hiding behind the deepest questions of the human heart, what is the bare minimum that God requires of me before he gets crossed with me?

[29 : 33] That's not holiness question at all. And it's a million miles away from the devotion of David's men to their king.

And he was just a man. To be holy is to belong to God, to live for God, and not just obey the things you do know, but you look in multiple ways of how I might increase, how I might increase my obedience towards him.

And in the end, if you delight in him, it doesn't feel like obedience at all. It is just delight. A delightful duty.

To grow in holiness, we need to engage the mind and the will, and lastly, the heart. Verse 17, since you call on a father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

Living in the fear of God is how you engage the heart. that is, the fear of God, the biblical fear of God, is crucial to understanding the Christian life.

[30 : 59] This is the heart of what will motivate and create a desire for us to please God, and delight in God, and give ourselves to God. The word fear here does not mean scared.

It means awe and wonder. It's an internal sense of awe and wonder. not doing things because you have to do it out of a sense of duty, but awe and wonder at the magnificence of a God who has captured my heart through sacrificing himself, giving himself for me.

In other words, fear of God grows the more we understand his love for us. and finally, and really quickly, how is, who makes this possible?

What is it that will capture our hearts so that they will grow in fear and wonder? What makes this new life possible? What's the engine under it all, if you like?

verse 18 and 19, for you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

[32 : 28] defect. Again, Peter is alluding to Leviticus. To live the Christian life, our hearts need to be filled with the fear and the awe and the wonder of Jesus Christ's blood being shed for us, for you.

He has sacrificed himself for you. You cannot grow in holiness unless your mind, your will, and your heart is fixed on that, the gospel.

He wants us to know the joy and the freedom of not living for ourselves anymore. He wants us to know the joy and the freedom, the freedom from the claustrophobia, the narrowness of living for the self.

Jesus gives his life away that we might experience and grow in the freedom of new life. And as we see him living and dying for us, we will die to ourselves and we will live for him.

You belong to him. You belong to him. You belong to him.