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Living as Exiles in a Hostile World – The Epistle of 1 Peter

(Part 10 – We are a Chosen, Holy People)

September 11, 2016

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1:14-25

Scripture Reading:

Prepare your minds for action, being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Sober-mindedness. I watched a documentary this past week about the training and missions of British commandos in WWII. They interviewed a number of men who served in those ranks, all of them now in advanced age of course. One fellow told about a raid into a Norwegian town where the Nazis were using local plants to manufacture war supplies. It

was heavily defended by experienced German troops and it was tough going.

This man recounted how he and his comrades were under sniper fire when their commanding officer stood up and urged them to go on. Right at that moment a sniper's bullet got him right through the head and he fell dead.

The veteran said (he had been only about 19 years old then) "I can tell you, a boy instantly becomes a man when he sees his commanding officer killed right in front of his eyes."

And so it is. The things we are speaking about this morning require *sober-mindedness*. They require that all of us, including young people, to put away childish things and to be serious about what the Lord has to tell us, because it is a very serious matter concerning the eternal state of our souls. Many, many, many men, women, and children around the world are going to die today. ToDAY! And the majority of them are going to enter eternity without Christ. Many of them

played around at life. They were not serious-minded. They didn't consider the truly important things, but only wanted to play. You must not make the same mistake. If YOU die today, how will it go with you? Do you know Christ? Really? Do you know him?

John Wesley lived back in the 1700's and was an clergyman in the Church of England. He was the leader of the "holy club" at Oxford, and he even traveled across the ocean to America as a missionary. But he was a miserable failure there. During a dangerous storm at sea when the ship he was on was in great danger, he was full of fear, but there were some Moravian Christians on board who prayed and sang hymns calmly. Through their witness to him, Wesley came to realize that he did not know Christ at all. His so-called Christianity was nothing but a system of works performed to earn merit and salvation with God. He said, "I was afraid to die....". One of the Moravians began speaking with him, asking him self-examining questions such as:

- Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?
- Do you know Jesus Christ?
- Do you know He has saved your soul?

Wesley, like Nicodemus, had no answers to or knowledge of such things.

"What have I learned," Wesley would say later? "Why, what I the least of all suspected, that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God." [George Whitefield, Vol 1, Arnold Dallimore].

Pro 10:8 The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin.

Pro 13:16 In everything the prudent acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly.

Pro 21:25 The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.

Wesley was sober-minded about the state of his soul, unlike the sluggard and fool. Which are you?

Holiness -

How many of you feel *holy* this morning? I suspect that such a question causes your mind to immediately start taking a mental tally of how your behavior and thoughts have been this last week and this morning. And I also suspect that we are quite hesitant to tell ourselves, let alone others, that "yes, yes I do feel that I am quite holy." After all, a

Christian more than anyone knows and grieves over their own sin.

And yet, listen to our text for this morning:

1Pe 1:13-25 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, **and being sober-minded**, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

(14) As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, (15) but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, (16) since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

(17) And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, (18) knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

(20) He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you (21) who through him are believers in God, who raised him from

the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

(22) Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, (23) since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; (24) for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, (25) but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

There it is:

"...but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Holiness. What is it? God Himself is holy, holy, holy. And Peter reminds us here that because we are now the obedient children of the Father, we must be who we are. Holy. Sharers in our Father's nature. So what is holiness? Apparently it is quite vital –

Heb 12:14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

The word is thrown around of course by people in shallow ways. You have the “holy father” the Pope. Holy water. Ghandi was supposedly a “holy man” as are monks who live in a desert or isolated monastery. The Pharisees no doubt prided themselves in their “holiness.” But none of this is the holiness of Christ.

The Bible uses the word in various ways as well, so much so that it is difficult to pin down the fundamental definition that all of the meanings share. Let’s see if we can categorize some of them:

1. Holy Things/Places

Mat 4:5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple

Mat 7:6 "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

1Ti 4:4-5 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, (5) for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

Heb 9:25 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,

2. Holy Servants of God

Mar 6:20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

Mar 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

2Pe 1:18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

3. The Word of God

Act 13:34 And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'

Rom 7:12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Rom 1:2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,

4. The People of God

Rom 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

1Co 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

Eph 3:5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession,

1Pe 2:5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

2Pe 3:11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,

5. Actions

Rom 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

6. Righteous Behavior

Eph 1:4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

Col 3:12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

1Th 2:10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

1Th 4:4-7 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, (5) not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; (6) that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. (7) For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

2Ti 2:21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

Fundamentally then, the quality of “holiness” that is shared by all of these uses of the word is something like *“dedicated to God, belonging to God, chosen for the service of God, reflecting the pure character of God.”* The Greek word for holy is “hagios” and the Greek dictionary gives this definition:

ἅγιος, ἱα, ον *set apart for or by God, morally or ceremonially holy.—*

1. of things *sacred, consecrated* 1 Cor 3:17. *holy food* Mt 7:6... *sanctuary, temple* Hb 9:12.

2. of persons: *of God cultically set apart, morally perfect* J 17:11. *Of Christ* Mk 1:24. *Of Christians, oi ἅγιοι God's people, saints* Ro 1:7. *Of pers. gener. pure, upright, worthy of God* Eph 1:4.

Let me give you this definition of holiness that is easy to remember:

Holiness is that quality in a person, place, or thing which reflects and displays the character of God, and announces that the person, place, or thing belongs to God for His sole use.

The Holy Nation or People of God

Peter is applying God’s instruction to Israel under the Old Covenant to

believers – to US in the New Covenant:

Lev 11:44 For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground.

Lev 19:2 "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

Lev 20:7-8 Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. (8) Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

God elected Abraham for the purpose of making a holy nation, a holy people for Himself to dwell among (remember our series on the Temple?) -

Exo 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; (6) and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

Deu 7:6 "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for

his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

It is the Church that is the true people of God, of which the OT nation Israel was a symbol –

1Pe 2:4-5 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, (5) you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1Pe 2:9-11 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (10) Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (11) Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

See it then? Out of all the people in creation, YOU have been elected by God to be HIS holy nation and priesthood. You were no one. Now you are God's. Everything about you is holy. Your body. Your mind. The church of fellow believers you belong

to. Your work. Your actions and behavior.

Holiness is that quality in a person, place, or thing which reflects and displays the character of God, and announces that the person, place, or thing belongs to God for His sole use.

And therefore...

(14) As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, (15) but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, (16) since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Holy Calling, Holy Conduct

We live as exiles in an UN-holy world. Peter's epistle is written to encourage us and instruct us regarding how the Lord wants us to conduct ourselves during our exile here. The instruction is rather simply stated –

I am holy. You are My children. So you must be holy too.

Or-

You are holy. Be who you are.

Let's look at vss 14-15 in more detail-

- As obedient children – We have been born again as children of the holy God. Children who love their father and are loved by their father want to be obedient. The way to do this is to be holy in our conduct. In contrast –
- Do not be conformed to who we used to be – *the passions of our former ignorance*. Isn't it interesting that the Bible calls the "enlightened, free, godless" life – *passionate ignorance*. Ignorance left to run free.

In other words, as Peter will say later –

1Pe 1:22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

1Pe 2:1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

1Pe 2:10-12 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (11) Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (12) Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers,

they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Just consider how much of the New Testament is exhortation to us regarding these very things:

- You are not who you were. You are a new creation.
- You are a child of the holy God, a sharer of His nature.
- Do not therefore live and think as you used to.
- Be transformed in your mind and let your life evidence that transformation by living in holiness and righteousness and truth.

This is practical holiness. In Christ we are pronounced and are actually holy. Holy ones. People now set apart by God for God. God's own possession. His own people and nation and children. God's temple in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

Therefore, be holy. What is holiness? Holiness is who God is. Holiness is what God pronounces good and righteous. Holiness is approving what is in the will of God. Holiness is loving what God loves and hating what God hates. And therefore if you want to live a holy life in accord with the holy one you now are:

- Obey God's law (the 10 commandments)
- Love others
- Put to death the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit
- Be done with the sin that you used to walk in
- In other words, reflect the nature of God in your thinking, words, and actions.

Did you know that holiness is the real key to evangelism? Peter says it:

1Pe 3:15-16 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord **as holy**, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (16) **having a good conscience**, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile **your good behavior in Christ** may be put to shame.

Be serious and sober-minded about these things. Are they true of you? Are you really born again and thus a holy one? Or is your Christianity merely skin-deep, an outward show, a disguise put on by an unconverted heart like John Wesley's was?