

When I used to be in a particular denominational church, at a state-level, the Synod (at about the same time as we were cutting spending on Youth and Children's Ministry), decided to employ a Media Liaison person... And as I read the position description, I realised that this position was not much more than being a spin-doctor.

Their role was to write good news stories about that particular denomination, and to release them to the media, so we could look really good... And at the same time, they had to keep their eyes open for stories that were appearing in the media, that might tarnish the image of that particular denomination, and then of course, to counter those stories in some way....

It was about PR – Public Relations...

And, for a lot of big churches today, PR is really important to them....

But today, we're going to be talking about a different sort of PR, and this is the sort of PR that I reckon should **abound** in the Christian church... **Privilege and Responsibility** – with privilege, comes Responsibility...

The topic for last week, was how we are living in a privileged time indeed... The prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah, longed to see this day... We live in the time following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and what a privilege that is...

The Spirit of Christ (through the prophets of old) had foretold His coming; His sufferings; and His glories (resurrection & His final coming)... And the prophets foretold this, but they each only had a small piece of the puzzle, and they didn't understand what it meant... And even the angels, were watching intently, to see what would happen...

But now, we are living in the time:

- after Jesus has been raised from the dead... ; and
- by His Holy Spirit, the Word of God is preached today; and
- the prophecies about Christ have been explained...

We're not living in the dark any more:

- we know why Jesus came;
- We know that the Christ suffered and died for **us**, for the redemption of our sins; and
- We know that He's returning again, to judge the living and the dead; and
- Those who are truly His, will share with Him in His glory...

What a tremendous privilege we have... The things the prophets longed to know; the things the Angels longed to see; And we're living it – we're caught up, right here in the middle of God's eternal plan of salvation through Jesus Christ His Son.... What a privilege...

And I gave you the heads-up last week, of what **today's** message was going to be about... You see, it doesn't end with the privilege – the privilege isn't the 'be-all-&-the-end-all' – the very next word – the very first word of today's bible

reading (which sets the tone for the rest of this letter), is the word “**Therefore**”....

And with that word “**Therefore**”, the Apostle Peter steers this letter to a direction it will hold (except for a couple of points), right through until the end. And it’s going to focus on how we (as disciples of Jesus – as the privileged children of God) should live...

There’s a Greek word that Peter uses, and it’s translated in 2 different ways in today’s reading,,
ἀναστροφῆ (anastrophē) – “Conduct” (v15) & “ways” meaning “way of life” (v18)... And in the whole of the New Testament, that word is used a total of 13 times...

- 1Peter – 6
- 2Peter – 2
- Rest of the New Testament – 5

Peter – the apostle whom Jesus seemed to choose as His lead man, has a great concern for the way in which disciples of Jesus, conduct their life... (Conduct / Way of Life)...

One of the great tragedies of the Christian church, is the way we tend to over-react to wrong teaching/theology, by swinging the pendulum too far the opposite direction, so much so, that we are in danger, of creating our own wrong teaching/theology...

In the early 1500's, Pope Leo X set about raising enormous sums of money, to build St Peter's Basilica (in Rome) (to the level of extravagance that he had his heart set on)...

And no, he didn't run a raffle; and now, he didn't sell booze at the local church fete (although he may have done those things as well) – What he did, was he sold, what's known as “Indulgences” ... And so, if you weren't really sure that your dearly departed Granny was good enough to get to heaven, and that she might be caught in this place that Roman Catholics called “purgatory”, you could buy her out of purgatory, and straight into the arms of Jesus... , because they believed the Pope Leo had that authority – to give an indulgence, that would get them out of purgatory, and into heaven...

As you would be aware, that's just,,,, plain “Wrong” ...

And it certainly wasn't the only factor, but it was a major presenting issue, that led Martin Luther to nail his 95 thesis to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, and the Protestant Reformation began...

Some of you will find history very interesting/boring... But this little piece of church history, has had an enormous effect on the Christian church and its teaching, to this day (both good and bad)...

The catch-cry of the reformation of the church was:

- Scripture over tradition;
- Faith over works;
- Grace over merit;

In Latin, they were known as the 3 Solae;

- Sola Scriptura;
 - Sola Fide
 - Sola Gratia
-
- Scripture alone – for the source of authority (not tradition);
 - Faith alone – doing good works, isn't a means of salvation
 - Grace alone – It is the unmerited favour of God, by which we are saved – we don't earn it – we don't buy it – it's by grace – our redemption and righteousness, is paid for, by the blood of Jesus....

But do you know the problem with a 'catchy slogan'??? - it's that sometimes, a slogan can take on a greater authority, than what it's pointing to... And in this case, the first phrase gets ignored (or interpreted) by the second 2...

And in the protestant church of today (and don't get me wrong – we are a protestant church – we don't acknowledge that the Pope in Rome is Christ's vicar on Earth)... We are very grateful for the reformation, and I believe in:

- Scripture over tradition;
- Faith over works;
- Grace over merit;

But in some quarters, "By faith alone" and "By Grace alone", have over-ridden "By Scripture alone"...

Over and over and over again, the Scriptures teach us (what Peter is telling us this morning) – that with the great privilege we have, to be the children of God, (and to be saved by faith and grace) comes a great responsibility – to live as children of God...

And there are many preachers who shudder today, to give a message like I'm giving right now... You see, I know that there are many preachers, who would brand me as a heretic and a false teacher, because I dare to say (as James did), Faith without works, is dead...

And quickly, before anyone gets up and walks out on me, let me say this, and if you still disagree with me afterwards, then fine (cheerio), and you can walk out, or press the delete button on your computer...

I believe the Scriptures are very clear on this:

- No one is saved by doing good works
 - Doing many good things won't save me;
 - Knowing the right people won't save me;
 - Being in the right denomination won't save me;

 - We are saved by grace alone and by faith alone;

But the Scriptures **also** very clearly teach:

- That **once** we are saved, as disciples of Jesus, He demands our obedience.
- How we live, matters...

And so strangely, what is a very clear Scriptural direction and expectation for God's people, has somehow become

controversial... Isn't that sad... And in the past, I've been branded as "a legalist" simply because I teach what the Scriptures say, on how we (those who have been saved through grace) must now, obediently, do good...

And this might seem like a little thing for you, but for me as a preacher and a Bible teacher, it's 'cutting' to be branded as "a false teacher" or "a legalist", simply because I take Scripture more seriously than a slogan...

Let's put "sola scriptura" back at the top of the list, where it began...

Peter says:

¹³ 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.

Now, in the Greek, it literally says: **Therefore, girding up the loins of your mind...** That's a strange phrase, isn't it...

In the ancient Middle East, (and in some cases, in the middle east today), their clothes were a long, loose-fitting garment, that would often go right down to their ankles... And if you were going to war/run/hard labour,,, it's not the most practical of clothing – it'll trip you up... And so, if they were about to do some hard work, or if they knew they were about to run,

they'd hitch it up, so that it would become a short skirt (of sorts), and they'd fasten it up, with a belt around their waste.

That's what "girding up your loins" means – making ready for work/action. And our translation today said "**being sober-minded**" – The Greek actually says "being sober"...

It's talking about having a clarity of mind, and having good judgment...

Some Christians make a really big issue about "alcohol", and they don't believe that any Christian should ever drink any alcohol... I just want to say, "That's a rule that has been made by men, and they then go on to twist themselves in knots, to try and show that Jesus made non-alcoholic wine; and Jesus and his disciples never drank alcohol... Rubbish..."

God didn't ban the drinking of alcohol (except for a few specific cases) – What God forbid, (and He has consistently forbid it) was drunkenness...

And my advice, for anyone who is wondering "what's the limit?" – when is enough, enough? – my advice, and what I have chosen for myself (ever since I was a teenager), is maintain clarity of thought...

- At the point at which your character changes, you've had too much to drink;
- At the point at which your mind is no longer as sharp as it is without alcohol, you've had too much to drink;

I've never been drunk, but one night, we were out, and somebody had bought some wine,, and during the night, I'd had a few glasses, and somebody asked me a question, and I

had to think before I answered it, and I should've been able to answer it (just like that), and I knew that I'd had too much...

And for many people in our culture, drinking alcohol or doing drugs, is "Oh, I need to have a few, to loosen me up, so I can have a good time..." And I'm going to say very bluntly to you, "If you've had enough to change your character, or to change your feelings, you've had too much"...

Peter says, "Gird up your loins – prepare yourself for action – prepare yourself for work, and be sober"... Keep that absolute clarity of mind... I suspect that most Australian Christians drink way more than they should... If there's a possibility that you might be over the limit to drive, you **are** over the limit for clarity of mind for Jesus...

But in the Greek, the phrase "being sober", also means, "to maintain good judgment and a clarity of mind"...

Alright, so what he's talking about here, is for our **full ambition** – for our **full focus**, to be on the grace, that will be brought to us, at the revelation of Jesus Christ...

That's what we should set our hearts/minds on. Nothing in life, matters more than our final salvation in Christ – that's the outcome of our faith...

As one commentary I read put it:

Place your hope totally on the return of Christ, and its results...ⁱ They are to hope totally in their reward at the return of Christ instead of setting their hope on things that are only temporary/corrupt...

We get distracted by so many things in life, don't we... How often do we let our other life choices/goals get in the way of serving Christ? (a new job / a better house / pursuing excellence in sport or leisure activities / new business enterprise we want to develop) – how often do we let the temporary things of life distract us from the main thing – the hope we have at the return of Christ...

- I don't have time for bible study – things have got busy at work;
- I can't make teaching RI a priority at the moment – I've got too many other commitments;
- I just don't have time to reach out to non-Christians – any time I have left, I owe it to my family;
- We tend to fill our lives up with so much stuff and so many activities that we just don't have time to serve Christ in a fuller way...

You know what??? When I fill my life up with the same things that non-Christians chase after, do you know what Peter calls that??? Living in ignorance.

He says:

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,

We once used to chase after those things, like the people of the world chase after them... But now we know better. Peter's just told us, that we are living in this privileged time – why is it a privileged time? Because we now know the

salvation of Jesus Christ, and we know that He's returning again, to achieve the outcome of our faith...

People of the world, live for today. Disciples of Jesus – yes we live **in** today – but we're not living **for** today. We're living for the return of Jesus...

We **once** used to live in ignorance (by living for today), but not any longer...

The ESV reading this morning talked about the **passions** of our former ignorance – I think probably a better translation might be the **desires** of our former ignorance... If my desires are pretty much the same as the desires of a non-Christian, then there's something not right in my relationship with God...

BTW, does this help you to understand why it's so important that a Christian should never date or marry a non-Christian??? It's because we have different desires and priorities in life: Am I a good match for this person??? Well, is their full hope focused on the return of Christ and the outcome of their faith??? Not at all... Well, how could they possibly be a good life partner...

So, what kind of relationship, does God expect us to have with Him?

You know, sometimes I reckon we make theology and the Christian relationship really hard to understand, but it's really quite simple... Jesus told us to see God as our Heavenly

Father... Our relationship with God, isn't a buddy-buddy-mate sort of thing... He's our Heavenly Father... And we are His children. And as His children, what's the proper way for us to relate to Father??? Obedience...

For me, as a dad, my expectation of my children, was higher than the expectation that I had for other people's children... Before my children grew into men, my expectation, was that they would respect me; and honour me; and obey me... (and their mother)

The proper way for us to relate to our Heavenly Father, is respect; honour; obedience...

V¹⁵ as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in {some of} your conduct,

Is that what Peter said??? How much of our conduct? **All** our conduct –

- Be holy, not just when it suits, but when the temptation is strong;
- Be holy, not just when you're surrounded by Christians, but when peer pressure is at its peak;
- Be holy, not just when people will agree with your position, but when they'll hate you because of your moral standard

V¹⁶ since it is written, "**You** shall be holy, for **I** am holy."

It used to be an honourable thing, to want to grow up, to be just like your dad. Do you remember that time? *All I ever*

wanted to be, was a farmer like my Dad... Unfortunately, now you have to be a multi-millionaire to make that happen, and I now know that I can never be a farmer like my dad.

We visited Jake and Lauren the other day, and Little Sammy goes and picks something up (don't know what it was) and says "Lunch", and he lifts the hatch on his scooter that he calls a "ute". And he puts on a pair of sunnies and he puts on a hat, and he pretends to drive off to work in his ute (just like Dad does)...

The normal father/child relationship, is for the child to want to grow up to be just like his dad... And we shall be holy, just like our Heavenly Father is holy...

What a fearful thing it is, to come into the presence of a Holy God...

Let me read for you, what the Prophet Isaiah experienced, when **he** came into the presence of God:

Isaiah 6: (ESV)

6 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is YHWH of hosts;

the whole earth is full of his glory!"

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, YHWH of hosts!"

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

Wow. When Isaiah found Himself in the presence of a Holy God, he knew he was doomed... **Woe is me! For I am lost;** He knew, "even his language wouldn't cut it"... You know, the words we speak – what comes out of our mouth – is an overflow of what's in our heart...

Some of us have gotten so used to using bad language, we've convinced ourselves that it doesn't matter... Some Christians try and justify it by saying "It'll make me more relevant to me work mates, if I can talk like them"...

But the Word of the Lord this morning, is **be holy in all your conduct**

Be holy, even if your pure language, will make you stick out from the crowd... (You understand, that's just one example, hey)...

We are to be holy, in **all** our conduct... We are to be holy, because our Heavenly Father is holy...

So, what is Peter saying about how we set our full hope on the return of Christ?

Obedience – our manner of life should be a life of holiness.

Why is holiness so important?

1. Because our Heavenly Father is Holy, His children should also be holy;
2. If we know that God is a righteous judge, this should fill us with fear;
3. The cost of our forgiveness was so high, let's never take it for granted... The cost of our salvation was significant – it is extraordinary... - the precious blood of Christ (no less).

Well, we've really run out of time today, and I've had to divide this message up into (I'm not sure if it's halves or thirds yet), We'll see next week, when we talk more about why our holiness is so important...

We have been saved by the Grace of God. That grace has been paid for by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ... What a privilege...

With this privilege, comes the responsibility – if we are the children of God, let's strive to live as the children of God...

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,

what a privilege it is, to be called a child of God.

What a privilege it is, to live in a time,

Following the resurrection of our Lord, who died for us...

What a wonderful gift of grace You have given us...

Lord, we thank You

For the wonderful gift of eternal life

A gift that was paid for, by the precious blood of Your son.

A gift we could not earn;

A gift we could never buy...

But Lord, there's been times

that we have taken Your grace for granted;

and we've conformed to the desires of our former ignorance;

and our conduct/manner of life has been (in many ways) similar to our unbelieving neighbours...

God forgive us...

Heavenly Father, You are Holy.

Help us to strive to also be holy...

We thank You that You have made us holy

(through the blood of Jesus)

And Lord, we pray that with the Help of Your Holy Spirit,

We will be changed/renewed,

That we will increasingly demonstrate,

The Holiness of the Father, in the conduct of our lives...

We ask this in Jesus' Name,

As we gird up the loins of our mind,

And as we 'sober up' with a clarity of mind,,,

To set our hope, fully on the day that Jesus returns...

And we live for **that** day,

Amen.

ⁱ Peter H. Davids. 1990. The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle of Peter. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids. P.65