

“Holy Strangers”

1 Peter 1: 13-25

13 Therefore, 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. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 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.” (Leviticus 11:44,45; 19:2)

17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. 18 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, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. 23 for you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, “All people are like grass,

And all their glory is like the flowers of the field;

The grass withers and the flowers fall, 25 but the word of the Lord Endures forever” (Isaiah 40:6-8).

And this is the words that was preached to you.

I am hoping at least some of you are familiar with or watched at least a couple of episodes of the campy old Batman show? (Any of you?) Well I watched the show a fair amount not too many years after television became color tv. Every time Batman and Robin would get in a jam or if they were confronted with something, Robin would make a comment like, “Holy crazy penguins batman.” It would truly be a compliment to a group of Christians if Batman and Robin came upon them and Robin’s comment was “holy strangers, batman.” I believe that Peter is calling Jesus followers to by holy strangers, here on earth. Hence the title.

Peter starts out with the holy part, so we will too. The 1984 NIV version of verse 13 reads, “prepare your minds for action.” I am an Eagle Scout so the Scout Motto immediately comes to my mind: Be Prepared. A good boyscout plans ahead and makes use of what resources are available. All branches of the armed forces share some version of this in their training. In those old batman tv shows, in the batman movies, and in the animated cartoons, it seems that batman always seemed to have just the right tool, pill, or gadget in his utility belt for every occasion or for any circumstance

that he and Robin might get themselves into. There would be some predicament where Batman and Robin were in a net, or tied up, or trapped somehow by some evil bad guy, usually facing death. Then come the questions. What will Batman and Robin do? Will this be the end of the dynamic duo? Commercial break of course. After the commercial break we would hear Robin say something like, "holy bad situations, Batman. What are we going to do?" Then Batman would reply with some version of, "If only I can reach the special compartment in my belt, I have a pill, or a device of some kind, that will get us out of this." That's being prepared. **[NOTE 1]**

Peter talks about preparing our minds. The newer translation or version talks about "With minds that are alert and fully sober" that we should set our hopes on the grace of the Lord Jesus. If you look at the original language you see that Peter is really saying, "gird up the loins of your mind." It is a direct reference to the long robes that the men of that day wore. They were not very conducive to physical work or running or anything of the sort. So when they wanted to participate in such activity they would gather up their robe and tuck it into the belt that was around their waist. This would give their legs the freedom of movement that they needed. In modern day English one might say, "They rolled up the sleeves of their mind." Prepare your mind for living a life of holiness. Scientists have discovered that human behavior is determined largely by the subconscious mind. So it really does matter what you let in your eyes and ears because, whether you are conscious of it or not, it effects you, it effects your subconscious. So the saying, "Garbage in, garbage out," is accurate. It reminds us that holy living begins with our minds. Our minds must be holy for our behavior to be holy. That's why Paul in his letter to the Philippians, tells us to think on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. It is important for us to ask questions and have a faith that is in the mind as well as in the heart and soul. In Romans chapter 12 Paul warns us not to be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our MINDS, that we might prove what is good and acceptable and the perfect will of God. **[NOTE 2]**

Before we go any further we better define the word holy. To be holy is not to be "holier than thou," it is not being perfect, it is not hypocritical (saying one thing and doing another) and it does not refer to monks hiding away from the world in a monastery. To be holy, means to be fully set aside or set apart for God's use; for Christ to live in and through you. To be holy, does refer to one who is humble in mind and attitude (that's right, it sounds similar to the definition of wisdom which we talked about last week). Are you set apart for God and serving Him? Are you ethically pure? If you answered yes to either of those questions then you are well on your way to being holy. The process of becoming holy is the theological word sanctification. You see, only God is truly holy in every way. God is holy and He is the only one who can call us to be like Him. He calls us to be holy, to be fully set apart for HIM! That is why we sing the

hymn "I Surrender All." To tap into God as the power source to become sanctified, more and more holy, you have to **know Him, love Him, and obey Him** meaning God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The essence of true holiness consists in the conformity to the nature and will of God. **[NOTE 3]**

So Pastor Rick, how do we do that? Well, we spend time daily in prayer and reading God's Word which reveals to us, by the Holy Spirit, who God is and what He is all about. The process of sanctification or becoming holy, for you and me, is a lifetime process of God's holiness increasingly replacing our natural character of lust and evil appetites. We need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We do that by letting go and letting God! In every area of our lives. To be holy we need to be separated more and more from sin. To know what holy is we have to spend time with God in prayer, read and think about God's Word, the Bible, and spend time in fellowship with others who are doing the some of the same things. All of us can be holy. We just need to continue to be in the process of setting apart more of our heart, more of our mind, and more of our body for God's purposes!

[NOTE 4] Part of this process is being sober Peter says in verse 13. The Greek word for sober is Neefo. It denotes abstinence from wine or string drink and means that our minds are under the control of the Holy Spirit. You see, if alcohol, drugs, or anything else is controlling your mind, then the Holy Spirit isn't. God gave us a conscience for a reason. That is why it says in Ephesians 5:18, "Do not get drunk on wine, for that is dissipation, but instead be filled with the Holy Spirit." Because when we are drunk we lose the inhibitions and conscience that God gave us to keep us from doing stupid things. Part of being sober is being self-controlled. We are truly self-controlled only when we are open to God's leading and at peace with God. **[NOTE 5]**

Peter then talks about hope. A part of preparing for holy living is to live a life of hope. That means that we fight the tendency to be pessimistic, judgmental and fatalistic. Living the life of hope means that we live our lives and make our decisions based on the fact that at the end of this earthly life, we will get to spend eternity with our savior Jesus Christ in Heaven/Paradise. Life with Christ is an endless hope, life without Christ leads to a hopeless end. This is precisely why one of my favorite verses in the Bible is Romans 15:13. It is on the back of my business-card and I use it for the Benediction 60-70% of the time. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." The hope that we have in God, His Son Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit never proves to be an illusion. It is hope that keeps us going, that gives us a reason to get up in the morning, to keep on trying our best to live our lives Jesus' way. **[NOTE 6]**

The other thing that Peter mentions as part of living a holy life is being obedient. Active obedience is at the very foundation of any Christian lifestyle. Jesus said, the one who obeys me, that person truly loves me. Peter warns us not to conform to our

former desires. These natural appetites are always before us. They promise us fulfillment and purpose but ultimately bring us only disillusionment and death. The kind of obedience that Jesus wants from us is to take what He says in the Bible seriously and do it. If you were in the jungle and a tiger was about to mump on your back and your Dad saw it and yelled duck so that he could shoot it, what would you do? Would you duck without thinking or questioning him and live? Or would you stop and say something like, "What for? OR Why? OR even No, and get killed by the tiger? Jesus wants us to actively obey God's Word. We are not to just read and say, "That's good stuff, or yeah, that's a good idea and then forget all about it. At the risk of sounding like a NIKE commercial, Just do it!

Then there is verse 17 where Peter tells us that we are to live as strangers here on earth. If you are truly a Christian, if Jesus Christ is the Lord of your life, then your major, main, number one citizenship is not in the United States of America ... it should be in HEAVEN! That is where you and I belong and that is where we will spend eternity compared to just a measly 50-100 years here on earth. Our highest calling is to the King of Kings and to His Kingdom. This earth is only our temporary dwelling place. That is why we are to live as strangers here and that is how we can live in the world but not be of the world. But we have such a strong tendency to focus all our energy on what is going on down here that we totally forget about what is most important; our citizenship in Heaven! We are to let the fact that we are citizens of Heaven affect our decision more than our citizenship in the USA. Three times in this letter Peter reminds us of God's role as judge. We need to have an awe, honor, and holy fear or respect for God and let that help us make our decisions. We are redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb not by anything as perishable as diamonds, or silver, or gold, or cash.

[NOTE 7] So we've got to be prepared, be sober, be humble and obedient, live a life of hope and be a stranger here on earth. Put it all together and it spells "H-O-L-Y". We are called to be Holy Strangers! Now being holy isn't just some far away concept out there for people somewhere that live on some higher lofty plain of uber-spirituality. Holy is not just something for the monks and people who don't live in the real world. Holiness is for you and me and it is for right now. The great evangelist D.L. Moody said, "It is a great deal better to live a holy life than to talk about it." Lighthouses do not ring bells and/or fire cannons to call attention to themselves. They simply shine." Blaise Pascal wrote, "The serene, silent beauty of a holy life, a life set apart for God, is the most powerful influence in the world, next to the might of the Spirit of God." It is meant to be lived out in our daily lives. In 1 John 4:16 we read, "May the Lord enable you, more and more, to spend your lives in the interests of others, in order that He may so establish you in Christian character now that you may be vindicated from every charge that might possibly be brought against you at the final judgment." Matthew chapter five and verse 16 quotes Jesus saying, "Let your light so shine before men that

they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” That is the call that Peter is echoing in our text for today. This is the first in a series of sermons that will take us all the way to November on 1 Peter. Please take on the challenge to live Jesus’ way. Seek Him out. Be holy (set apart your life for God and service in His Kingdom). Be holy as God is holy. Be controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit and the holiness of the Spirit’s presence and power will shine from your life. If we try to live holy lives on our own power we will fail miserably. If we follow Jesus Christ as the Lord of our lives and allow the Holy Spirit to live in and through us, we shall be channels for the holiness of God. Let go and let God live through you. Live as a holy stranger and you will have a full and meaningful life.

Please, write down one specific thing that you will do this coming week to live your life as a holy stranger. What is one thing that you can do this week to humbly let your light shine? I am fully convinced that if you live as a holy stranger, one who is set apart for God and His purposes and living as if your primary citizenship is in heaven, you will be blessed. You will have a more full and meaningful life. I am convinced because I strive with all I have within me by the power of the Holy Spirit to live God’s way. You will be blessed, the Bible tells us so!

Let’s pray ... AMEN

BENEDICTION: May the Lord enable you more and more to spend your lives in the interests of others, in order that He may so establish you in Christian character now, that you may be vindicated from every charge that might possibly be brought against you at the final judgement. May God’s love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control be yours in the name of the father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Depart in peace and be holy! AMEN

“Sermon Notes for “Holy Strangers” based on 1 Peter 1: 13-25
Given at Doster Community Church on July 30, 2023

- I. Prepare your mind for living a life of holiness. Think on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable. (Philippians 4:8)
- II. God is Holy and He calls us to be like Him, fully set apart for Him. You are holy if you and your life, thoughts, words, and deeds are set aside or set apart for God and His use!
- III. The essence of true holiness consists in the conformity to the nature and will of God. We work toward that through the process called sanctification. It is a lifetime process of increasingly replacing our natural character of lust and evil appetites with God’s Word, love and will.
- IV. Part of this process is being “sober”. That means abstinence from anything that interferes with our mind being controlled by the Holy Spirit like drugs or alcohol. When you are high or drunk, your conscience get disconnected and the Holy Spirit has less control.
- V. Peter says we need to live a life focused on the hope that never proves to be an illusion, the hope of eternal life with Christ in heaven.
- VI. Part of being holy is living in humble obedience to God’s will. Take the Bible seriously and do what it says!
- VII. Verse 17 tells us that we should live as strangers here on earth. Our citizenship is in heaven, not on earth, not in the United States. We should focus on becoming citizens of heaven.
- VIII. Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good life and glorify your father in heaven. So what are you going to do about it? Please write down an “I will ... statement” that describes what you will do specifically this week to become a holy stranger on earth.