

1/2 /2009 KK 10.30am Church Bibles p 1217 1 Peter 1:17- 2:2

The whole of the Christian life is a consequence to something. This section begins with the word 'Therefore'; our response to God flows out of what he is - holy - and what he has done for us in Jesus; In quoting the Old Testament, Peter shows there is no dichotomy in God from before and after Christ; God is holy; he wants us to be holy too. That is going to involve us in using our *minds*. Let's see how holiness works out in practice:

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

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

16 for it is written: Be holy, because I am holy.

17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers 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 forefathers,

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 your brothers, 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 men 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 stands for ever." And this is the word that was preached to you.

2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation

3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

What would you have done with the ticket?

(Richard Bewes tells the story:)

A hundred years ago in April, 1912, there was a minister in London who had been invited to preach in America. The Rev Stuart Holden bought a ticket and prepared to travel - on the brand new ship, the Titanic. But the day before he was due to sail, his wife took ill and landed up in hospital. He refused to leave her.

Six days later, the news broke that the Titanic had sunk. The first he knew of it was reading his own obituary in the Times!

They had seen the name, Rev Stuart Holden, on the passenger list, and could not trace him on the list of survivors. So they announced his death.

He looked at his unused ticket. What would you have done with it? He was so grateful, he framed it and hung it on the wall of his study

'But for the grace of God,' he thought, 'I would have died that day. Every day that remains of my life on earth, I live for God.'

Christians have something in common with Stuart Holden. We live with a reverent fear for God, as Peter puts it in 1: 17.

We know there is a God who judges everyone, impartially, without mistakes. We as sinners would have been found wanting, a long way short of what God designed us to be, and what he is. He himself is holy; he calls us to be holy; and we are not. We would have died, were it not for the action of God himself in Jesus Christ.

We live in reverent fear, because we know ourselves to be Redeemed, v18.

Slaves in the old days could have their freedom if someone paid the ransom price. But Peter is

thinking of a different bondage. The Hebrews as slaves in Egypt needed God to rescue them, and he did, with a series of calamities on Egypt. The final one brought death to every household in Egypt, unless they knew to take a lamb, without spot or blemish, kill it, and sprinkle the blood on the door frames of their houses. The angel of death '*passed over*', missed out, those houses, and the bereaved Egyptians begged them to leave.

Well, the Christians in Peter's day knew they too had been redeemed, bought out of slavery to the empty way of life handed down from their forefathers. ...

The price was not paid in mere money, in 'perishable things like silver or gold, ' as Peter puts it in v 18 - and don't we know how fragile the value of money is today, with the Pound now worth about as much as a Euro, and little more than a dollar, and with house prices falling sharply!

No, we were redeemed with something infinitely more valuable: the precious blood of Jesus Christ, a lamb without blemish or spot. This is a deliberate echo of the Exodus Passover. The blood refers to the death of Jesus, in place of guilty sinners like us.

Whose was the blood that was spilt on the cross? I don't think I have ever pointed out to you the implication of Acts 20: 28. Paul in leaving the elders at Ephesus tells them to keep watch over themselves and flock: 'be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.' The blood shed on the cross was the blood of God himself! 2 Corinthians 5:19 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.'

Jesus Christ was not an afterthought for God the Father, v 20. He was there before the foundation of the world. He did not come into being with his birth that first Christmas, but was revealed, uncovered.

And just as his physical birth was not his beginning, so his death, so crucial for our forgiveness, was not his end. God raised him from the dead. We preach a living, loving Saviour

Well, no-body who knows what it is to deserve to die for their sins, and who knows they have been redeemed by Christ's blood, can have any other view of God than a reverent fear., like Stewart Holden. God alone has made us fit for his holy company, at a price beyond any earthly scale.

We belong to him. We live for him. We want to live holy lives, for him and by his strength. And if we need to put a framed ticket on the wall, or a Bible verse, come to that, to remind us daily, do it.

What then?

We want to live holy lives for God with reverent fear (Oh but we don't forget 1:8 'even though you do not now see him, you believe in him with inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.')

How does God equip us to do so?

Once again, it starts with something God has done for us.

V23 'for you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable...'

This is an echo of v18; from the analogy of redemption from the slave market, the metaphor changes to childbirth. Such is the dramatic change in our lives, it is like being born all over again.

Story...

And v 23 begins, 'For' i.e. it gives the rationale behind the command in v 22:

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have a sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. That is possible because you have been born again.

A crucial element in holy living is love, especially for our fellow believers.

There was an article about memorable advertising slogans in the paper yesterday: the Heinz company are going to re-use their ad from the 70s because it was so distinctive: 'Beanz Meanz Heinz'.

Well, what is the distinctive trademark of the Christian church, a feature so memorable it promotes our message like nothing else? *Love among the fellowship!* Or should be!

Sincere love I said last week 'sincere' comes from Latin, *sine cere* without wax, but I forgot to explain it. Silversmiths of old could pass off as genuine silver a hollow idol formed around a core of wax. The trade mark for honest smiths was, *sine cere* without wax. Sincere love means, love that is genuine, all through.

For your brothers. Most people can work out three of the four commands to love that Jesus left us: Love God with all your heart soul mind and strength, love your neighbour as yourself, and love your enemy; they tend to forget his words to the disciples in the upper room, 'Love one another, as I have loved you.' The love within the fellowship of believers exists because we all know that Christ has died for us and lives for us.

Love one another deeply..
Love...From the heart.

WE read more about the features of the newborn life of love in ch 2 v1; only this time, it's a series of negatives, opposites:

"Therefore rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind."

Every one of them is a contradiction of love.

Malice - the intention or desire to do evil. English law talks about a crime done with malice aforethought, i.e. the intention to do wrong, that aggravates the crime.

Deceit - Jesus said, let your yes be yes and your no be no. When Politicians or others wriggle out of questions on TV, saying something different to avoid saying the whole truth, we get very annoyed. Well, don't use the same tactic

Hypocrisy the opposite of sincere. I've told you before about the world famous Greek actor, Hupocrites. He could play any part and convince you he was real. (Not Hippocrates, the Dr. with an 'I' and two p's) Just as Mr Hoover gave his name to vacuum cleaners, Hupocrites gave his name to acting. We write it hypocrites.

Hypocrisy is the act of preaching a certain belief, religion or way of life, but not, in fact, holding these same virtues oneself. For example, if a person were to tell one to stop smoking cigarettes yet they smoke themselves, this is hypocrisy.

I remember a world famous Russian skater telling us his technique, so much more than just skating. 'You have to smile for the cameras,' he said, 'but you can tell, because the acted smile comes only from the mouth, not the eyes.' And certainly not the heart.

Envy - is a bitter plant. If we truly loved our fellow Christians, we'd be pleased for them when they enjoy some good event. The envious heart begrudges them their good fortune; we want it for ourselves. Envy is a feeling of discontented or resentful longing, aroused by someone else's possession, qualities or good fortune.

e.g. Two people are up for the same promoted job. One gets it; must the other fall out with the successful applicant? Even a Christian might be *tempted* to, then see that that would be envious, and wrong. We use our minds to recognise envy and choose to get rid of it.

Slander of every kind. English law again.' To make a false spoken statement damaging to a person's reputation'. In Scots law we use the term 'defamation of character'; it doesn't matter if we spread the falsehood by speech (slander) or writing (libel)

Suppose someone tells you they saw a church member drunk in the street. Do you instantly believe your informant? Or see if there could be another explanation? Do you ask, 'What actions

made you think they were drunk?' Staggering? Ah, did you know he has a problem with balance? Or, did you know that certain medicines can have that side effect temporarily?

What is the key to being born again, and to living out this love?

Well, we come to life through hearing the Word of God, v23

And we grow in this life through the same word of God. 2:2

Hearing it in the first place brought us to life

Hearing it as born-again believers, it transforms us.

The Word of God is eternal.

When we hear that Christ died for sinners, and accept him and his benefits by faith, our being born again is the action of Almighty God, with an eternal aspect.

We find our past sins forgiven, we find our lines remade, we trust our future is secure.

So when we read the Bible as Christians, we expect God to continue his work in us, work with eternal consequences.

Our visitor from Malawi, Nation Mafuleke wrote us an email this week. He moved to a village, you remember, to be Deputy Headteacher; they promised to build him a new house; but it was not ready. This week he was able to move in. but the village is not yet on the national grid, so he has no electricity.

You and I might be gnashing our teeth over the delays and inconvenience.

But Nation is a national organiser for the Student Christian organisation of Malawi. SCOM He was able to hold the first meeting of SCOM in his school in Emfeni this week. And three pupils came to faith in Christ!

Something eternal is going on amidst the frustrations of material life. Houses are ephemeral. New birth is eternal, and faith comes through hearing the Word of God.

What is your ticket to remind you of God and eternity? It is the written Word of God. Don't try to frame it and pin it to the wall. Don't leave your Bible wedged in a bookcase.

Take it down, dust it off, open it, and pray that God will speak to you through it.