**Week 3**

***The Believer’s Identity***

***1 Peter 1:13-25***

**25-26 April 2022**

**Review and Overview –** Last week we saw how Peter described his hearers as “elect exiles” who had a wonderful inheritance that gave them a living hope: someday they would be removed from the very presence of sin when they entered the presence of God. This week he moves on from *giving* ***descriptions*** of that inheritance to *giving* ***commands*** in light of the descriptions.

**Four Commands –** Peter begins this section of his letter with the important word “therefore”. Although he uses that word only once, he gives four implications for it, i.e. four commands that follow from what he said in the first 12 verses. The first of these “therefore’s” is **Prepare your mind.** The literal translation of what Peter said is, “Gird up the loins of your mind”. The people of his day understood that when men went into battle, they gathered their long robes up and fastened them securely at the waist so that they wouldn’t get tripped up and could move freely. [Edie’s note: Farmers in Bangladesh do the same thing today when they are working in the rice fields.] Similarly, we are being told to prepare our minds to wage a battle against sin. The battle against sin begins in our thoughts, so the mind is the first thing that Peter mentions. We cannot afford to “drape our minds in frivolity”. We must grow our minds for action; we must grow our minds in the Word of God because our mind is our first line of defense.Peter points his listeners toward their future hope again by telling them to set their hope *fully* on the grace that will be brought to them. They are not to set their minds partially on it. They are not to set some of their hope on a relationship here on earth…or on their possessions…or on having power, influence or wealth. *The first thing we are commanded to do in response to knowing about our inheritance is to hope fully in it.*

**The Second “Therefore”: Prepare Your Heart –** Peter commands his listeners to not be conformed to their former passions. He wants them to control their emotions and not be deceived by their hearts. As Jeremiah 17:9 warns us, “The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?” (HCSB) Any disordered desire that we have (e.g. alcoholism, binge eating, etc.) *feels* more “normal” to us than the holy alternative. So we have to relearn a “*new* normal” as children of God; the relearning starts in our minds and moves to our hearts. We are called to be sons of obedience, in contrast to what is said about unbelievers in Ephesians 2:2.

**Head, Heart, Hands –** In verse 15 Peter moves from his discussion of the mind and the heart to our *conduct*. He wants us to move from correct thoughts to correct desires to correct actions. We too often think, “I have to change this behavior” and try to figure out how to do that. But Peter tells us that if we correct our minds and our hearts, our hands will naturally follow along. Our minds become equipped; we begin to desire the better thing; and then we stop reaching for that which feels “normal” but is so dangerous. Further, we are to be holy in all our conduct because we are to be conformed to the image of the One who saved us and rescued us from sin, not to the image of the culture or to our whims.

**Our Father and Judge –** We look at God as our Father, who is personal and loving, but also as our Judge, who is impartial and fair. We need to keep these two truths about God in correct balance. Depending on our background, we may view Him more as a judge of whom we are terrified or as a snuggly “Daddy-God” that requires nothing of us but to be precious and to sit next to him all the time. But we are called to live in the tension between a God who is close and yet a God who transcends. For example, the Lord’s prayer begins with “Our Father (who is close) who art in Heaven (who is transcendent)”. We are to hold God in reverent fear and awe. It has been said that human beings are the only creatures on earth that can experience awe. Awe makes us realize that we are so insignificant, and yet at the same time it makes us rejoice that we are here to experience whatever it is that amazes us. That is what a correct understanding of God does: it makes us realize that we are small, and yet we have been given this wonderful thing, our salvation. It will keep us from either taking God for granted or else cowering before Him as someone that cannot possibly be loving.

**“Ransomed from Futile Ways Inherited from Your Forefathers” –** For Gentile listeners, this would have referred to the flood of debauchery that they were accustomed to living in and that they had grown up around. For Peter’s Jewish listeners, this would have referred to their forefathers who had worshiped the law, but not the God of the law, who used the law as a way to shut up the Kingdom of Heaven rather than as a way to point people toward its King. Whatever your spiritual heritage was, you need to set it aside for this new heritage as a child of God.

**Pointing Toward the Passover –** In verses 18 and 19 Peter reminds his listeners that they have been ransomed with the precious blood of Christ, which would have directed Jewish minds immediately toward the Passover. Christ is not just a ransom, He is a precious ransom.

**Foreknown –** When Peter began his letter, he told his listeners that *they* were foreknown by God (verse 2). Now he says that *Christ* was foreknown by the Father before the foundation of the world (verse 20). Peter goes on to say that Christ has been made manifest “in these last times”. What “last times”? He is referring to Christ’s coming in the flesh, when He fulfilled what the prophets had longed to see fulfilled.

**Faith AND Hope –** As Peter explains Christ’s role in our salvation, he tells his listeners that all these things happened so that our *faith* and our *hope* are in God. Why did he use both of these words? He did so because they encompass two different pieces of the same idea. We have faith looking back at what has already accomplished in our salvation and at what is on-going in salvation in our lives now. But we also have hope for a future salvation that is to come.

**Four Commands for Our Conduct –** In regards to our conduct, Peter has already given three commands:

1. *Set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us.*
2. *Don’t be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.*
3. *Conduct* *ourselves with reverent fear.*
4. Now he goes on to the fourth: *Love one another earnestly from a pure heart.*

Peter says that our souls have been “purified” (same Greek word as “sanctification” in verse 2) or set apart. There is a literal understanding of this concept, but also a figurative one, because this same word was used at that time to refer to vines being “purified” or cut back by fire so that they would produce more grapes. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the *pure in heart,* because they shall see God.” So when our hearts, the seat of our desires, are purified, we will see God more clearly. So Peter is building his argument by saying that the process of purification begins by our obedience to the truth. We won’t always get it right, but we will learn either through our successful obedience…or through our failure, as Peter did so often.

**Loving One Another –** Peter wants his listeners to learn and grow in their obedience so that they will love one another more and more deeply. Why? Think of the suffering they were experiencing. They were facing persecution from the culture at large. We know from our own experience that when we face trouble, we get stressed out and too often tend to turn on those closest to us. It is like coming home after a hard day and kicking the dog or yelling at the kids. So Peter tells his people, “When things get tougher on the outside, you are going to need to love earnestly on the inside.” You will learn to do this as you obey from a purified heart and experience the joy and freedom that comes with obedience.

**The Living and Abiding Word of God –** Peter purposely uses two words to describe God’s Word, both of which would be encouraging to his readers. The Word of God is both living and abiding. It lives, and it stays with us—it sticks, it remains, it endures! We don’t have to keep going out for more in times of trouble because it stays right with us. It is meat for our bones and water for our souls.

**Isaiah 40 –** Peter then quotes a passage from Isaiah that would have been very familiar to his Jewish background hearers. Isaiah spends 39 chapters describing woe and doom to Israel for their continued disobedience. But then he turns a corner and begins a new section with the repeated word *comfort:* “Comfort, comfort My people.” God, who is both Father and Judge, at long last brings words of encouragement to His people through this prophet. Isaiah 40 offers encouragement to exiles and goes on to give them the gospel. Isaiah gave the gospel in a way that the Old Testament prophets tried to understand but that Peter’s readers knew fully. Peter is saying that the encouragement he is giving is not new, but has existed from the foundation of the world.

**Summary and Personal Challenge –** Peter has said that we must do four things in life with the beautiful inheritance that we have: set our hope fully on grace, be holy as the One who delivered us is holy, conduct ourself as someone who is in awe of the God that we serve, and love one another earnestly. What are the perishable things that are drawing our eyes toward them and away from this kind of obedience? What is it that we think is living and abiding when it is actually dead and fleeting but we want to give it our time and attention?