

TURN TO 1 PETER 2

Usually when I have a chance to speak, I speak about the person of God. I would much prefer to speak of the Glory and Excellency of God than any other thing. His salvation is marvelous and His Kingdom is truly full of wonder.

But today I am going to go a different direction. I believe the Lord would have me remind us of an essential teaching of Christ and the apostles. Secondly, I think it would be healthy for us all to question the reality of our salvation, to make sure that we are truly abiding in Christ and in His love. What follows is, however personal it may be, a simple exhortation for us to “be holy even as he is holy.” As Christians we are -

Called Out and Set Apart

Indeed the very word church, in the New Testament, which is (ekklesia) means –“the called out ones.” But from what have we been called out of? Peters answers,

1 Peter 2:9-10 - 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who **called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.** NIV

We, Peter says, have been called out of darkness. We now abide in His wonderful light. We now have the Light and we can see the truth about sin and righteousness and judgment. We have been called out into the light of His holiness. We are to be holy like He is holy. Holiness is a unique characteristic of God, which He requires of His people as Hebrews tells us,

Heb 12:14 - 14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; **without holiness no one will see the Lord.** NIV

Reading from nelson’s bible dictionary, - HOLY

Moral and ethical wholeness or perfection; freedom from moral evil. Holiness is one of the essential elements of God’s nature required of His people. Holiness may also be rendered "sanctification" or "godliness." The word holy denotes that which is "sanctified" or "set apart" for divine service.

We then are called out of darkness to be set apart from the world around us.

It is no secret that the Christian is expected to live a holy life before God. In fact, this is central to the teaching of the gospel. After turning to Christ in repentance from our sins, we are to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance” as John the Baptist proclaimed. We are no longer to conform to the world in which we live, as we once did. But rather we are to be set apart from the world. A holy people belonging God, showing the work of God’s free grace in our lives by our reverent and pious behavior. After all, have we not been changed? Indeed we have! We have been “born again,” as Peter tells us,

1 Peter 1:23- 23 For **you have been born again**, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. NIV

We have received a new nature. The very nature of God has been implanted within our souls and is indeed conforming and changing our lives to be like Christ, God the Son.

2 Cor 5:17- 17 Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation**; the old has gone, the new has come! NIV

Having been transformed by the Spirit in the inner man, we no longer live in the emptiness we once walked, following after the futility of the sinful nature. But now we have a purpose and meaning in our lives, which is beyond ourselves. We seek to serve the Living and True God, who has created us and commanded us to love and serve one another. No longer pursuing the desires of the self life, we have committed ourselves to

serve and worship God in true holiness and sincerity. We are following Jesus, the pure and holy One. We seek to be like Him in all we say and do. And this is consistent with His invitation to us,

Matt 16:24-27 - "If anyone would come after me, **he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.** 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for me will find it.** 26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. NIV

Indeed we have "lost our lives" for Christ. To follow Him and live as He lived, in kindness and love, in power with self control, in gentleness and patience we now follow Him. And this is the very purpose of Christ in our salvation,

Titus 2:11-14 - 11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 **It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,** 13 while we wait for the blessed hope-the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and **to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.**

So here God's will is made very clear for us. What is God's will for your life Christian? It is here clear as a sunbeam, to be a pure and an upright people, a people eager to do what is good. It therefore goes without saying that we are to put off our former way of life. We are to put off all forms of sin in our lives. We are to forsake every act and deed in our life which is not consistent with Christ. This message is resounded throughout the New Testament, again and again. Paul goes on in Titus,

Titus 3:1-7 - 3:1 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, **to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, 2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.** 3 At one time ***we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.*** 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. NIV

Friends, we have been washed, we've been cleansed! We can no longer live in the filthiness of sin and unbelief. We must allow God to change us. We must allow Him to be Lord of every Kingdom in our heart, holding nothing back for ourselves, but giving it all to Him.

TURN TO EPESIANS 4:17

What is God's will for your life Christian? Again it is clear. We are to be sanctified, made holy and pure by His Spirit. We are to put off the old self and be renewed in our hearts and minds. Ephesians makes it crystal clear,

Eph 4:17-24 - 17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that **you must no longer live as the Gentiles do,** in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are

darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. 20 **You, however, did not come to know Christ that way.** 21 Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 **You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.** NIV

We have many sins that beset us. Many areas of our lives that we have yet to surrender to Him. But as Christians we must allow Christ to change us, that is if we have been changed! Paul goes on in Ephesians with very practical instruction about putting off the old self. Here he lays it out as with a bright light.

Eph 4:25- 25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. NIV

A Christian should live in integrity. He or she should never be found with a lie upon their lips. To lie is to deny God and to confess evil. It is to break the 9th commandment. Satan is the Father of lies, not God. God is truth, He cannot lie and neither should His children. Lying is the characteristic of those who follow the deceiver and their destiny is hell itself. Liars don't go to heaven!

Eph 4:26-28 - 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. NIV

What benefit does your anger give to anyone? It is of no profit, only harm. The harm of yourself and others around you. We are an angry generation, indeed we are kindling the wrath of God with all our anger. It will bring about no good thing, only destruction in the end. Christian, put off your anger! Deal with it! Come to Christ and allow Him to replace it with gentleness and patience. We must forsake it! Moms, Dads, wives, husbands, children, put off your anger! **Imagine what would happen if God responded like we do! The whole place and everyone in it would be toast!**

Eph 4:28 - 28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. NIV

The 8th commandment is in view here. Why should you take what does not belong to you? Instead you should share what is yours with those in need. Christians shouldn't steal, or cheat, or lie or deceive anyone in anyway. Can you see Jesus shoplifting His favorite pair of Levis? Or how about cheating on his taxes or his timecard at work? Not hardly. Rather He gave His entire life in sacrifice to others.

Eph 4:29-30 - 29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. NIV

You want to know what is in someone's heart? Listen to what comes out of their mouth. For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. In our speaking we should glorify God. If Jesus lives in our hearts, how can we curse and speak evil of others? If this is the characteristic of your life, maybe you should question the reality of your salvation?

What benefit does our speaking bring to others? The Sons of God speak peace. Kindness and grace should be upon their lips!

Eph 4:31-32 - 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. NIV

The crystal clear teaching of the bible is unmistakable. Here we are to forsake all these forms of evil and walk in forgiveness and love. If you have come to Christ in faith and repentance, you are to conform your life to His! We are to put aside sin and be holy, just as He is holy. We are to be like Him, as Paul goes on,

Eph 5:1-2 - 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. NIV

Live a life of love! What purpose and meaning in this. That we should live our lives to love others! God help us to be this people of love. The world is starving for a people who will love them. Look around, people are dying everywhere from a lack of love.

Prov 19:22 - 22 What a man desires is unfailing love; better to be poor than a liar. We Christians are to be a people of love, and kindness and truth. A people who have forsaken their sins, and live pure lives of righteousness and equity.

Eph 5:3-5 - 3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person-such a man is an idolater-has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Three times in the New Testament the bible says that those who indulge in sexual immorality will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is a repulsive sin before God. The fruit of the Spirit is self-control. Men if pump pornography into your mind, what do you suppose the result will be? The bite of such evil is venomous indeed! It will destroy! And what about this, foolish talk or coarse joking? Far too many Christians have never read this scripture, not to mention obey it. Foolish talk and coarse joking are out of place for Christians!

Friend, if your life is characterized by any of these things, you must take inventory of your heart. If you have been born again by the Spirit of God, you will not continue these patterns of sin. You must question the reality of your salvation. Can a good tree bear bad fruit? A life of continual sin is proof positive that we do not belong to Christ. A life of forgiveness and love is good evidence that we do.

Gal 5:22-24 -22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. NIV

Christians, God has given us an exceeding great power to overcome sin in our lives. We cannot do it in our own strength. We must rely upon God and His strength in order to do these things. Friends, we have been changed and He lives in us. Let us surrender to Him and allow Him to change us. Listen to Peter's testimony about us,

1 Peter 2:9-10 - 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. NIV

Royal priests, a holy nation. That's us! A people belonging to God Himself. We are His people. No longer in darkness, we are in the wonderful light! So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Let your life glorify God in all you do! His praise shall continually be in our mouth! We have a purpose friends! We have meaning! We serve the Master! Don't grow weary, take courage friends, we stand in His strength!