

‘What makes you think these kids are all mine?’ (7)

The last time we were together we saw from **1 Peter 1:13** that we have the responsibility to fine tune and strengthen our hope and set it fully upon the grace that we are to receive when Jesus comes again. And today Peter is going to remind us of another responsibility we have as Christians and that is to conduct ourselves as obedient children.

A woman drove a mini-van filled with a dozen screaming kids through the supermarket parking lot, looking for a space. Obviously frazzled, she coasted through a stop sign. "Hey, lady, did you forget how to stop?" yelled an irate man. She rolled down her window and said, "What makes you think these kids are all mine?"

In a world which has many disobedient children living in it and which we're quick to point our fingers at today, I'm wondering what God thinks of us as His children. I wonder if God sits on His throne when Satan is pointing out our behaviour as Christians if He ever thinks to Himself, 'what makes you think these kids are all mine.'

Now I understand there are a few people who don't like the word **obedience** but this is a subject which is stressed time and time again throughout the Bible. **Hebrews 5:9** "When he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him."

2 Thessalonians 1:8 says that He is coming "with a flaming fire, to punish those who reject God and who do not obey the Good News about our Lord Jesus". So the Bible has a lot to say on the subject of obedience but we're going to try and answer the question, **in what way are we to be obedient?**

Well if we're to live properly as God's children we need to know that there terms and conditions implied for us to continue to live as His children. In other words we are going to learn about some 'thou shalt nots' and 'thou shalt.' Things which we shouldn't be doing and things which we should be doing.

1 Peter 1:14 "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former lusts." Peter says here is the first thing you shouldn't be doing, **don't conform to former lusts**. Although the **KJV** uses the word 'fashion' other translations uses the word 'conform' which is an interesting word, it basically means to conform oneself to another's pattern.

When Peter uses the phrase "former lusts" he is referring to those evil desires and behaviour in which we once engaged, and in which the world continues to engage. But what Peter is telling us loved ones is; "Don't act like you once did, or like those still in the world." Do not adopt their sinful habits, mannerisms, dress, and speech, which you did before you became Christians.

In other words, if we were into the habit of going out nightclubbing and getting drunk every weekend like some non-Christians do then we need to find another habit. If we get upset with someone and get angry and showed them the 'V' sign like some non-Christians do then we should find another way to express our anger. If you dressed in really short skirts and low cut tops where your breasts are hanging out like some non-Christians do then you shouldn't be dressing like that anymore.

If we go on **Facebook** or **MSN** and use all sorts of filthy language like some non-Christians do then we need to replace our speech with wholesome talk and watch the company we keep. In other words anything ungodly, which we were involved in the past needs to stay in the past. These are things we simply shouldn't be involved in today as Christian. We need to remember that Christians are not to be "conformists", but true "non-conformists", or as the Bible calls us "Transformists."

Romans 12:1+2 "So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God---what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect".

Loved ones, when an individual or a congregation has the attitude of compromise in regard to spiritual values and truths, dark days are ahead. All who strive to be Christians feel a certain amount of pressure from the world. But you need to know that through the strength that Christ gives, we can overcome the world and its temptations.

A man starting a fish business put out his sign that read, "Fresh Fish For Sale Today" and invited all to visit his place of business on opening day. Many came and congratulated him on his new business, but one suggested that he change

his sign. "Why the 'Today'? It is today." So he removed the "Today". Someone else said, "Why, 'For Sale'?" Everybody knows you have fish for sale--or else why the store?" The words "For Sale" came off the sign. Another said, "Why the word 'Fresh'? You are a man of integrity, that guarantees your fish to be fresh." "Fresh" came off the sign. Only one word was left, "Fish" and one complained about it. "I smelled your fish two streets away."

You see loved ones the individual or congregation that tries to satisfy everybody ends up pleasing nobody. If we start compromising, we will end up serving the devil. The man should have put up his sign and then stood by it. This is what we are to do in life, we are to accept God's will for our lives and stand on His promises.

You see the problem with "Conformists" is that they simply imitate others, sometimes claiming to do so only outwardly. But the "transformists" are those who have undergone a true change on the "inside." The "true transformists" are those who manifest the difference on the "outside." Do you understand what Peter is telling us this morning? He's telling us; if we are claiming to be obedient children of God then we need to live like it, we need to dress like it, we need to speak like we're children of God.

Now like I mentioned earlier that I know there is pressure to do what the world does especially for our children.

But doesn't it make you sick to the stomach to see on our television screens women who are all made up wearing short dresses, tight designer jeans and wonder bras and all the time they are advertising perfume? Doesn't it make you sick to the stomach to see on billboards men with six-packs who are only wearing shorts and all the time they are advertising after-shave? Do you know why they advertise like that? Well not only are they appealing for you to buy their product but they are appealing to your fleshly desires.

Magazines and papers are filled with people either half dressed or wearing the most expensive clothes money can buy. And people are looking and thinking 'yes, I will buy that top and I will look just like Victoria Beckham.' 'I will buy that mobile phone and be as cool as Brad Pitt.' Listen loved ones, save your money and don't by into this fleshly culture we're living in.

Ladies save your money and don't by into the culture which says you will only look gorgeous unless you wear this short cut top and skin tight jeans. 1 Timothy 2:9+10 "I also want the women to be modest and sensible about their clothes and to dress properly; not with fancy hair styles or with gold ornaments or pearls or expensive dresses, but with good deeds, as is proper for women who claim to be religious".

A missionary went to Burma one time and after preaching a Karen woman offered herself for baptism. After the usual examination, the preacher inquired whether she would give up her ornaments for Christ. It was an unexpected blow. He explained the spirit of the Gospel, and appealed to her own consciousness of vanity. He then read to her the Apostle's prohibition, 1 Timothy 2:9. She looked again and again at her handsome necklace, and then, with an air of modest decision, took it off, saying, 'I love Christ more than this.'

Do you love Christ more than the twenty pairs of shoes you have in your wardrobe? Do you love Christ more than the car you drive to work everyday? Do you love Christ more than the home you live in?

What about our speech, do you love using suggestive language or filthy jokes more than you love Christ? Ephesians 4:29 "Let no filthy talk come out of your mouths, but only what is good for building up as the need may be. This way you will give grace to those who hear".

Has sexual sin, impure thoughts, or greed taken over your love for Christ? Ephesians 5:3+4 "Do not let sexual sin, impurity of any kind, or greed even be mentioned among you, as is proper for saints. Obscene, flippant, or vulgar talk is totally inappropriate. Instead, let there be thanksgiving."

The Bible says if you want something to fill your mind and think about, think about Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is fair, whatever is pure, whatever is acceptable, whatever is commendable, if there is anything of excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy-keep thinking about these things."

A London man recently found himself in trouble at work. He arrived one morning and began using language one of his female co-workers found offensive. She was so upset she filed sexual harassment charges against him, and he was

subsequently fired. He proved in court that all he was doing was quoting some of the dialogue from the previous night's episode of **Little Britain**.

Now that's interesting isn't it! Here is language so offensive as to get this man fired, but not so offensive as to keep some Christians from watching it and allowing their children to do so. Now I struggle with this with our kids, it's difficult to monitor absolutely everything they are watching and I'm probably just as guilty as anyone to some of the things I allow my children to watch.

But I'm wondering if some non-Christians in the world have figured out some things we Christians haven't figured out? Have we, as Christians, become so desensitised to sin that we fail to recognize inappropriate language when we hear it?

There are some things about which Christians should be ignorant. Paul says in **Romans 16:19** "I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil". The word Paul uses for "simple" means "pure, unmixed." In other words he wants us pure and unmixed with evil. He wants us to understand the good and be naive about evil. There are some things with which Christians just don't need to be familiar with, even if it means turning off the television.

Have you ever wondered why many Christians fall away? It's simple they are conforming to the world and its lusts. So it shouldn't be a surprise for us when we see Christians being entrapped by the world. Why do you think there is so much marital unfaithful and divorce in the world? Why do you think our prisons are overflowing with people?

We need to be careful Christian and listen to the advice of John and what he wrote in **1 John 2:15-17** "Stop loving the world and the things that are in the world. If anyone persists in loving the world, the Father's love is not in him. For everything that is in the world-the desire for fleshly gratification, the desire for possessions, and worldly arrogance-is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world and its desires are fading away, but the person who does God's will remains forever." So John and Peter remind us that there are certain things Christians shouldn't be involved with.

But it's not all negative there are some positives things we should be doing as Christians. **1 Peter 1:15+16** "Instead, be holy in all that you do, just as God who called you is holy. The scripture says, "Be holy because I am holy." Peter says as obedient children of God we need to be holy. Now the word "holy" is closely related to the words "sanctify" and "sanctification," which carry with them the idea of being set apart. In other words to be holy means to be set apart or dedicated to God.

But why? Why is holiness important? Well the first reason as to why holiness is important is given by Peter, he says, "For I (God) am holy." The God who has called us through His gospel is a holy God. He Himself is "set apart" from sin and wickedness and His very nature demands a similar holiness on our part.

Do people see God in you, your life, your speech and your dress? You see loved ones you cannot expect people to know that our God is a holy God if your life isn't reflecting His holinesses. **Hebrews 12:14** "Try to be at peace with everyone, and try to live a holy life, because no one will see the Lord without it".

So holiness is important because our God is a holy God but holiness is also important because Jesus died for that very purpose. **Ephesians 5:25-27** "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."

But I want you to notice something else here in **1 Peter 1:15+16** "Instead, be holy in all that you do, just as God who called you is holy. The scripture says, "Be holy because I am holy." Notice that Peter says 'be holy in ALL that you do.' Loved ones, holiness is not an option, it's a command. Holiness is not something we put on when it's convenient, like on Sundays. Our whole lives, our daily lives, our speech every single moment of every single day we're supposed to be set apart in service to the Lord.

Read **Romans 12:1** again, "So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer."

If we want to live holy lives in service to God then that means that every aspect of our life must be in harmony with God's demand for holiness. This includes our work, our speech, our dress, our recreation; **ALL** should be in harmony with the principles of God's Word. Even the most boring things, when done in keeping with God's will, will become a part of our holy service to God.

Now I don't know about you but I know there are areas of my life which can and need to be improved as a child of God. But just before we finish let me highlight one more thing we need to look at to understand what it means to be an obedient child of God.

Now I don't know about you but I was brought up fearing my father. If I did anything wrong all my mum would have to say is 'wait until your father gets home' and for the rest of the day I would be watching the clock absolutely terrified waiting for my father to arrive.

But why was that? Why was I afraid of my father? Well simply because my father was the authorities figure in our home, he was always the one who would hand out the punishment. In other words I knew that my father loved me and I really loved my father but I also was scared of him because he had the power to really punish me.

You see Jesus understood this principle and that's why He says in **Matthew 10:28** "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather be afraid of God, who can destroy both body and soul in hell". The apostle Paul understood this principle that's why he wrote in **Philippians 2:12** "So then, dear friends, as you always obeyed me when I was with you, it is even more important that you obey me now while I am away from you. Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation."

Peter himself understood this principle, he says first of all you should fear your heavenly Father because He is the one who is going to judge you. **1 Peter 1:17** "You call him Father, when you pray to God, who judges all people by the same standard, according to what each one has done; so then, spend the rest of your lives here on earth in reverence for him."

Peter says you need to know that God is not partial when it comes to judgement. He will judge us individually and personally according to what we have done. In other words there are not going to be any special favours, no one will escape His discerning eye.

And the second reason we should fear our heavenly Father is because of what it cost to redeem you. **1 Peter 1:18-21** "For you know what was paid to set you free from the worthless manner of life handed down by your ancestors. It was not something that can be destroyed, such as silver or gold; it was the costly sacrifice of Christ, who was like a lamb without defect or flaw. He had been chosen by God before the creation of the world and was revealed in these last days for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from death and gave him glory; and so your faith and hope are fixed on God".

I remember seeing a sign on a shop window which says, "Cheque Cashing Policy: To err is human. To forgive, £10." It's a funny way to recognize the fact that we make mistakes, but it's also evidence of the way many people think about forgiveness. To forgive is to accept within yourself the consequences of the sins of others. It means to accept the pain, the problems and the burden that comes when someone sins against you. Forgiveness is neither an easy nor a frequent gift.

What did God give for your forgiveness? Peter says it wasn't money or anything of wealth or value in worldly terms. He gave His Son. Jesus took upon Himself the burden of our sins. We were not redeemed from our sins with silver or gold but only by the precious blood of Christ.

After all Peter says He is the One who was without blemish and without spot. He was the one who was foreordained to die for our sins before the world began. He was the one who came to this earth for our sakes. He is the one by whom our faith and hope are in God.

And again I don't know about you but just knowing that God is going to judge me according to the things I've done and sent His Son to die in my place should bring home the reality of how importance obedience to God is. Yes my heavenly Father loves me, and yes I love my heavenly Father but I also fear my Father in heaven because He's the one who can also punish His disobedient children.

And Christian you need to know that any child of God, who doesn't conduct themselves in a manner appreciative of the price paid for his sins, can expect a fate worse than death if you don't repent. **Hebrews 10:26-31** "For there is no longer any sacrifice that will take away sins if we purposely go on sinning after the truth has been made known to us. Instead, all that is left is to wait in fear for the coming Judgment and the fierce fire which will destroy those who oppose God! Anyone who disobeys the Law of Moses is put to death without any mercy when judged guilty from the evidence of two or more witnesses. What, then, of those who despise the Son of God? Who treat as a cheap thing the blood of God's covenant which purified them from sin? Who insult the Spirit of grace? Just think how much worse is the punishment they will deserve! For we know who said, "I will take revenge, I will repay"; and who also said, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

So loved ones, if we truly claim to be God's children we mustn't conform ourselves to former lusts. We are to be holy in all our conduct and we are to conduct ourselves in fear. Paul said much the same thing when he was writing to the church at Corinth. **2 Corinthians 7:1** "All these promises are made to us, my dear friends. So then, let us purify ourselves from everything that makes body or soul unclean, and let us be completely holy by living in awe of God."

Loved ones being a good person doesn't make you a holy person. Giving generously to charity or voluntarily working with the homeless doesn't make you a holy person. Holiness is given by the redeeming grace of God. Forgiveness is given by the precious blood of Christ. And as Christians we can be strengthened by the power of His Spirit to live the sort of lives pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

Have you ever seen a baby and you think to yourself 'aw he looks just like his mother' and then a few years later, someone else meets them and they say 'aw he sounds just like his father' and then a few years later someone else meets them and says, 'aw you've got your mother's smile and your dad's baldness'.

You see loved ones if someone went up to our heavenly Father and asked, **are these your children?** And God asks, **'what makes you think these kids are all mine?'** We really want that person to say, I see You in them, I hear You in them, the fear they have of You, I feel in them, they are so obedient children, you must be so proud.

If you're not already a child of God this morning then please don't leave here today without asking how you can become one. If you're a Christian who is struggling to live a holy life for God and we can help and pray for you then please just ask someone today for help and prayers.