

**SO, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?****1 Peter 1:13 – 2:3****(Read 1 Peter 1:13 – 2:3)**

**INTRO:** I remember as I was approaching 40 years old – so you know I'm talking about ancient history here – I went through a mid-life crisis of sorts. I had what I thought was a heart attack (turned out it wasn't), I decided I needed to lose weight, and I shaved off my beard. You laugh, but it was cheaper than buying a red sports car.

I'd had a beard on and off and of over 20 years at that point and the one I had at that point had been there long enough that Emily, who was 4 or 5 at the time had never seen me bare faced. She was a little frightened. I never thought it would have made such a difference but it did. So much so that one of the girls on Sheila's soccer team that I coached saw me as I walked onto the field and said "*Wow, Keith! That makes you look 30 years younger!*" At that point I wanted look in a mirror and see what I looked like at 10 years old. Who would have thunk just shaving a beard would make such a difference?

As I continue this series Little Letters, BIG MESSAGE, and dig deeper into First Peter, something we see pretty quickly is that we need to be different from society in a lot of ways. Peter points out that we are called to be holy in an unholy world. The problem is all too often that we are indistinguishable from the rest of the world. We need to be different – not just to BE different, but because it's best and it what God desires for us. Two weeks ago I talked about being strangers in a strange land, and, in a way, this is a continuation of that vein. The point I want to make here today, is that we need to be different to make a difference. Barclay says, "There is laid on the Christian the task of being different." Here's why, and here's how. First . . .

**We've got to be ready**

- With the teaching we had last week from the verses leading up to our text, Peter says "Therefore" and flows in right away with the admonition to have minds that are prepared. To be unprepared mentally it to be completely unprepared. The KJV says *to gird up the loins of your mind*. What in the world does that mean? Well its a word picture of what the original language is telling us – something I saw when I was in India. And it would have been familiar to the people Peter is writing to. He is picturing workers in the field in their robes. In order to keep their robes from getting in the way of their work they would tie them up around their legs to better facilitate movement. The garment of the day was a robe – but to run in a robe, would have been constricting and would have inhibited progress. The idea today would be to roll up your sleeves and get down to work.
- What does it mean then, to prepare our minds – to have minds that alert and fully sober? It means we have to ready – we have to know what we believe. To have an unprepared mind is like having a flabby unprepared body and to attempt a marathon – we are destined to fail and fail miserably. To make a difference, we need to know what we believe and why. To make a difference, we need to be ready and steady. Not wavering.
- The other preparations we need to make a difference in this world is what we heard last week, and that's to realize that we need to set our hope on Christ as we go along the way in order carry us through those times of frustration and hardship that WILL come up. Without hope, as we saw last week, the world looks gloomy indeed. I was amazed as I watched the news this week how, the news kept getting worse. I mean can you imagine losing EVERYTHING like those poor people in California. Well if it ever does, we really need Jesus.
- In addition to being ready . . .

**We need to be holy**

- Jesus is our redeemer and Lord – he was holy, we need to be just like him, we are called to be holy too.
- Like Paul in Romans 12, Peter warns to never conform to the ways of the old life – the old ways we practiced while we were still in ignorance. (Tell how to plow a straight furrow – you pick out a point in the distance and keep your eyes on it) Living the Christ like requires keeping your eyes on him. You take your eyes away and things start going sideways.
- Not only was the old life described as ignorance, but it was driven by desire. One of the differences from the old life to the new is that we are less and less driven by lusts and more and more driven by love.
- Another picture of the old life is futility. Life without Christ is, in actuality, empty and pointless. In Ecclesiastes the writer repeatedly describes life without God and pursuing what the world chases after as



*vanity all vanity, a chasing after the wind.* (Share about my life without Christ) Life without Christ for me was hopeless – life without Christ IS hopeless.

- But it's good to remember . . .

### **Holiness shows that we are redeemed rather than better**

- In fact, it shows that we are sold out to Christ and his transforming power. We already saw that the believer is to be holy and obedient – the other two distinguishing characteristics are reverence and brotherly love.
- Reverence is really something that is different from society. In this cynical age irreverence is considered hilarious. Have you ever noticed that stand-up “comedians”, don’t actually seem very happy? Our world is becoming more and more joyless and part of it is a marked lack of reverence for **ANYTHING** – whether it be religion, marriage, relationships, family, or even life. What makes believers truly different, however, is the reverence we have for God and from that reverence comes a reverence for all of his creation – from our fellow human beings to nature.
- And that reverence helps us to love one another. Our text tells us to love one another deeply. And as we know from our study of the letters of John, we are to love all of humanity deeply. You see, when we fail to love, it shows we are not loving God. Love reflects God the Son. When we love we look just like him, so, if we are not loving – we have work to do. Which brings me to my final point from the beginning of chapter 2. . .

### **We need to be constantly growing and transforming ourselves in order to be tools for transformation in society**

- This isn’t something we do on our own – it is by the work of the Holy Spirit – but we must change – that’s how we become be tools for transformation in society.
- Barclay writes, “*No Christian can stay the way he is; and Peter urges his people to have done with evil things and to set their hearts on that which alone can nourish life.*” And he lists the kinds of things we are tempted to entertain, like malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander. It takes constant vigilance and work.
- I marvel at Fiona – she is constantly curious and in an eternal state of inquiry, investigation, and learning – that means she is ALWAYS on the move. When I think that she turned 7 months old yesterday and how far she has come in that short time, and how much she changes each day, I am simply amazed.
- We need to be the same. While we never arrive on this side of heaven – we need to constantly crave more of Christ like a baby craves nourishment and learning. That makes it fun. Pray for a holy curiosity to grow. That’s really different from a world that is stagnating.

**Conclusion:** So what’s the difference? You! Me! We are different. So be ready, be holy, be reverent, love deeply, and be growing and transforming by the work of the Holy Spirit. That is what is necessary to transform a lost and dying world, we need to stay that way. Amen.