



# Central Peninsula Church

Catalog No. 1270-4  
1 Peter 1:13-25  
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March 28, 2004

## The Marks of Alien Living

### SERIES: *A Guidebook for Aliens*

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Four weeks ago we started a series in the letter of 1 Peter that we're calling "A Guidebook for Aliens." And we've been focused in these weeks on what I would call the essentials of our faith. Peter has been reminding us of the foundational truths that we need in order to stand firm in the confusion and pressures of the world around us.

He's reminded us of who we truly are: We are chosen by God the Father. We are being sanctified, made whole by God the Spirit. We are forgiven and cleansed by the blood of God the Son. And He's reminded us of our true home and the hope of our inheritance that is secured in heaven for everyone who's trusted in Christ. Last week we were comforted to know that in the midst of the sorrow and grief of this world we have the inexpressible joy of knowing Jesus Christ. And in the midst of the trials that life can bring, we love Him, believe in Him, rejoice in Him, and receive from Him more of the fullness of our salvation. Yet while we remain here on earth we are resident aliens. We don't live by the same values, desire the same rewards, or aspire to the same goals that characterize the world.

Here's a modern version of the beatitudes that I think captures the mindset and world view of the culture that surrounds us:

*Blessed are the self made and the self sufficient, because they did it all by themselves.*

*Blessed are those who play it cool, because they avoid being hassled by life.*

*Blessed are those who demand their rights, because if they don't, someone else will.*

*Blessed are those who go for all the gusto, because you only go around once.*

*Blessed are those who show no mercy, because anyone dumb enough to get caught deserves it.*

*Blessed are those who have no rules, because after all, everyone should be able to do their own thing.*

*Blessed are those who intimidate others, because if you don't, someone else will grab your toys.*

*Blessed are those who despise what is good, because everyone knows that good guys finish last.*

That says it well, doesn't it? The values being expressed and embraced by our culture place the priority of self at the top of the list while God is being pressed more and more to the margins of both public and private life. Yet we are called to live and function and remain in this world without participating in its values and priorities. So then how do we live?

Sometimes it's funny the things that come to mind when you're meditating on scripture. This week I couldn't get this out of my head so I've got a trivia question for you this morning: See if you can identify the people in this picture. Is this: a) A Picture of Me and the worship team of 2020? b) A picture taken after last month's elder's retreat? c) A picture of

Jed Clampett and the Beverly Hillbillies?

Of course it's Jed and Jethro, Granny and Ellie Mae, the Beverly Hillbillies. For those who might not know, this was a popular TV show sometime in the early and mid 60's. And here's what made that show work, as dumb as it was: It depicted a family who refused to change. You could take hillbillies out of the hills, but you couldn't take the hills out of the hillbillies. Though they were surrounded by all the glitz and hype of Hollywood they remained unchanged, unimpressed and unswayed by their surroundings. They just continued to swim in the cement pond, cook vittles, and hunt varmints in the back yard. You see, they retained the distinctives of their values and their culture no matter what anyone thought and no matter what pressures were applied.

You and I as followers of Jesus have that same call upon our lives. We're called to live out the distinctives of our faith no matter what anyone around us thinks, and no matter what cultural, political, or personal pressures may be applied. But I need to be clear as we begin this morning. Living a distinctively Christian life in the world is not the stuff of Hollywood sitcoms. In many parts of the world, even today, the choice to live for Jesus could mean the loss of your career, your property, your family and even in some cases your life. Remember that's why Peter is writing to this alien people in Asia Minor. He writes to warn them of the hostilities and persecution that is coming and to encourage them to stand firm, to live out the distinctives of their faith in an increasingly hostile world.

This morning we're going to finish up our four week series in 1 Peter chapter one as we ask this question: What are the marks of our alien life? Another way of saying that is: What are the distinctives of our life in Christ that we are to live out while we remain in this world?

#### I. **Fix Your Hope**

Let's turn together this morning to 1 Peter chapter 1 starting with verse 13. "**Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**"

In verses 13-25, Peter uses four commands that describe four key characteristics of those who follow Jesus in this world. The first characteristic or distinctive that we find is here in verse 13. Peter says we are to be a people who have a fixed and focused hope. He says we are to fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. If you've been with us for the last few weeks you know this is our living hope, our heavenly inheritance. The confident and secure expectation that all those who belong to Christ will spend eternity in heaven with Him. And this grace that is to be brought to us is the completion of our salvation in Christ.

This is not a passive hope that twiddles its thumbs and

says "Boy, I can't wait to be with Jesus someday." No, this is to be an active, participatory, living hope. And as this hope is firmly fixed in front of us it energizes us and it orders and prioritizes the way we live.

When I was about five years old I was obsessed with a cowboy show called *The Maverick Brothers*. I saw every episode I could. I walked like the Mavericks, talked like the Mavericks. I carried a Maverick gun and wore a Maverick hat. And then it happened. I found out that if I sent in \$1.75 and three box tops of Kellogg's Corn Flakes to Battle Creek, Michigan I could get my very own Maverick belt. So I did. I broke the piggy bank, talked my mom into buying three boxes at once, cut off the tops and sent it all in. Then you know what I did? I fixed my hope on my Maverick belt. And it consumed me. I woke up thinking about it. I lived with a great sense of anticipation. Everyday I asked, when is the mail going to get here? I'd eagerly check the mail box every day until it came. My hope was fixed, it energized me; I couldn't wait for it to come. It brought order and priority to the way I lived each day. That's a fixed and living hope.

That's our first distinctive. We are to be a people who are characterized by a fixed hope. The confident hope that I will spend eternity in heaven with my Savior. We have a fixed hope that energizes, orders and prioritizes the way we live.

So how do we do that? With all of the distractions of this life, with all of the things that can capture our affections and cloud our focus, how do we keep our hope fixed completely on our heavenly home? Peter says we do two things; we gird our minds for action and we stay sober.

If you lived in Peter's day and you needed to take off in a hurry the first thing you'd do would be to wrap your robe up underneath yourself and between your legs and you'd tuck it into your belt. Then you were ready for action. Peter says we stay fixed on Him when our minds are alert and ready. The apostle Paul says in Eph. 6, **"having girded your loins with the truth."** It's truth that steadies us. It's truth that readies us and prepares us for action. We stay fixed on our hope by knowing the truth of God's word. It keeps our minds clear and focused so that our hope remains fixed particularly when the pressure is on and our world comes unglued.

My son's keyboard and piano instructor is a world renowned organist named Mark Thallendar. Last August he was on with the College Faculty in Maine. On a stormy night as he exited the highway his car hydroplaned, hit the barrier and threw him into oncoming traffic. He lost half his blood and his injured arm had to be amputated at the shoulder. Mark's now completing his doctorate in music at USC teaching a class at the community college and performing pieces that he and others have rearranged to be played with one hand and two feet. His is an amazing journey but his hope has stayed fixed because of God's Word in his life. Here's what he said: "The scripture verses I had memorized and the many hymns, those texts came back and encouraged me at the right time. You don't know how important Christian memory is in the time of adversity until it happens. All the stuff stored there pours out, giving strength and encouragement." Our hope stays fixed as we

absorb the Word of God.

And Peter tells us we keep our thinking clear by "staying sober." Any of you in recovery of course recognize how critical this is. You can work the steps and go to the meetings but if you give into the temptation to use, your judgment becomes clouded and your thinking is no longer clear. Peter is saying that if we give into the intoxicating things of this world, whether it's ambition, materialism, immorality, or self promotion; if we lose our spiritual sobriety, our judgment becomes clouded and our vision is no longer able to fix itself on Him. We fix our hope on Him as we read, study, ponder and sing the Word of God. And as we guard ourselves, staying spiritually sober in an intoxicating world.

Where is your hope fixed today? Is it a career path? The prospects of marriage? Maybe it's the hope of retirement. Have you fixed your hope on Social Security? This is a critical question. Because where your hope is fixed determines in large measure how you live, what priorities you embrace, what goals you give yourself to. As followers of Christ, aliens in this world, we are to fix our hope beyond this life to our eternity with Him. And this living hope is to order and prioritize the way we live today.

That's our first distinctive. We are to have a fixed and living hope. Peter commands that we are to be holy.

## II. Be Holy

**"As obedient children, do not be conformed again to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance. But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior; because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY'"** (1 Peter 1:14-16).

Our second command and the second mark of our alien life is this: "Be Holy yourselves in all you do." It's actually in the present tense and can be translated "Be becoming holy." In other words, pursue holiness in this life. Peter says this pursuit of holiness should touch all our behavior, affecting everything we do. The core idea of the word "holy" simply means to be different, to be set apart from the rest.

Peter expresses this negatively first. He tells us that we're not to go back to what he calls "the former lusts," the desires and appetites that characterized us when we lived in ignorance. We were once conformed or shaped by the desires, passions, and ambitions of the world. But now in relationship to God we're to be as obedient children. We're to be different, we're to be Holy. That may come as a shock to some of you this morning. Did you know that God wants you to pursue holiness in every aspect of life? In your actions, in your words, in your relationships. Did you know that the desire for holiness is to characterize your living at church, at work, at school, in your family, in your neighborhood and when no one is around?

This is not an easy word for us this morning. I know some of you are saying, now wait a minute, aren't I saved by grace? What about freedom and liberty in the Christian life? Yes grace. Amazing, abundant grace. Grace that flows from the Cross of Christ, grace that saves sinners just like you and me. Grace that is daily applied to our failure and weaknesses. How we desperately need a continual covering of grace! But the free grace of God is not a permission slip to live any way you want. God saves us by His grace in order to change us, to make us holy. The apostle Paul says in Gal. 5, **"For you were called to freedom brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh."**

In December *Newsweek* magazine did a piece on what life

is like now in Iraq. It tells of a young single man named Ali who spends \$1.50 for fifteen minutes with a woman. The article reports that "Ali sees the easy and inexpensive access to sexual favors as a big improvement over the days when Saddam Hussein was in power. The dictator strictly controlled vices such as prostitution, alcohol, and drugs. The fall of the regime gave rise to every kind of depravity. In addition to brothels, Iraqis have their choice of adult cinemas, where 70 cents buys an all-day ticket. Referring to all the newly available immoral activities, Ali grins and says, 'Now we have freedom.'" Folks, that's not freedom. That's bondage to the old way of life, to the flesh and to sin. God delivers us from that bondage in order to make us holy.

So the pursuit of holiness is to touch every aspect of our lives and the standard for holiness given here is God himself. Peter quotes from Leviticus 11, "**You shall be Holy, for I am holy.**" That was God's word to the people of Israel to set themselves apart from the unclean practices of the Canaanites with their sexual immorality, sorcery, and pagan idolatry. God wants us to reflect His character of holiness as we separate ourselves from the practices of the world. But we need to be careful here. Holiness cannot be reduced to a set of rules. And holiness does not come about by self effort or discipline, no matter how sincere we might be. Some people may seem upright but they're really just uptight. Trying hard to be model citizens with a self imposed righteousness, without the winsome joy of a loving God filling their hearts and lives. William James says, "Their faith exists as a dull habit." Some of us look for a way to escape the demands of holiness, others of us reduce holiness to a set of rules and then try too hard to keep them. But Holiness is a condition of the heart, affecting the whole of who we are." In his classic book *Rediscovering Holiness*, J.I. Packer writes, "Holiness is actually the true health of the person. Anything else is ugliness and deformity at character level, a malfunctioning of the individual, a crippled state of soul."

Holiness then is an inner reality that manifests itself in the way we live. It flows from the heart. To desire holiness is to long for the wholeness that comes as we: love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength. As we say Lord, search my heart, reveal my inner motives, place me in the refiners furnace; for I want holiness deep within. So we have a fixed and living hope, and we pursue the holiness of God in all we do. And Peter says we are to live in reverent fear.

### III. Live in Reverent Fear

**"And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God"** (1 Peter 1:17-21).

The third mark of our alien way of life is this: We are to conduct ourselves in fear during the time of our stay upon the earth. In other words, while you're passing through this life as aliens and wanderers, we're to live in reverent fear of a Holy God.

Now I know that there are some of you here this morning

who grew up in a context where authority was administered through harsh intimidation, physical force or even abuse. And those wounds are easily accessed today. There are also many of you who grew up with a view of God that was stern, demanding and swift to punish. So it's important to know that the fear that Peter talks about here is not a fear that's waiting for the the next blow. This is not a fear that drives us from God, but it's the reverential fear of a child who is drawn to the security and strength of a Father's care. In a healthy father/child relationship there is an appropriate and respectful fear that binds parent and child together in an atmosphere of protective love. This is a fear that values the boundaries and rules as expressions of the Father's care. You see, we fear God because we know we need His discipline and authority in our lives.

Ryan Dobson tells a true story of a young girl who was desperate for her father's parental care. He writes: "I know a beautiful teenage girl who wears the most revealing stuff you've ever seen. I went with a friend to pick her up one evening. Her dad was out watering the lawn. She came out in something so shocking I couldn't believe it. I said to my friend, 'She's not going out like that is she?' He nodded. 'Just watch.' She called to her father to tell him she was leaving. He looked right at her and said, 'Have a good time.' When we got to the mall this girl went straight into the bathroom and changed into modest clothes. 'Dude,' I said to my friend, 'what's going on?' And here's his answer-'She just wants him to tell her no, but he never does. Next time she'll probably come out nude and he won't even care.'"

I hope you hear that Mom and Dad. Our children want and need the protective care and boundaries of a parent's love. And so do we. In the midst of all the voices in our world today we need the clear and strong voice of a loving heavenly Father who says no, don't wear that. Don't go there. You're my beloved child, let me give you a passion for holiness. Let me fill your heart with the joy of holy living.

Peter reminds us that this Father of ours, the Father of mercy and grace, is also an impartial judge. With Him you could never say "Father liked you best." No, He's impartial. Literally that means that He doesn't judge according to one's face or appearance. He doesn't have one standard of holiness for pastors and missionaries and another standard for someone else. And He's not a pushover. He cannot be manipulated or conned. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, "**For God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.**" And Peter says our Father will judge according to each man's works.

Some suggest that the judgment in view here is the judgment seat of Christ that Paul speaks about. We know that we as believers in Christ, have been saved by grace and are secured by grace for all eternity. But at the judgment seat of Christ each of us will give an account of our works, and each will receive the appropriate reward. I appreciate how Warren Wiersbe describes this event. He says, "This is a 'family judgment,' the Father dealing with His beloved children...God will search into the motives for our ministry; He will examine our hearts." In 2 Cor. Paul says that which is done in the flesh will be burned away, only that which is of the Spirit will remain.

Peter may have this future judgment in view but we will also need to take into account the present discipline of a

loving Father. The author of Hebrews reminds us that “the Lord disciplines those whom He loves.” And “all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” Like obedient children we learn that discipline is making us holy.

Peter says we’re to live in reverent fear, knowing that we’ve been redeemed by the most costly thing of the universe—the precious blood of Jesus Christ—the spotless Lamb of God. We sing “I’ll never know how much it costs to see my sin upon that cross.” We’ll never know the full price of suffering and rejection that Jesus paid to redeem us. This redemption is something we respond to in gratitude and delight. But the cross should also cause us to live for Him in reverent fear and holy wonder, knowing that He died for your sins and mine. May we never presume upon the cost of our redemption in Christ. We are to conduct ourselves in reverent fear because our Father is an impartial judge who disciplines those he loves and because of the blood of Christ, the high cost of our redemption.

#### IV. Love One Another

And then finally, Peter says our alien life is to be characterized by our love for one another. **“Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and abiding word of God”** (1 Peter 1:22-25).

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her class of five and six year olds. After explaining the commandment to honor thy father and thy mother, she asked, “Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?” Without missing a beat, one little boy answered, “Thou shall not kill.” Well, that’s a start! But this text tells us how we are to treat our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to “fervently love one another from the heart.” We are to be a people who are characterized by an uncommon love and we should say supernatural love for one another. This love is not in our own strength but Peter reminds us that it flows from our new birth, our new life in Christ. The word “fervently” means to stretch yourself out. We’re to stretch ourselves in response to the need of our brothers and sisters. We’re to extend ourselves beyond what is comfortable.

Many other passages of scripture expand on the nature of this extended love. Romans 12 says we are to love one another without hypocrisy. We don’t say one thing to your face and another behind your back. We don’t play games with each other. We’re to be devoted to one another in brotherly love. This describes the kind of family affection that should characterize how we treat each other in the body of Christ. It says we’re to give preference to one another in honor. In other words, we’re to promote and honor the reputation of others instead of always trying to come out on top ourselves. We’re to share a genuine empathy and intimacy with one another so that we weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

We’re to associate with the lowly. That means we hang out with folks that don’t make front page news. We’re not to be so wise in our own estimation. We’re to be humble and teachable. We’re not to retaliate when wronged but we’re to overcome evil with good.

This is where the spiritual rubber meets the road for most of us. Because the crippled state of our souls is most exposed in relationship. It is in relationship with one another that we discover our deep need to be changed, to be made holy. To fervently love one another from the heart means that I’m forced to confront my greatest fears, my prejudices, my critical unforgiving spirit, my petty ambitions, my need to look better than the other guy. It exposes my desire for self promotion and self protection. It forces me to face how absorbed with me I really am. But this is God’s mandate on each of our lives. This isn’t an optional accessory. This is how we are to live. Jesus said, “By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Genuine, fervent, stretched out love is to characterize all those who follow Jesus Christ. So then we are to have a fixed and living hope that gives order and priority to the way we live. We are to pursue Holiness in all we do. As obedient children we’re to live in reverent fear of a Holy God. And we are to fervently love one another from the heart. Peter ends this section with a reminder that the living Word of God will remain forever. He says, **“For all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord abides forever. And this is the word which was preached to you.”**

My prayer this morning is that in all of these many words of mine you’ve heard God’s word to you. For some of you it’s been a reality check on your hope. The Lord is asking you, where have you fixed your hope, what orders and prioritizes your life today? Is it fixed on the hope of heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ or on some lesser and empty hope of this world? For some it’s a call to holiness. You’ve sensed the Lord touching some area or habit of unholiness in your life and you know you need to respond to Him today. The Father is inviting some of you to draw near to Him in reverent fear. As an obedient child you’re asking for His boundaries and discipline to guard you, to protect you, and to change you. And for all of us today we humbly ask, Lord, may CPC be known for its extraordinary love. May we learn to stretch out and fervently love one another from the heart.

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