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Cultured Olive Branches - To the Older Children (and Younger Adults) – (2 Pet 1:5-11) - A Redeemed Culture #16

Introduction – There is a time in life that begins, roughly, when you actually start listening to the sermon self-consciously thinking that the minister is not only preaching to your parents, but to you. And yet, with a sub-series like this on childrearing and marriage, it is tempting to think that I am not speaking to you. Oh, but I am. Today, I wish to do this all the more directly to you in your station in life. The body of Christ, each and every individual, is to strive in Christ to make their call and election sure. One of the things this means is that the faith your parents have raised you up in must become your faith as well. And what are you to do with this faith?

Make Your Election Sure (2 Pet 1:5-11) – “Diligence” is not what many people are known for, and those growing up in the church are often those who, for a variety of reasons, lack diligence in these things. It is a privilege to have the gift of assurance – it will take you far in your walk with God. But this jewel does not fall into the lap of the lazy soul. Give yourselves, Peter exhorts, to these things –

Faith – is the gift of God to receive and rest upon the finished work of Jesus Christ and upon Him alone for your salvation.

Virtue – is a wonderful gift of power, courage and valor, by which we grow in our willingness to stand in that righteousness.

Knowledge – is the gift of loving God with all of our minds, bringing every thought captive to Christ, and learning what acceptable worship before Him is.

Self-Control – the word means “holding himself in” and is the ability to hold control over one’s passions.

Perseverance – as we grow, we are granted one trial after another – that is God’s way of sanctification. The one who is persevering is one who is embracing these trials as God’s perfect medicine.

Godliness – reverence for God, and a lifestyle of active obedience that manifests that reverence.

Brotherly Kindness – people given to their families, and to the family of faith, with deference, care and concern – this too is the gift of God.

Love – treating others lawfully, from the heart.

He Who Lacks These Things (vv9-11) – Peter gives us grave warnings of the shortsightedness which is the result of lacking these things. To the young, it means that without these graces, you will make foolish and stupid decisions. When you forget that you have been forgiven (not in your head, but in your lifestyle), you have lost your assurance.

This is the Normal Christian Life (Ezek 37:25) – This list, this plan, this way, is not for the super-Christian. Because it is all of grace and because God has plans and promises for His people, we can rest assured that this is the normal pattern for His people, for their children, and for their grandchildren. The passages abound (Ps 102:28, Deut 7:9, Gen 17:7-9, Is 59:21, 65:23, Ps 103:17-18, Acts 2:37-39). But you must be careful here. You are tempted to hear the promise, but look at yourself, or your friends growing up in the church and think, “*these can’t possibly be for me or for them...*” But hear the Word and obey, believing God. Do you believe that your great, great grandchildren will be serving the Lord? This is the gift of faith.

Avoid the Sin of Self-Righteous Presumption – The assurance that is promised is no excuse for asking the hard questions. The hard questions show forth true verses false assurance. Who are you? 1 John 1:6-7 teach us that the faithful walk in the light, love the fellowship of the brothers and the blood of Christ. The presumptuous point to a commitment, but love the darkness anyhow. At the same time, the one who hears this Word and is convicted of their sin grows in their assurance, because they are growing in their awareness of their sin and sinfulness all the time and in all situations (1 John 1:8-10). We are saved by grace through faith, and Amen. But the same author who wrote that also wrote that he beats his body and makes it his slave, lest having preached to others he himself should be disqualified for the prize (1 Cor 9:27). The New Testament warns constantly of a real hell for church members. Do not rest on your church attendance. Do not rest on your Calvinistic beliefs. Rest on Jesus Christ, who has called you to lay down and die.

Avoid the Sin of Self-Righteous Introspection – Assurance comes from looking away from your heart and looking to Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of your faith. Why would you expect to look into yourself and find righteousness? The battle of the flesh and Spirit will never cease in this life. Too much introspection is frankly the sin of pride, another sin to be confessed. Do not look to your pietism, your moralism, your do-goodness for your salvation. It cannot be found there because you will fail yourself – guaranteed. That is why we come to the Word, to the Table, to the gift of prayer and fellowship, to receive Christ and all that He has for us. This is grace to you.

What A Robust Redeemed Culture Requires – Answer: Generations; lots of generations. And so God has a plan and it includes you, little ones. It includes you, young people. It includes you middle-aged folk. It includes you gray-heads. You have been called to a life of faith and you have been called to believe His promises for you and for your family, even your future family, walking in the fear of God – a fear that produces great joy.

(Eccl 12:13) – God is building the new Temple, the new creation is budding. A vibrant, joyful, life of adventure and vanity, enjoyment of the mundane, and at the same time a life of profound, eternal significance awaits each of us in the kingdom of God. But it all rests here – *fear God and keep His commandments*, (and as the scripture says elsewhere), *for this is your life*.

Children of believing parents – you have been chosen. It's not because you are special or your parents are special. It is because God is at work, His Spirit is at work, and the low-hanging fruit is all around. Walk in the fullness of His joy over you.

Dave Hatcher – August 21, 2005