



1 PETER – Living Out Our Identity in Christ Amidst a Challenging World

Mile Marker 4 ... “A ‘Peculiar People’ Living a ‘Peculiar Life’ – CONDUCT That Says ‘NO!’”

1 Peter 1:13-17; 2:11-12 and 4:2ff

Introductory Reflection

We move from Mile Marker 3 and the theme of IDENTITY to a focus on **CONDUCT** in this one (and the next two as well). Unfortunately, our conduct can sometimes be less than intentional – it’s just what we might naturally do in a given situation. Ideally though, we recognize the importance of carrying ourselves in a certain kind of way when it comes to our actions, behaviors, etc.

When it comes to your CONDUCT, what are some of the primary shapers – both positively and negatively – of the way you go about your life (both in reality and what your ideal would be)?

Think about some ways in your life experience where your belonging to a certain group (e.g. a specific company, a sports team, a community group, even a family, etc.) required a certain kind of CONDUCT from you.

A Reminder about Our Approach through the Rest of 1 Peter

For this broader portion of our look at 1 Peter, we’re looking at this letter according to themes. It might be more typical of a Bible study to just tackle the text in major chunks. However, since there are a limited number of sessions, we are taking a more thematic approach. Specifically, two major themes (inter-related ones) are serving as our main areas of focus.

THEME #1 Our IDENTITY in Christ (Mile Marker 3)

THEME #2 Our CONDUCT as Christ’s people living in this world (the rest of the way)

**Here’s the link between the two: because of our IDENTITY in Christ – what should be the most foundational part of who we are!! – we live the life we do in the midst of this world!
We are a *peculiar people* living a *peculiar life*!**

In Mile Marker 4 specifically, we're going to introduce this basic theme of CONDUCT in 1 Peter. As with the IDENTITY theme, there is value on reading through 1 Peter "inductively" in regard to this CONDUCT theme (*i.e.* simply reading the text to notice a particular theme). **Again, if you are an overachiever, you might find it good to do just that😊!**

Some Preliminary Observations about Our Conduct in Christ

Before we dig-in to the material from 1 Peter, though, let's make a few preliminary observations. These are important to take note of as we consider this theme in God's Word. ***While there is not space provided for much reflection, somehow mark the ones that you particularly need to keep in mind when it comes to your CONDUCT as one who is in Christ.***

1. **An Important GRACE NOTE: *especially in Christ* (but even for the OT people of God!), it's not about how we are to live in order to *earn* our standing, but CONDUCT that reflects whom God has graciously *already* made us to be.** Remember the way Peter emphasizes what God has done for us in Christ especially in chapter 1 (see 1:3ff and 1:18ff). When we are walking in the way of grace, our conduct flows out of that identity.
2. **Our CONDUCT is part of an appropriate expression of our worship – our inside-out, heartfelt response to what God has done for us.** It's what Paul captures in Romans 12:1 ... in response to the marvelous reality of what God has done for us in Christ, we offer our bodies/whole selves as *living sacrifices* (it's clear worship language!).
3. **The CONDUCT of those who belong to God matters a great deal to Him!** We simply cannot read the pages of God's Word and walk away thinking God is ambivalent towards the way those whom He calls His own go about their lives. For examples of NT texts that emphasize this, see Ephesians 4:1, 17-32; Philippians 1:27 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.
4. **And yet, a CAUTION: when it comes to our CONDUCT, we must avoid creating a rigid list of rules and regulations especially ones that go beyond God's instructions.** This is a recipe for Pharisaical legalism. We do well to strive for the right kind of conduct in our lives. However, there are significant spiritual dangers when we turn our lives of faith into a mere external keeping of a list of do's and don'ts.

The General Importance of Our Conduct according to 1 Peter

It does not take long within the text of 1 Peter for us to arrive at this basic emphasis. In fact, after the celebration of our hope in 1:3-12, Peter launches right into this theme. Actually, the entire rest of the letter is going to have something to say about our CONDUCT based on our identity in Christ. While many passages in 1 Peter speak to this theme, there are two specific texts that would be good for us to see on more of a broad level – 1 Peter 1:13-17 and 2:11-12.

READ 1 Peter 1:13-17 (ESV)

¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." ¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ...

READ 1 Peter 2:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Find a way to mark all the CONDUCT-related language in these texts.

Within 1 Peter, there is a Greek word family that emphasizes this theme of CONDUCT (it's used specifically in both 1:15 and 17 as well as 2:12 – see the underlined words from the ESV; it's also used in 1:18 to describe their former “empty way of life”). It's the same word family used elsewhere in the NT to capture a basic way of life. Paul instructs believers to “throw off” your old self including your former “way of life” (Ephesians 4:22, NLT). He also commands Timothy as a young man in ministry to “set an example” for others in various ways, including the general “in the way you live” (1 Timothy 4:12, NLT). Broadly speaking, it's about our basic actions, behaviors, manner of life, etc. Of course, practically-speaking, there are all kinds of specific expressions of such things.

Within such a broad category, what specific expressions do you think of when it comes to this idea of our CONDUCT?

Peter does not just recognize there *is* a basic conduct by which we live; more directly, he reminds us that there is an appropriate way for us to live as those who are in Christ! Here are a few items to recognize about this theme of **proper CONDUCT** as those who are in Christ:

- **It requires a sense of alertness in the way we go about our lives (1:13).** After all, it's so much more than just going with the flow or doing what may come easiest/most naturally.
- **It flows out of our HOPE for what is beyond this life (1:3ff and 13).** We do not live as others who see merely this temporal, here-and-now world. Rather, we see the realities of heaven and live accordingly (see Colossians 3:1ff).
- **It also flows out of our IDENTITY in Christ (see 1:14 and v. 17; think also of 1:1 and the way Peter labels his audience and 2:11-12).** Think of the themes from Mile Marker 3. Because we are God's ransomed/redeemed, we no longer live according to our previous empty way of life. Because we are God's elect/chosen, we reflect His nature and character as His people. Because we are God's strange/peculiar people, our lives practically demonstrate this reality that we do not truly belong here (see especially 2:11-12!).
- **It involves both a REJECTION of that which is wrong (see 1:14; 2:11 and 4:2-4) and an EMBRACE of that which is good and honorable (2:12 + much of the rest of the letter!).** In other words, there is a more NEGATIVE element to this peculiar life we live in Christ (what we must say “NO!” to in Christ) and a more POSITIVE/AFFIRMATIVE element (what we must say “YES!” to in Christ). More on that former theme below and then the latter theme in Mile Markers 5 and 6.

- **It is what God’s Word means with the idea of being “holy” as God is holy – living a life that is fundamentally DIFFERENT (even PECULIARLY so!) ... both in contrast to how we used to live (see 1:14; 2:11 and 4:2-4; see also Ephesians 4:17-32 and Colossians 3:5-17) and to how unbelievers around us still live (4:2-4 again).** It’s a *life* that is set apart just as God is and even consecrated to Him! In 1:16, Peter includes words pulled from the OT Law in Leviticus 11:44-45. Part of being God’s chosen people – those graciously part of His covenant community – meant reflecting His character while surrounded by pagans and their practices. While the specific expressions of our context may be different than they were in the OT Law, let us not make the mistake of assuming this basic principle has been abandoned! We too are God’s graciously chosen people, those who are part of *His* covenant community even; we must accordingly live holy lives!
- **It is all-inclusive – see “in ALL your conduct” from the end of 1:15.** This should broadly open the door in our thinking towards all kinds of very practical ways where this holiness should be manifested in our conduct.
- **It is part of how we should live in reverent fear of God as Judge.** There is at the end of this life, a day of accountability for our actions. That is a clear, consistent theme from God’s Word that integrates in Biblical theology even with being saved by God’s grace through our faith in what God has done for us!

One Specific Direction – Saying “NO!”

We do want to make sure we focus on the direction of what 1 Peter would teach us to *avoid* or say “NO!” to as part of this CONDUCT. It’s similar to the “TAKE OFF” language in Ephesians 4:17-24 and Colossians 3:5ff. Specifically, Peter is going to identify this kind of conduct three times using the language of “desires” or “passions.” They are those sinful “lusts” that are characteristic of our unredeemed flesh (sexual and beyond ... as opposed to God-given human desires that are properly expressed). Instead of simply allowing them to reign – after all, it’s only “natural!” – Peter instructs us to live differently. Here is what he writes more specifically (using the language from the ESV):

1:14 ... *it’s about not being “conformed to passions (desires) of your former ignorance”* – in Romans 12:2, Paul instructs us to “not be conformed to the pattern of this world.” In a similar way, Peter writes here that we should no longer be allowing the ignorance in which we used to live (before Christ) to shape and mold how we go about our lives. It means not allowing sinful, worldly passions to control us any longer now that we are in Christ (see Romans 6)!

2:12 ... *it’s about “abstaining from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul”* (see 1 Peter 5:7-8 for the one who is behind such attacks). Again, the picture is one of sinful worldly desires trying to master us, even waging war on us. We are to reject this!

4:2-4 ... *it’s living no longer for human passions – what the Gentiles do”* – there is to be this contrast with how we might have lived in the past and with how pagan unbelievers *still* live!

Concluding Thoughts and Application

As you reflect on this emphasis on our CONDUCT more generally and specifically what we are called to reject or avoid in Christ, what challenges you about your own life as a follower of Jesus?