

“Hope that Leads to Holiness” (part 2)

1 Peter 1:13-21

J.D. Greear tells the story about something he was told when living in Southeast Asia. There was an older man who told J.D. about an incident that took place when he was young. A group of Japanese fishermen, he said, had been found floating off one of the islands in the Pacific Ocean, clinging to the debris of their small, wrecked fishing vessel. When questioned, they claimed that ‘a cow had attacked them from heaven.’ The authorities assumed they were smugglers of some kind who had had their ship destroyed in an altercation, so they held them in prison pending further investigation.

One week later, a group of American servicemen rather sheepishly came forward and explained that they had been guiding their B-24 bomber down the airstrip of a small nearby island when a cow meandered across the runway. They thought, “Hey, free steak!” and loaded the cow into the bomb bay. After the plane took off, however, the cow began rampaging and kicking around the plane. They couldn’t calm it down, so they assumed it had mad cow disease or something. So they placed it over the bomb doors and pressed the little red button. You can probably figure out the rest of the story from there.

Some things sound too fantastic to be true. Maybe at first glance, what Peter tells us that we have in Jesus Christ, it may seem too fantastic to be true:

- new birth
- living hope
- eternal inheritance
- inexpressible joy

It all sounds too good to be true, but it is true! And in light of all that we have been given in Christ, Peter says that we are to live our lives with a mind that is made up and a hope that is fully set on Jesus Christ. In other words, we are to live as those who have been transformed. And even though it may sound too good to be true, you have already been given all the resources you need in order to do this.

We began looking at this section last week in our study of 1 Peter. He shows us the practical importance that our hope has in our lives as Christians. What we believe about salvation has bearing upon the way that we live and behave as Christians. Peter says that our hope leads us to the pursuit of personal holiness.

The issue addressed in this next section deals with our integrity in the midst of a corrupt culture. Peter answers the question, “How can I stay clean in such a corrupted world?” How can I live as a committed follower of Jesus Christ when the world around me seems to be ever so dark? In a violent world of school shootings and political chaos and unbridled lust, how now shall we live? He says that the answer is not isolation from the world, but insulation in our hearts. It is holy living in the midst of an unholy culture. He says that it is a matter of remembering ‘who’ we are, as well as ‘whose’ we are.

It is this ‘insulation’ from the world that Peter describes in this passage. He says that the answer is pursuing holiness in view of the hope that we have in Christ. According to what he writes, hope that leads to holiness involves at least three things: a life that is consecrated in hope, a heart that is conditioned by fear, and a mind that is consumed with glory. We looked at this first principle last week:

1. A life that is CONSECRATED in hope (1:13)

“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.”

Peter says that in light of all that’s true of our lives as those who have come to inherit the salvation blessing that he has already described, here is how we are to practically live. Because God has caused us to be born again to a living hope, we are to ‘fix’ our hope on God. It is an indicative-imperative pattern. Another way of saying it is that the indicative (what God has done for us in Christ) is always the basis for the imperative (how we should now live our lives). Our obedience to God as believers is always a loving response to what He has done in our lives.

I have been made holy in Christ, therefore I am to pursue holiness in Christ. Because I have a hope that relies on God, I must now set my hope fully on God. Peter tells us that a consecrated life is not something that happens by accident. Rather, holiness demands that you and I be proactive in our faith. Peter says that it demands:

- Intentionality in our thinking
- Responsibility for our actions
- Totality of our devotion

There is a way of living that becomes dull to the realities of our faith, one that has been numbed by the attractions of this world. When people are lulled into such a state of spiritual drowsiness, they lose sight of the glory of Christ at His appearing while focusing only on their present earthly struggles or desires.

(see Romans 13:11-14)

With minds that are prepared for action, we are to set our hope fully on the grace of God that will be given to us when Christ comes again. This is a life consecrated in hope.

2. A heart that is CONDITIONED by fear (1:14-17)

“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ 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.”

Peter says that the hope that leads to holiness involves a life that is consecrated in hope. He also says that it involves a heart that is conditioned by fear. Now I know what some of you are thinking. You hear me use that word ‘fear’ and you think, “I thought fear was a bad thing. The Bible says that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind!” Yes, all of that is true. However, it depends on the type of fear to which you refer.

The fear that Peter speaks of in verse 17 is the fear of God. Not fear in the sense of dread or anxiety, living in a terrified kind of way, but rather the fear of reverential awe.

Personal holiness corresponds to your understanding of who God is. At the core of the issue is the fear of God in your life. He is not a God to be trifled with.

Our former life

14—As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance...

At first glance, this might sound somewhat insulting, as if Peter were referring to them as ignorant little children. Yet that is not what he saying. They are ‘obedient children’ who have been born again to new life. They have been given a new spiritual nature in Christ. Formerly, they lived out their days in spiritual ignorance and blindness.

1 Thessalonians 4:5—“not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.”

Acts 17:30—“The times of ignorance God overlooked,”

Ephesians 4:17-18—“Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.”

Peter is saying to them, “Now that you have been born again, don’t go back to your former way of living.” It is a reference to their life “B.C.” or before they met Christ.

Every believer has a testimony. Sometimes, we struggle to share our testimony because ours may not sound as sensational or interesting as someone else’s. But every Christian has a story to tell. Your testimony involves:

- Your life before you met Christ
- How you met Christ
- Your life since you’ve met Christ

Before they met Christ, Peter’s readers were characterized by spiritual ignorance. They were lost and undone, without God and without hope in the

world. But now, they are obedient children with hearts aflame with the love of God.

Our Father's character

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.’

Instead of caving in to the passions of former ignorance, Peter calls on these believers to be holy. They are to live out in a practical sense what God has worked into them through the new birth. The God who had called them out of darkness and into His marvelous light is a holy God. Therefore, they were to be holy in all of their ‘conduct.’

“Conduct” — *refers to what a person says and does; refers to a person's total behavior and way of living*

As He who called you is holy, so you be holy in all you do.

The basis for holy living is the character of God. He is a holy God. In fact, holiness is the essence of who He is. All that He does is perfectly consistent with who He is.

The absolute holiness of God should be of great comfort and assurance to us. If God is perfectly holy, then we can be confident that His actions toward us are always perfect and just. We are often tempted to question God's actions and complain that He is unfair in His treatment of us. But it is impossible in the very nature of God that He should ever be unfair. Because He is holy, all His actions are holy. We must accept by faith the fact that God is holy, even when trying circumstances in our lives make it appear otherwise. To complain against God is in effect to deny His holiness and to say that He is not fair.

Our new birth has changed our identity. No longer are we slaves to sin. Instead, we are the sons and daughters of this holy God. Rather than conforming to our former way of living, now as sons and daughters, godly fear means that we live lives that are in keeping with our Father's holy character. As children of God, we bear the likeness of our Father.

The older we get, the more we take on the looks and ways of our parents. (This could be good or bad!)

Over time, as we mature in the Christian life, we develop a certain degree of Christ-like character. We grow in truthfulness, purity, and humility. But we do not always act consistently with our character. We tell a lie, or we think something we shouldn't think. Then we are disappointed with ourselves for these actions because they are inconsistent with our character. This never happens to God. He always acts consistently with His holy character. And it is this standard of holiness that God has called us to when He says, "You be holy, because I am holy."

Peter goes back to the Old Testament book of Leviticus to show how a holy God has holiness in mind for His people. This is important because it is the background that Peter has in mind that underlies everything he writes in his letter. As the people of God, we have been set apart by the Holy Spirit for His purposes.

1:3—“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood...”

That we are 'holy' means that we are set apart from the world to serve God. Before Israel would ever be a light that would bring blessing to the nations, Israel

must first be holy. This is the whole point of the book of Leviticus and all of its injunctions. God intended for Israel to be distinct from the surrounding nations, set apart for His agenda:

- their diet was different
- their clothing was different
- their ethics were different
- their relationships were different

They were set apart to reflect the character of God, and would thereby be a witness to the truth. They were a strange people. While the specific injunctions of the law have been fulfilled by Christ, the principle of separation still applies to the church today. We are to be separate and set apart for the glory of God, and are thereby a witness to the world around us. We are to live in such a way that we reflect the holy character of our Father to a decaying culture that doesn't know Him.

Juan Sanchez — *“Yet, while the Old Testament is still authoritative for us, we are no longer under the old covenant. So, our distinction is not reflected in what we eat or wear; it is not reflected in worship located in a central sanctuary where animal sacrifices occur repeatedly. For us, we are to obey everything Jesus commanded. That is how we display our identity as children of God, as covenant people.”*

Perhaps a good question to ask ourselves is this—Does my lifestyle reflect the character of my heavenly Father?

Am I increasingly taking on His character the longer that I am a Christian?

Our future judgment

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...

A heart that is conditioned by godly fear is in contrast to our former way of living, and it is in keeping with our Father's character. Notice that Peter says that it is also sensitive of future judgment.

God is an 'impartial' Judge. That word 'impartially' comes from a word that means face to face. The idea is that God doesn't judge merely on face value. He is not just interested in surface level morality. Rather, He is the One who examines and exposes the heart.

Peter reminds us that what we say and do in life matters.

The truth that God is our Father is intended to give us a sense of identity and acceptance. The truth that God is our Judge is intended to give us a sense of motivation.

I realize that not everyone has good memories of their father growing up. I am fortunate to have had a father who loved me and led me to Christ. He is my dad, and I respect him for who he is. That's healthy fear. When he was upset with me, all my dad would have to do to get my attention was simply look at me. It motivated me. I love my dad, and knew that my dad loved me, but I feared my dad with a healthy fear by which I was motivated to obey him.

Peter is saying that as those who hope in Christ, we are motivated to live in holy obedience to His commands. We anticipate a coming future time in which we will stand and give an account to God for the things done in the body.

This was Paul's motivation:

2 Corinthians 5:6-10—“Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to always please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

The hope that leads to holiness involves a heart that is conditioned by fear. It means we understand that the same God whom we call our Father is also the righteous Judge before whom every person will one day stand and give an account of his or her life. This is why we conduct ourselves with fear throughout the time of our ‘exile,’ that is, all throughout our quickly passing days in this life here on planet earth. We understand that judgment is coming.

When our faith is weak, our hope fades, and it is then that we are tempted to indulge our fleshly appetites. Which is why Peter next mentions what must occupy our minds.

3. A mind that is CONSUMED with glory (1:18-21)

“Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the 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.”

What Peter says in this paragraph is the supreme motive for personal holiness. He reminds these believers of the price of their salvation. ‘Knowing that you were ransomed.’

It echoes a similar passage:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20—“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

Holy living is a matter of a mind and heart that is consumed with the glory of God, one that is truly grateful for the price that has been paid for salvation. It means we understand:

What we’ve been saved from

18a—knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers...

The word ‘ransomed’ is an important word. It is a word that was used to describe the purchase and rescue of a slave. It calls to mind the redemption of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. All throughout their wilderness journeys, Moses constantly reminded the people that they had been slaves in Egypt. They needed to remember it.

In a similar way, Peter wants believers to understand that we have been saved from the tyranny of sin. We have been set free from sin’s dominion.

“Futile” — *translates a word that means frivolous or empty*

He is saying that we have been rescued from an empty way of life. No matter how much a person has or what kind of pleasure he or she strives to experience

in life, outside of Jesus Christ, it is all empty and meaningless. It serves no real greater purpose.

This is largely what Solomon writes about in Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes 1:14—“I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.”

Peter says that we have been ransomed from such a futile way of life, one that only seeks its next fix or its next high. Jesus saves us from such an empty way of living. How ironic that those who claim to be the most ‘free’ are in fact in shackles and chains. That is what we see around us every day—a lifestyle that promises to satisfy, to bring one happiness and pleasure. But it brings exactly the opposite.

It is a lifestyle that leads only to another hangover or a wrestling match with guilt. One high after another. One illicit sexual encounter after another. It is all so empty and shallow. It is a miserably way to live.

Peter says that Christ redeems us from such emptiness!

Who we've been saved by

18b—you were ransomed...not with perishable things such as silver or gold,

19—but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

20—He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you.

The price of our salvation is far more than that which could be measured by a gold standard. Believers have been bought with the ‘precious’ blood of Christ

Himself. He was a sinless and spotless Lamb who died in the place of guilty sinners. Were He not sinless, then He could not serve as a sufficient Substitute for sinners. But because He is the only spotless Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, it is therefore only by His precious blood that God's wrath is satisfied and sin can be atoned for.

Again, this hearkens back to Israel's exodus from Egypt. In Exodus 12, the Lord gave Moses instructions for the passover lamb. In order for them to be saved and spared the death of their firstborn, a lamb had to die in their place. The blood of that lamb had to be applied to the doorposts of their homes. On the night that God passed through the land in judgment, wherever the blood was applied the doorposts, God would pass over that home and go on to the next. The reason was that an innocent lamb had died in the place of sinners and its blood served as an effective atonement. It served as type and shadow of the salvation which is now ours in Jesus Christ. (note phrase 'for you')

We are motivated to live in holiness when we consider what we've been saved from, who we've been saved by, and then also:

What we've been saved for

21 – 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.

Through Christ we have come to know God, the very One who raised Christ from the dead and gave Him glory. The reason is so that our faith and our hope is always in God who raises the dead to life again.

We're saved from empty living and given fullness in Christ.

Such faith and hope is the fuel for our witness as believers. We have been saved and set apart for the purpose of bringing glory to God through active involvement in His mission of rescuing others from sin's grip.

This is the theme that Peter will take up in the next chapter.

1 Peter 2:9—“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

Jesus Christ has not purchased us with His own blood for the purposes of making us a bunch of spiritual recluses. Instead, He has ransomed us from the futile ways of living and has brought great purpose to our lives. We are to radiate as holy lights in a dark world. We are called to be His ambassadors. We are special agents who have been given a specific assignment in the world. We are to give our lives for the One who gave His life for us. Peter says, “Don't forget what you've been saved from, who you've been saved by, and what you've been saved for!”

Conclusion:

(illus. of “Something By Tolstoy”)

Have you been in Christ so long that you have forgotten what it was like to be without Him?

Remember ‘who’ you are and ‘whose’ you are. Remember where He brought you from, and what He bought you for. He has saved you for a holy purpose.

Don't you sense that you've been saved for far more than what you have settled for? With His own blood, Jesus Christ has purchased you for Himself. Why give your heart to things that cannot save or satisfy you?

Are you in possession of a hope that motivates you to live a life of holiness, a life of eternal significance? If not, then repent of your sins and ask Jesus Christ to save you today. He will! He will save, He will sanctify, and He will satisfy!