

LIVING IN HOLINESS

1 Peter 1:13-25

There are a lot of things we do in life that we regard as special things – things out of the ordinary. These special things range from events to relationships. We find ourselves behaving differently or even dressing differently for these special situations. For example, if you were to attend a wedding, then you would dress in different clothes than if you were working in the garden. The way we behave at a funeral is much different from the way we might behave at a New Year's Eve party. We recognize the special relationship with family and conduct ourselves differently with family members than with people we barely know. The recognition of special things extends even to the dishes and “silverware” we use in our homes. Many people have good “china” they use for special occasions. Even in attending church, we “dress up” for that since we recognize it as an event that is set apart from everyday things. Special clothes, special dishes, and special behavior are ways we have of setting special things apart from the ordinary.

The idea of designating something as special gets close to the idea of holiness. God had called the Israelites to be a people who were separated from the world's way of doing things. In other words, they were to be a holy people. The vessels that were used in the Temple were set apart for special use in the rituals and, therefore, were holy vessels. In the early days of the Church, they realized that God had literally called the Church out of the world for a special purpose. In that sense the Church is holy. The relationship that we have with God is a special relationship in that we have been adopted into the family of God by virtue of the New Birth and we have become a special people that are different from others in the world. In other words, Christians are holy people. Our holiness (or uniqueness) is by virtue of the fact that the Spirit of God now resides in us. As a consequence and because we have salvation, our lives should reflect the fact of this relationship as we experience the trials and tribulations of life.

Because God is Holy – 1:13-16

¹³Therefore, prepare 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. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, ¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; ¹⁶because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.” 1 Peter 1:13-16 (NASB95)

Peter used the metaphor of getting prepared to work in his call to action for the scattered saints. The original text used the words “gird up your loins” which is like our saying of “roll up your sleeves.” If people had a job to do, they usually needed to get the robe that they wore fixed so that it would not be in their way as they worked. To gird up the loins of one's mind was to develop a proper attitude toward the trials of life. If we know that the trials are helping us grow spiritually, then we can better cooperate with God as He works in us to transform us. The practical outworking of being free of the hindrances is a holy or separated life. We will find that we cannot live the way the unsaved live if we expect to be pleasing to God.

To accomplish what God wants to do in us takes time. We have instant coffee, instant potatoes, instant oatmeal, and we want instant maturity. Three out of four is not bad. We haven't discovered instant maturity for Christians even though some tend to think that being “born again” is all there is to the Christian life. Unless we were perfect before we were born of the Spirit, then we need to go through a transforming process to reshape our attitude and outlook. We have trained our minds to think a certain way and to interpret events in a certain way. Usually, this *certain way* is the “way of the world.” We tend to view everything as an isolated event and from a standpoint of how it affects us personally as an individual and what the present

impact is. We need to be viewing events from a broader perspective that includes others and how these things may be a part of historical and future trends.

It literally takes mental discipline to overcome the patterns of the way we think. In addition to the broader perspective, we need to discipline our thinking so that we interpret life in light of what is being revealed to us by Christ. This revelation is the basis of our hope and included the facts that we have been saved, that we are now children of God, that we have eternal life, that we will spend eternity in Heaven, that God is in charge, and that the trials of this life are part of the refining process that God is putting us through. (Note that most translations give us the idea that the revelation of Christ is associated with His return. Young's Literal Translations makes it clear that Peter is writing about the truths that are being brought [present tense] to us by what Christ reveals to us. This is a better picture of the sanctification process that should be occurring in each Christian as opposed to the idea that we will suddenly "get it" when Jesus comes back.)

We also need to have moral discipline. It is a mistake for us to hold on to the desires and passions of what the world wants since we are no longer a part of that system. We have been separated from it – set apart – made holy – and we are to become and behave as a member of a new heavenly order that is patterned after God Himself. God's primary attribute is holiness – He is a Holy God. He is set apart from evil and expects His people to be as He is.

The only way we can truly be pleasing to God is for Christ to live in and through us. Jesus lived a perfect life and did so among people. He is the example we are to follow and He is the goal to which we are being transformed. He was in the world but not of the world. The standard has not changed; we are still called to holiness.

Somehow some modern-day churches have ignored the idea of accountability. Jesus taught accountability in His parables and plainly stated that we would be accountable even for every idle word. It would do us well to live our lives with the idea that God will one day judge every man's works.

Because God is Judge – 1:17

¹⁷ If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*; 1 Peter 1:17 (NASB95)

We acknowledge the special relationship with God each time we refer to Him as Father. That relationship carries with it a responsibility based on "who we are" in this new relationship. Think about how we react to the news that a teenager was arrested for vandalism. This person had grown up in a family where the father had been in prison for various crimes, the mother had been arrested for public drunkenness and an older brother had been charged with selling illegal drugs. We might conclude that the child's behavior was aligned or in agreement with the family standards. On the other hand and at the opposite end of the spectrum, we who are part of the family of God should have behavior that reflects the family values of those who recognize God as their Father. This behavior has to be exemplary (above and beyond) what is considered acceptable by even the highest standards of humanistic morality.

A good example of a humanistic morality standard would be something akin to the Hippocratic Oath to which physicians are supposed to adhere and that is simply to "do no harm." Even that standard is very difficult to meet for those in the medical profession. When you consider that approximately 18 percent of those who are under the care of a physician will incur some harm, then we see the difficulty in avoiding errors or problems even when people have the best of intentions. For those in the family of God, most would argue that the higher standard to which we should project is to "love our neighbor as we love ourselves." However, we can no

longer be satisfied with that since Christ came along and raised the bar to an even higher level when He gave us a New Commandment in John 13:34 that we “love one another as Christ has loved us.”

Because of Our Redemption – 1:18-21

¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ*. ²⁰ For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 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. 1 Peter 1:18-21 (NASB95)

If we were to be asked why we do certain things, we might relate the reason to some concept like responsibility. In the case of holy living related to salvation we see responsibility growing out of a realization that we have been redeemed (set free) and we now have responsibility that comes with privilege. Knowing and acting on the various responsibilities that are associated with the various privileges we have is part of the idea of accountability. A general statement of this accountability is “unto whom much is given, much is required.”

In addition to God (the Judge) being our Father and the fact of our being set free, we find a third reason of responsibility for holy living and that is the high cost of our salvation. It is not a trivial thing that God has done for us in Jesus Christ. God Himself came to us in human flesh and lived among us and died for us as a perfect sacrifice for our sinfulness. This fact alone should create such awe in us that we would be moved to live lives worthy of such outpoured love.

It is difficult for us to comprehend the eternal nature of God in that He knows the end from the beginning. His plan to redeem mankind was preplanned before the world began; however, it did not take place until the right time in time. God did it in such a way that we could know Him more perfectly and that we would be able to place our trust in Him based on the hope that is inspired by the resurrection and glorification of Jesus.

Because of Our Purification – 1:22-25

²² 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, ²³ for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For, “ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, ²⁵ BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.” And this is the word which was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:22-25 (NASB95)

One of the things that sets Christians apart from the rest of the world is that Christians love each other as much as (even more than) themselves. This characteristic is Godlike in that it was such unselfish love that God demonstrated in Jesus Christ. Such love for others can happen only when there is purity of our motives. This virtue is not something that we can accomplish in our humanity but is a result of the power that the Holy Spirit brings into our lives.

This power is a consequence of having been born again as a result of believing the truth of the word of God. Paul tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. We can have confidence in the word because it is eternal even as God is eternal and God cannot lie. Therefore, we can trust in what He says. The nature of God is contrasted to the nature of man. His nature is incorruptible and can never die. It is eternal and not temporal. It is pure, holy and righteous and motivated by love. We are called to be as He is living holy lives that will bring glory to His name.

As we go through life there will be problems. This condition is common to all humanity. The response of Christians to suffering and trials in the world ought to be different from that of

the unsaved. The fires of life's trials are not there to hurt us but to refine us. However, we must hold on to our hope that at the end, this refining process will produce the desired end product and we will spend all eternity with God in unspeakable joy.