

Hope for Holiness

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Date: 12 May 2013

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[0 : 00] I want you guys to open up your copy of the Scriptures to 1 Peter. We're only going to look at a handful of verses, four verses this morning from chapter 1 of 1 Peter.

And so I want you to hang with me. We're still sort of in the middle of 1 Peter, in the middle of the first chapter of 1 Peter. And we're going to begin reading in verse 13 and read just down to verse 16.

So as you turn there, I'm going to ask you guys to stand and we'll read together. 1 Peter chapter 1 beginning in verse 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.

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.

Father, take your word by the power of the Holy Spirit. Open our eyes to see Christ in it. And open our hearts to be transformed by it.

[1 : 15] We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. There's one connection that I know all of us share when we come in here every Sunday.

Whether you're here every week or you're here occasionally, the fact that you're here this morning means that you share something in common with everybody else who's here and everybody who's not here. And that is that in the last seven days, since the last time that we came together for worship, you and I have both blown it several times.

I mean, we have, we failed. We have failed to be fully obedient to God's word. We have failed to honor Him in everything that we do. We have done probably more things than we can even count.

If you really began to think through every little thing and every big thing that you did throughout the week to fail to honor God, if you counted all those things up, you'd probably, you'd very quickly sort of lose count of all the things that we, that you've done.

I'd lose count of all the things that I've done in the last week. So, so we're, we're failures and losers. And so we have that in common. And that, that can be encouraging if you understand that you have it in common with everybody else.

[2 : 26] Whether it's you failed to, to, to, to guard yourself against, against impure sexual thoughts throughout the week because of a billboard that you drive past every day or, or someone you work with or because things are so easily available, just the click of a mouse away.

Or maybe it's that you failed this week to really control the things that you say. Maybe you said some really mean things to people that you actually do care about and that you love, but you just said mean things to them this week.

Maybe you blew up in traffic or, or who knows what sorts of things. I mean, there, the list would be so long of all the different kinds of things that we've done this week. But we have, we have failed to be the kind of people that we all want to be, which is why the instructions that we receive here in these four verses of 1 Peter chapter 1 are so crucial to us because they show us and will help us to see how we can live holy lives, how we can live lives that are pleasing to God, how we can live lives that line up with what He reveals about us and about Himself in His Word.

And so here's what we're going to do this morning. We're going to work our way backwards through this text. We're going to start in verse 16 and we're going to work backwards so that we can see how can we be the people that we want to be?

How can we be obedient, holy people before God? So take a look there. I want you to notice that in verses 15 and 16, there's a really simple command.

[4 : 01] In fact, in all four of these verses, there are only two direct commands. And we find one of them in verse 15. But as He who called you is holy, you also, here it is, be holy in all your conduct.

And then He quotes the Old Testament as if to bring in some additional support for this command. He says, Since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy.

Be holy, He says. Now, that's a term that often sort of gets thrown around without a whole lot of thought as to what it actually means. The word holy is not a complicated term in and of itself.

By itself, it refers to us being distinct and separate from the fallen sinful world around us. So anything that's in the Old Testament, anything that is associated with God and His ways, even the things that are used in the temple, even just utensils that are used for the lighting of fires, for sacrifices, those are called holy because they are set apart, they're taken aside, they are consecrated and set apart to be used in God's service.

And so holy has this sense of just separate and different and apart from a sinful fallen world, which automatically means that it also carries with it the idea of a kind of moral purity.

[5 : 27] A kind of behavior and conduct that is different from everything we see in the world around us.

Now, there are two kinds of ways that the New Testament often talks about holiness, specifically when it talks about our holiness. It may mean, in fact, not a holiness that we actually do, not a holiness that we perform.

It may mean a holiness, or oftentimes the word righteousness is used. It may mean a holiness or a righteousness that is given to us by God, that is counted as if we actually performed it.

It's counted as ours. And so over and over and over, the New Testament speaks of a righteousness that is credited to our account. It's accredited to us.

It's not anything that we do. It's not anything that we actually perform. It's nothing that we can look and say, I did these things, and by doing these things, I am a holy and righteous person.

[6 : 31] Oftentimes, this holiness language and righteousness language is used in a way to say, no, that's not the kind of righteousness or holiness that God has in mind at all. God has in mind rather a holiness that He gives to you, a holiness that has actually been performed, a righteousness that has been obtained by someone else, namely Jesus, who lived His entire life in perfect, full conformity to God's Word.

Never once did Jesus break one of God's commandments. Never once was He disobedient to His Father. Over and over, throughout His 30-some-odd years, perfect, full obedience.

And the Bible tells us that if we will put our faith in Christ and repent of our sins, that that perfect holiness and righteousness of Jesus is counted as ours.

So that through faith in Christ, on Judgment Day, when we stand before Christ, we don't stand before Him and say, well, here are all the good things I've done. We don't do that.

Instead, we stand before Him and say, here are all the good, perfect things that Jesus did, and I have trusted in Him, and so they are counted as mine.

[7 : 43] That's one sense in which holiness is spoken of in the New Testament. But here Peter means it in a more common way that we might think of. When Peter says, be holy, he means, do things that can be called holy or righteous.

Live in such a way that you are separate from and distinct from the world. Now, I say that for two reasons. Number one, because this is a command. Be holy. So He's expecting us to do something, not simply receive something.

He wants us to actually do something. Be holy. As He who called you is holy, so you also be holy. And then He says, in all your conduct. In other words, in all the things that you do, in the way that you behave, in the way that you talk, in everything that you do, in your conduct, be holy.

So this is not the holiness, this is not the righteousness that is given to us as a gift from God through faith in Christ. This is the kind of holiness that we are to perform.

And so you can look at your life and you can say, these things I've done are holy. These things that I've done are not holy, not righteous. And so you can look and see whether or not you've actually done this.

[9 : 01] Whether or not, in all your conduct, you have been holy and righteous and set apart before God. And we all know, as I said before, that we have not, on the whole, done that.

Over and over we fail. When He says, all your conduct, He means in everything that you do. This is not a, well, try your hardest and be good occasionally. This is, in everything that you do, be holy.

In every single thing that you do. And the whole point of this is so that we will, in fact, be different from the world around us.

In fact, this quotation that Peter refers to, be holy because I am holy, is found four times in the book of Leviticus. I want you to hold your spot in 1 Peter and turn over to Leviticus way towards the beginning of your Bible.

Leviticus, of course, is a book that is filled with all sorts of rules and regulations and laws. I mean, that's what it is. It's just law upon law upon law, rule upon rule, and very detailed, complicated rules about what the Jews were allowed to eat, what the people of Israel were allowed to wear, and things that they were able to do, things that they were not able to do, all these different rules that surrounded their lives.

[10 : 28] And in the middle of that, four times, he says, be holy. First time is in chapter 11. He says it twice in chapter 11 in verse 44, and then he says it in verse 45.

Verse 44, he says, after giving them a list of these very detailed commandments, he says, for, this is the reason you're supposed to obey all those commandments, for I am the Lord your God.

Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. For you shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground, for I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God.

You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. In other words, God's point is, I'm giving you these laws because I want you to look different from the people around you, and I want you to look differently from the people from which you came.

I just delivered you out of the land of Egypt. I brought you out of that land. It was a land filled with all sorts of false gods. It was a land filled with idolatry and all sorts of wickedness.

[11 : 31] And I'm giving you these rules so that you will not become like the people among whom you've lived for 400 years and so that you will not become like the people among whom you are going to live for the next several centuries.

I want you to be distinct, separate, and different, and so therefore I'm giving you these rules that you might be separate, holy, because I am a holy, separate God.

You can turn over just a few pages. We read this a moment ago as we were singing in chapter 19. It says something very similar. Verse 1, The Lord spoke to Moses saying, Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.

Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father and you shall keep my Sabbath. So that's a summary of the first little bit of part of the Ten Commandments. And then he says, I am the Lord your God. Do not turn to idols or do not make for yourselves any gods of cast metal.

I am the Lord your God. Obey these commands that I've given you because I am a holy God. Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.

[12 : 45] And then one more time in chapter 20. In chapter 20, he lists, he begins to talk about all the rules and laws again. Verse 22, You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my rules and do them, that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out.

And you shall not walk, listen, you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things and therefore I detested them. But I've said to you, you shall inherit the land and I'll give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.

I am the Lord your God who has separated you from the peoples. You shall therefore be separate. You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean and the unclean bird from the clean.

You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or anything which crawls on the ground which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. You shall be holy to me for I, the Lord your God, am holy and have separated you from the peoples that you should be mine.

You hear it over and over? I have separated you. I have called you to be different from the nation from which you came and from the people that I'm driving out of you in the land to where I'm sending you.

[14 : 02] You are to be different from them and although you and I are not subject to all the same rules and regulations of the people who lived under the old covenant, we're not subject to all the food laws.

Jesus declared all foods clean. We don't have to follow all the rules and regulations of the temple and the sacrificial system because we don't need that anymore because Jesus, the ultimate, final sacrifice has been offered.

We're not subject to all the rules and regulations of the Old Testament of the book of Leviticus and yet the same basic calling is still ours to be separate and different and distinct in all of our conduct from the world that surrounds us.

Now, my primary concern when I come to preach here is not to enter every week for 30 or 40 minutes into the culture wars and try to fight a little mini battle and try to charge you up to go out into the world and make things right in the world and take all the stands that you ought to take in the world.

I want you to be engaged in cultural battles. I want you to be engaged in ideological battles out in the world but my task as a preacher of God's word is not to fire you up for culture wars.

- [15 : 24] My task is to reveal God to you as he shows himself in his word and to motivate you to become the people that he wants you to be. That has very little to do with the culture wars but it will in fact result in you looking very differently from the culture that surrounds us.

In fact, I think that we invest so much energy into pointing out all the things in the world that we don't like and that are wrong and that we would like to get rid of that we don't spend enough time looking to ourselves, consecrating ourselves, pursuing holiness.

A holiness which by the way is the only means by which the culture around us will be transformed. It will not be transformed primarily by all of our programs and our rallies.

It will be transformed by believers in Christ living holy lives in the midst of unholy people. That's the way it will happen.

And yet, we find that a difficult task. And there are two ways that we can approach this. How can, I mean, how? How can we pursue this?

- [16 : 44] How can we do this? How can we be holy? How can we be separate and distinct and morally incorruptible? How can we be that sort of person?

We could attempt to pursue holiness the way that the people under the Old Covenant pursued holiness. We could have a list. Here are all the things that you ought to do over here and here are all the things that you ought not to do over here.

And we could invest time and energy making sure that we don't do any of these things and that we do all of these things. But that's a recipe for failure.

It's not only a recipe for failure, it's a recipe for frustration and burnout as you realize you don't have within you what it takes to obey all the rules.

In fact, Peter alludes to that. He tells us in verse 14, he says, As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.

- [17 : 49] That word passion simply means desires. So there are desires within us, desires that were ours before we came to Christ and are not immediately all eradicated once we've come to trust in Christ.

There are desires that are there that would prevent us from being holy. That will keep us from being able to check off everything on the list of morals and rules and regulations that we want to hold to.

It will prevent us from being able to do those things. There are these desires. They belong to our old pre-Christian life and yet they do not immediately go away.

You all know that from experience. You know that many times a person who becomes a Christian, many things about them change. Attitudes change.

Some desires change and yet there are deeply rooted within us still some old desires that keep bubbling up that keep coming back for things that we know we ought not to desire. They don't automatically go away.

- [18 : 56] And if you need biblical proof for that you can just turn over to Romans chapter 7 where the Apostle Paul himself, no less than Paul, talks about this wrestling with desires that hang on.

Sinful desires that do not immediately go away once you come to faith in Christ. So he says in Romans chapter 7 verse 15 he says, I do not understand my own actions for I do not do what I want but I do the very thing that I hate.

Now, if I do what I do not want I agree with the law that it's good and so it's no longer I who do it but sin that dwells in me. I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh for I have the desire to do what is right but not the ability to carry it out.

For I do not do the good that I want but the evil that I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now, if I do what I do not want it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells in me.

Those sinful desires that cling that hang on to you. And he concludes he says, So, I find it to be a law a principle that when I want to do right the evil lies close at hand.

[20 : 12] For I delight in the law of God in my inner being but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

It's all present tense. You see that? He's not talking about his past life. He's saying right now there's a battle going on inside of me and I want to obey God.

I want to live the kind of life that Peter here is commanding us to live wholly in all of our conduct. Paul says, I want to do that and yet I find within me other desires. I find within me another law other than the law of God that constantly pulls and drags me away into things that I don't want to do and yet there's a part of me buried down within and still desires it.

Those things that Peter calls the passions the desires of your of your former ignorance. And if you attempt to become a holy person in outward conduct by checking off the list these inward desires will rise up every time willpower, effort, rules those are not the ways to attain real practical holiness in life.

But Peter tells us that there is a way to do it. He hints at it here in verses 14 through 16. He tells us as obedient children.

[21 : 53] So he tells us first of all that this is something that's only possible for those who are children of God. This is not something that's possible for non-believers.

We become the children of God when we are born again into his family. He speaks about that in verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again.

Only those who have been born again only those who have been adopted into God's family only those who are his children have even the slightest bit of hope of being able to become holy people in all of our conduct.

And so that's the clue number one. You must be an authentic genuine child of God. You must have faith in Christ you must have his righteousness counted as yours as a gift before you can hope to ever produce any real righteousness in your life.

So it may be that you you've failed in these areas and that you look at your life and you see a wreck behind you just because you're not a child of God.

[23 : 07] Not for any other reason. Because you're not his. You've not been born again. You do not belong to him. It may be that that's the cause. And in that case we could stop right here and we could say here you go.

Step one. You must trust in Christ fully and finally. No more flirting with him. No more saying that you believe in him and yet not really trusting him with your whole heart and your life.

No more of that. Fully trust in him. Become a child of God by adoption through faith in Christ. Without that this quest for practical holiness worked out in your life it's never going to happen for you.

And so first off we must we must be the children of God. We must be adopted through faith in Jesus and we must be born again into his family if we're to have any hope of righteousness.

And there's a very real reason for that. Because when Peter says that we have been born again he says we have been born again to a living hope. And we find that hope referred to in this passage again.

[24 : 18] In fact I said that there are two commandments in this passage. There's the command to be holy and then there's the command to hope. Take a look at verse 13 he says therefore preparing your minds for action and being sober minded here it is set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Set your hope on something. Set your hope on the grace that will be yours when Christ returns. What is that? Well he has described it for us. We are born again in verse 3 to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you.

So the secret to holiness is to fix your hope on the grace that is yours in the future. To set your eyes and all your believing and all your faith on the gift that is yours in the future.

The full inheritance that Christ has made available to you and the eternal life that he gives to you through his power over death in the resurrection. If you do not set your hope on those things if you do not fix your eyes on those things you will only see the immediate stresses and dangers around you and you will fail in your quest for holiness.

You will. This hope that he talks about it's not the kind of hope that we think of often. We say things like well I hope it's not going to rain again because water is still standing in my yard.

[25 : 52] I hope that I get this job. I hope that I pass this test. We speak of hope in terms of something that we want to happen and we're not sure if it will.

But that's not what is meant by the word hope here in 1 Peter. When Peter says set your hope and when he says you've been born again to a living hope he means that you have a solid certain foundation.

It's equivalent to faith in Paul's letters. It is the full firm trust we have in Christ that all that he's done for us and all that he has promised us will be ours.

There is no doubt. It's not contingent on anything outside of Christ. He has accomplished it. He has promised it. He will give it to us and the hope that we have is that certainty that knowing it is mine.

It's mine. He's given it to me. He's accomplished it. He's done all of it. And when Peter says set your hope fully on the grace that will be yours that's what he means. He doesn't mean hope that Jesus will save you in the end.

[27 : 03] He means know Jesus will save you in the end. It's going to happen. Set your hope on the grace given to you. But how do you do that? How do you in the midst of busyness how do you in the midst of a thousand distractions how can you in the present which is busy how can you in a busy present look toward the future that is yours?

That's what verse 13 is about. Verse 13 tells us how to go about looking toward that day. Take a look at it. He develops it logically.

He says 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. So going back the first thing that you have to do if you want to be able to look to the future is you have to be sober minded.

In other words your mind needs to be clear. You all know what it means to be when you're not sober. When you've had too much to drink you don't make good decisions.

You don't see things as they actually are. Everything is skewed. Everything is blurred and so you choose things and you go directions that if you were sober you would never go.

[28 : 23] Peter says in your thinking be sober. Be clear. Don't let other things fog up your vision. And here's how you do that.

Preparing your minds for action. Literally he says girding the loins of your mind. Now that sounds weird. But it makes a lot of sense in the first century because they all wore robes.

You all are familiar you've seen the pictures. They wore robes. And so if they wanted to get anywhere quickly or if they had to go on a journey it didn't make much sense to walk in your robe.

It was cumbersome. It would get in the way. And so they would take the bottom of their robe and they would pull it up and they would tie their belt around their waist and so it became more like a pair of pants or a pair of shorts. And that's what it meant to gird your loins.

It just meant to tie up the bottom of your robe so it didn't get in your way when you were trying to go somewhere. And so Peter uses that metaphor and he says gird up the loins of your mind. In other words he means clear your mind of all the distractions.

[29 : 27] Stop focusing on all the little things around you. Stop looking at everything that you have to do right before you. Stop looking at the list of demands. Stop looking at the list of do nots.

Stop looking at all of those things and stop being concerned with what your neighbor thinks about you and stop thinking about what happened yesterday and what your husband or your wife did yesterday and stop thinking about all the things that you have to do for your children constantly.

Let all of those encumbrances, all of those things that can tangle you and sidetrack you, clear your mind of those things. Set them aside so that you're clear headed and you're able to look ahead toward the future that is yours.

When you find yourself in a position where you are able to do that you will see that holiness begins to spill out of you. It spills out of you because we're not Israel.

We're not the Old Testament people of God who just had a list of rules to which they had to adhere. That's not who we are at all. We're the New Covenant people of God.

[30 : 41] And God says of His New Covenant people, I will write My law on their hearts. It's in us now. It's inside of us. And so we've got to let the law that God has written upon our hearts, we've got to let the law that He's put inside of us, the desires to be obedient to Him, we've got to let them take precedence and begin to flow out of us.

And the only way that we can do that is to clear all of the distractions and to remove all of the things that would pull us in different directions and look and focus on the hope that is to be ours.

Holiness is not to be had by self-determination. holiness is not to be had by the power of your own will.

It is not to be had by obedience to outward rules and regulations. Holiness is obtained when you fix your eyes on the one who is holy.

only then will you begin to see real transformation in your heart and in your life. And I would dare to say that there are probably several people here who cannot fix their eyes on the hope that is to be theirs because it's not theirs.

[32 : 10] Because you're not children. Because you've not been born again. And my encouragement to you is to stop.

Think. As Paul says, test yourself to see if you're in the faith. And know whether or not you have that hope.

And if you do not, now trust in Him. Put your faith in Him and begin to look toward that hope so that He might begin to work within you the holiness that He desires.

Let's pray. It's not a complicated thing, holiness. It's simple. We know that, Father.

You are a holy God, distinct and separate from all that You've made, too pure to look upon sin. And our desire is to be like You.

[33 : 16] Yet we find ourselves entangled, surrounded by desires and distractions that would pull us away from that.

So I pray that this morning and this afternoon would be a time for us to stop, clear the cobwebs of confusion and distraction and begin to think upon, meditate upon, set our hope upon the grace that is ours in Christ.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.