



1 Peter 1:13-16

You Have to Be Holy

13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;

15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

Holy – that's a word we use to describe God, it speaks of his sinlessness and perfection. In a God, holiness is so perfect, that even the angels cover their faces in his presence, and it is why men like Moses and Isaiah became terrified in His presence. It is why Peter, when he realized that Jesus was the Son of God, fell on his knees and cried out instinctively "***Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!***"

Holy is certainly not a word I think anyone would use to describe our society, I find increasingly that its not safe to turn on the news while the kids are in the car because all you hear about are generally a stream of the most awful acts of sinfulness. But while the level of sin in our society may be increasing of late, sin is nothing new is it? After all sin and rebellion against God are almost as old as the world, and certainly its not something you and I don't know about from personal experience.

Paul writing to the church in Ephesus, speaking of what God has done in saving them, summed it up this way: **Ephesians 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.** Not physically dead of course, but spiritually dead and in a state of hopeless rebellion against God. That was the state all Christians are in when they were physically born into the World and before they are brought to new life through the preaching of the Gospel by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Paul even tells Titus to remind Christians of that particular fact least we begin to get too big for our britches and begin treating those outside the church with contempt saying in Titus 3:3

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

But in salvation, it is God's purpose obviously to change us from the state of sinfulness we were once in to become holy, as He is holy, that is the objective that is set before us in 1 Peter 1:16 - that way heaven might be filled with the Spirits of ***just men made perfect*** as the author of Hebrews puts it.

The process by which that occurs is called sanctification, which means literally to become holy and the way that happens is that after we are born again, we grow. We grow more and more like Jesus Christ. The new Christian is like clay, and God the potter gradual molds after the image of His Son, shaping us, sometimes in ways that may initially even hurt, as parts that look nothing like Christ are flattened and reshaped. That says Paul is what God has determined to do in all the elect:

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Christians have long recognized that great need for holiness in their own lives, it is after all the mark of their being conformed to the image of Christ and that it is part of their preparation for heaven. One particular Christian minister who particularly understood the need for holiness was Robert Murray McCheyne, whom I'm going to take the liberty of quoting several times. Speaking of this need for Holiness, McCheyne preached to his own people:

I trust you feel real desire after complete holiness. This is the truest mark of being born again. It is a mark that He has made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. If a nobleman were to adopt a beggar boy, he would not only feed and clothe him, but educate him, and fit him to move in the sphere into which he was afterwards to be brought; and if you saw this boy filled with a noble spirit, you would say he is meet to be put among the children. So may you be made meet for glory. The farmer does not cut down his corn till it is ripe. So does the Lord Jesus: He first ripens the soul, then gathers it into His barn.

Peter knew, as a matter of fact, that the process of becoming Holy, while it is difficult was essential for Christians as they made their way through the world in their pilgrimage to heaven. And that is why he is going to recommend it repeatedly in his letter and give us practical advice here on how to be holy.

The first thing he says is that you must gird up the loins of your mind. To gird up the loins was to arrange your clothing in a way that would prepare you for travel and work. Back then they tended to wear long flowing robes and you needed to make sure that none of your clothing would trip you up or entangle you before you did anything vigorous. Today we might say "get your kit together" and "tie your shoes."

Part of what Peter is saying is that we need to have holy thinking before we can have holy acting. That is quite a transformation from the Peter of the gospels who was always acting, before he thought, and being rebuked for it. So what should we be doing to gird up our minds? Well first we need to be filling them up preparing them by studying the word of God, and secondly we need to be emptying them of all the worldly baggage that will encumber our growth.

Brothers and Sisters, if you are setting your mind only on the things of this world, the cares, the business, the distractions then you are being conformed not to the image of Christ, but to the image of this passing world, and Paul tells you: ***"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."***

The second thing he says is to be sober, and there he doesn't simply mean don't get drunk. He means don't allow yourself to be intoxicated by all the allurements of this world, that will end up putting us to sleep. Now that is sometimes difficult, because believers experience pain in this world, and sometimes our response is just to try to escape, to medicate ourselves and try to forget. But just as Jesus knew he had to refuse the draft that they gave to prisoners before crucifixion to make them groggy that he might have his wits about him on the cross even though it meant more pain, you need to keep your spiritual wits about you too.

The way you do that is to turn your gaze from the things of this world and to set your hope on heaven, and the things above. To really think day by day, I am running a race, heaven is my finish line, and Christ will give me my reward. If you have been saved, It really is possible to do that -
As Paul wrote to the Colossians:

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

Finally, you must strive to live for Christ, to obey his commands, and to die to sin. We hear very little of this today, but that means we have to really want to be Holy, to desire it with all our might. If we do, then Christ will not deny us the gift of holiness, he himself said - ***Matt. 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.***

But understand the only people who truly hunger and thirst for holiness are those who have been born again. I hear a lot today about Christians who are supposedly really saved, but have no desire for holiness, who are not growing in conformity to Christ, who they say will have Christ as Savior but not as Lord and who consequently look in their habits and living just like the unsaved.

Brothers and Sisters, do not be deceived. *Just because the mouse is in the cookie jar, that doesn't make it a cookie.* Just because I am in a church, that doesn't mean I'm a Christian. *If it looks like a duck, sounds like a duck and walks like a duck WHAT IS IT? If someone looks like an unsaved person, sounds like an unsaved person, and has a walk like an unsaved person. WHAT ARE THEY?*

I've seen people going round and round the mulberry bush trying to convince themselves that because so and so said once said they believed they are saved despite the fact that they have never shown any signs of growth or even interest in holiness. *Don't do that – listen to what McCheyne said “This is a true mark of grace. If you be contented to remain where you are, without any more nearness to God, or any more holiness, this is a clear mark you have none.”* I know it will **HURT** to admit that, but yourself but you will do them no good at all if you spend the rest of their life letting them go on in a bogus and totally unbelievable Christianity. And brothers and sisters, let us say that there is a tiny chance that you are wrong and that they really are saved – well, you will do no harm to a true believer by preaching the gospel to them, no true believer dislikes hearing and discussing the gospel.

Let me leave you with two last considerations that may assist you to desire more holiness.

First, our own holiness is the key not only to our own progress, but it is a key to our doing good for the world and being used in the conversion of others. Our own lack of holiness impoverishes others:

The holiness of the believer is like the most precious perfume. When a holy believer goes through the world, filled with the Spirit, made more than conqueror, the fragrance fills the room; “as if an angel shook his wings.” If the world were full of believers, it would be like a bed of spices. But oh, how few believers carry much of the odor of heaven along with them! How many you might be the means of saving, if you lived a holy, consistent life, if you were evidently a sacrifice bound upon God's altar! Wives might thus, without the word, win their husbands, when they see your chaste conversation coupled with fear; parents might in this way save their children, when they saw you holy and happy; children have often thus saved their parents. Servants, adorn the doctrine of God

your Savior in all things; let your light shine before men. The poorest can do this as well as the richest, the youngest as well as the oldest. Oh, there is no argument like a holy life,

Matt. 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Secondly, do you remember Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians we read two weeks ago in evening worship – "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ?" One of the greatest aids to holiness is to humbly seek out the fellowship of other more advanced Christians and to become imitators of whatever is Christlike in them.

"In a letter to a McCheyne compared these contacts with other Christians to the necessity for keeping his pocket watch corrected by consultation with the trustworthy and proved clocks in the church steeples. He wrote, "And just so I sometimes think it may be with that inner watch, whose hands point not to time but to eternity. By gradual and slow changes the wheels of my soul lag behind, or the springs of passions become too powerful; and I have no living timepiece with which I may compare, and by which I may amend my going. You will say that I may always have the Son, and so it should be; but we have many clouds which obscure the Son from our weak eyes."

Speaking of McCheyne in that respect, as I was reading his letters again last night, I could not help but weep when I read these words that he penned to Horatius Bonar which he wrote one year before he died *"I have great desire for personal growth in faith and holiness. I love the Word of God, and find it sweetest nourishment to my soul. Can you help me to study it more successfully?"*

Oh that I had that humility, that desire to be like Christ, may God grant such a heart to all of us, before we too meet with Him!