
Hope Transformed by Our Obedience

1 Peter 1:13-21

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Introduction Is your life defined by holiness and obedience to God's word, even in your trials and difficulties? What do others see through your life when you are suffering? Is it obvious to those around you that your life is identified with Christ no matter what the circumstances? Do you live a life that is morally distinct from the world?

It is no secret that from a worldly perspective there is virtually no difference between the church and world when it comes to morality. Many self-described evangelicals march in moral lockstep with mainstream culture, in practices of divorce, spousal abuse, extramarital sex, pornography consumption, materialism and racism, just to name a few. In fact, more and more, professing believers make no attempt to distinguish themselves from the world, and either don't even know what the Bible says about morality, or believe the Bible is outdated and its message is no longer relevant. The American Evangelical Church seems to work harder than the world at being relevant to American culture and the world. The American church doesn't want to stand out, but rather be accepted. We use the excuse that our "blending in" is to better reach our neighbors with the Gospel, but is that truly what is happening?

Dan Edelen in his blog article, [Why Christianity Is Failing America](http://ce-ruleansanctum.com/2009/11/why-christianity-is-failing-in-america.html), quotes Ray Ortlund, Jr., "...to shameful degree, we Christians are morally indistinct from the world. Why? One reason is that we think piecemeal, and our lives show it. We do not perceive reality from God's perspective. We perceive reality from the perspective of our ungodly culture, and then we try to slap a biblical principle onto the surface of our deep confusion...If you and I truly stepped out in faith to live the Gospel we say we believe, it may well be that we would have to drop out of the corporate treadmill, suffer a freefall in the company hierarchy, watch our income plummet, and suffer the American indignity of no longer being able to keep up with the Joneses. It may mean we cannot get our children into the fancy private school, the top division sports team, and subsequently fail to send them to Harvard to mint their perfect future...Believing the Gospel will destroy our American lifestyles. But as long as we are Americans first and Christians second, we have nothing to fear from the Gospel..." <http://ce-ruleansanctum.com/2009/11/why-christianity-is-failing-in-america.html>

Jerry Bridges writes, *"It is time for us Christians, to face up to our responsibility for holiness. Too often we say we are "defeated" by this or that sin. No, we are not defeated; we are simply disobedient. It might be well if we stopped using the terms victory and defeat to describe our progress in holiness. Rather we should use the terms obedience and disobedience."*

"Faith and holiness are inextricably linked. Obeying the commands of God usually involves believing the promises of God." (Jerry Bridges)

Knowing how to be obedient and holy is rooted in knowing the truth about the great price that Christ paid for our salvation and understanding that God expects his children to be holy as he is holy. Living by God's grace and choosing to live a life obedient to God, are not exclusive exercises.

Our holiness is primarily about our union with Christ, so too are grace and obedience united. We are called to be holy and we are dependent on God's grace to do so. Knowing who you are in Christ, and where your future hope is founded is vital when our faith is tested by the numerous trials and suffering that this world brings. America is only our temporary home, we are called to be holy in a world that is not ours, we are exiles. Like the churches dispersed that Peter is writing to, we are called to live holy lives during a difficult life in a foreign land.

I am afraid that as American Christians desperately pursue the "American Dream" we can easily lose sight of our true hope.

1 Peter 1:13-21:

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

The word holiness in this passage simply means "pure" or "dedicated". Being pure is not something we can do on our own, but we do have the responsibility to be holy. The ESV introductory notes to 1 Peter says, the aim of 1 Peter is, "to trust the Lord, live obediently no matter what your circumstances, and keep your hope fixed on God's ultimate promise of deliverance" Much of Peter's message takes place in the context of suffering at the hands of God ordained authority in a strange land, whether that suffering is at home, at church, at work, under the government, etc. The authority that God has placed over us is by God's sovereignty and for our good. Ultimately, our hope in difficulty comes from what we believe about the gospel of Christ.

Our Living Hope (v. 13a)

Therefore, ...

Peter opens his first letter describing our salvation that we received through God's great mercy toward us, and although we have already been born again, the fullness of that salvation won't be completed until Christ returns for the Church. Peter says that our full inheritance is being kept and guarded in heaven through faith and God's power until Christ is revealed. What do I mean by our full inheritance is being kept in heaven for us? Verse 13 says, *set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. What is the grace that 1 Peter is referring to? Since "*Therefore*" points us back to the beginning of 1 Peter, verses 3b-5 say,

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

God has caused us to be born again. And if you are born again you are placed into a union with Christ which is our living hope. Because Jesus arose from the dead, we who are unified with Christ have an assurance that we too will receive a glorified body at the resurrection, just as Christ already did at his resurrection. That is our future inheritance!

In order to be obedient to God's word, especially when life is hard, we must focus our hope on that gracious inheritance that is kept and protected for us in heaven. While we wait, we will face many trials that will show us that our faith is real and true. When God strengthens our faith through difficulty, we can be confident that our faith and obedience will produce praise and glory and honor when Jesus returns.

As part of my work, I discuss family inheritance with clients often. All my clients care about giving money as inheritance or receiving money as an inheritance. The reality of a potential inheritance, either big or small, is something people think about. You wouldn't believe the number of people who speculate when they might receive an inheritance, or those clients who will almost live in poverty to pass on a small amount of money to their heirs. I have known family members argue over parent's money and who will get what before their parents are even close to death! Knowing that you are guaranteed a priceless inheritance that is incorruptible should be very motivating for us to live an obedient, holy life while we await the revelation of our full inheritance when Christ returns.

Our Focused Hope (v. 13b)

...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.

In order to be focused on our future inheritance in the middle of a difficult life, we need to be self-controlled and clear-headed. We need clear and biblical thinking when our faith is being tested and stretched through the difficulties that God allows in our lives.

Preparing your mind for action

The translation in verse 13 literally means to get one's mind ready for action, to be ready to learn and to think, and to be alert. We are to gird up, prepare and ready our mind, so when we are faced with a trial we are prepared and thinking clearly.

We have all heard about how warriors girded their armor and tunics with a belt. They tightened their belt and armor when preparing for battle, and this is true for all generations of warriors. This idea of girding a belt reminds me of the use of a weightlifting belt. One of the pieces of equipment that weightlifters use when lifting heavy weight is a belt. A weightlifting belt is typically made of leather that is up to 1/2-inch-thick, and 3-4 inches wide. When the weight gets heavy enough, you prepare for the lift by tightening the belt around your waist as tight as you can, before loading the barbell and weights on your back (in the case of a squat). The idea of a weightlifting belt is that the belt creates an immovable object that you can push against

with your abdominal muscles to create the necessary compression to create the necessary stability and force to lift the weight. You simply cannot lift as much without that belt, and in fact it could be dangerous to try to lift too much weight without a belt. A weightlifting belt is not particularly comfortable but eventually necessary for most lifters. We too must prepare our minds for battle, like the preparation necessary to put yourself under that heavy weight.

Be self-controlled

Peter also writes that we are supposed to be sober-minded, which is the opposite of having the mind of a drunkard. The idea here is to be restrained and well-composed in our mind and actions, temperate, and sober. We should be thinking and living in alertness and not in drunkenness.

Our future hope

And finally, the grace of our salvation is not simply saving us from destruction and damnation in this life but being born again is about our future hope, which will not be fulfilled until Christ returns. As great as our salvation is now, the true sense in this passage is that our full hope rests in a future salvation. We have been saved, we are being saved and we will be saved!

Be clear-minded and ready for action, preparing yourself to put your full hope in your future salvation is the initial preparation for living a holy, obedient life that is full of hope.

As Obedient Children (v. 14-16)

¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

As children of God we are to live obedient, holy lives. We are no longer to live as we did before we received Christ, and God wants us to be holy as He is holy. We are not to be living a spiritually ignorant, sinful life, which does not reflect the true holiness of God. Because we are children of God bought at such a high price, our holiness should be reflected daily through our actions because our God who redeemed us is holy.

When Parker was in kindergarten, he had a little project he had to do, and it was fill in the blank. It said, "When I grow up, I want to be a _____. Help me be the best one I can be." I am sure teachers were expecting the usual at that age. I want to be a fireman, policeman, etc.... Parker put down that he wanted to be a "Dadby" (at that age he struggled to keeping his d's and b's straight). I have that paper framed in my office. That is the same attitude we should have toward our Heavenly Father and holiness. We should want to be like our God who has paid such a high price for his children.

Do not be conformed to your old way of living (v. 14)

Children of God are no longer to be conformed or shaped by their old way of living before they were born again. We are not supposed to live according to evil desires and lusts that defined our lives before Christ, since our old way of thinking and living is clearly are the opposite of the holiness that God expects. We are to put off those past desires we had before being born

again. Being conformed and shaped by the sinful desires that we followed in our former ignorance, has no place in the life of the child of God. Clinging to our past sin will only make suffering more difficult, and in fact could be the cause of our suffering, instead of suffering for the name of Christ. Charles Spurgeon wrote,

“The further a man goes in lust and iniquity the more dead he becomes to purity and holiness; he loses the power to appreciate the beauties of virtue or to be disgusted with the abominations of vice.”

Be holy in everything you do (v. 15-16)

In verse 15-16, Peter references Leviticus 11:44; *“For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground.”* ⁴⁵ *For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”* This was the Old Covenant Law about beast and bird and every living creature, and the importance of making a clear distinction between clean and unclean. Separating the clean and the unclean was important in the Judaic Law, and there was laborious work and detail exercised in determining clean from unclean. But it was vital to the Law and something to be taken very seriously.

God’s chosen people should also be distinct and holy. There should be a clear difference between the righteous and the unrighteous, the holy and the unholy. Believers are supposed to be holy in all their conduct. Here is what Peter writes, *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.* We are supposed to be holy in everything we do! Just as the children of Israel were set aside as God’s people, and God’s people followed laws of separating the clean and the unclean, believers should be distinct and set apart and holy in all that we do because of our union with Christ. Those people we live with should see a difference between how God’s children conduct their lives and how the world lives.

A Life in Exile (v. 17-20)

Like the churches Peter is writing to, we too are living as exiles. We are not living in our true homeland (the new glorified heaven and earth). But we are supposed to live holy, obedient lives where God’s sovereignty has placed us. 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, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, 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*

As we live our lives while awaiting Christ’s return, we are to live as if we are exiles in a foreign country, living away from our true home. We are to live each day fearing the power and judgment of God. Because of God’s holiness we need to turn to Christ, who has given us the grace for our salvation, and we should not turn back to our former patterns of sin. Living a holy, obedient life will reflect God’s mercy, grace and power, and strengthen our faith when we go through difficult trials so far away from our true home.

Live as a temporary resident with reverent fear (v. 17)

God will judge everyone according to their deeds. Therefore, Peter writes that because we call on God as Father, and we have been bought with such a high price, we should live each day with respect and in awe of God, of who he is, his power, holiness and impartial judgment. As God's children we should not be living in such a way that we fear God's judgment because of disobedient behavior, but we are to live honorably as God's chosen people, who are united with Christ and his holiness.

The high price of ransom (v. 18-20)

¹⁸ *knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, 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.*

The futile ways inherited from our forefathers (v. 18)

At salvation we were ransomed from eternal death due to our sin nature, which was inherited through Adam's disobedience, and passed down through every generation (this was our guaranteed inheritance before Christ's death for his children). Not only are we ransomed from our sin nature, but we are also set free from the Old Covenant and its rules and regulations. The original audience of Peter's letter would have heard allusions to their Jewish heritage and the Law of the Covenant, as well as their forefathers and patriarchs, and the Jewish system of belief. Christ's blood set us free from the Old Covenant Law and the sin inherited from our forefathers.

We no longer live in fear of sin and death but now we look forward to a life without sin, sickness and death in a perfected, glorified body for all eternity when Christ brings our guaranteed inheritance with him.

Ransomed through the perfect sacrifice (v. 19)

The ransom Christ paid for us was a special ransom, the perfect sacrifice for all time. Our ransom was not of precious gold or silver (like a ransom from the world), but the once and for all ransom of the shed blood of Christ. Christ's sacrifice was like the sacrifice of a perfect sacrificial lamb without spot or blemish. What Adam and the Law failed to do, the sinless sacrifice of Christ perfectly accomplished, and set those free who believe in the sacrifice of the one perfect, spotless lamb, Jesus Christ, God's only son.

A foreknown plan (v. 20)

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

The Father's plan was known before the world was created and revealed to man at the perfect time in history. In God's sovereignty, Christ was raised from the dead for those of us who believe. Look at verse 20, *he was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you.*

At the beginning of Peter's letter, it tells us that even the Old Covenant prophets were serving the New Covenant reader regarding salvation, because they searched and inquired

about who and when the suffering and glories of Christ would be revealed. They preached the good news to us through God's word and were content to serve those of us who would come later in redemption history, and not simply serve themselves and their personal desires. The prophets believed God's promises like we believe today, and they believed with even less evidence than we have today. What a privilege it is to be called to salvation on this side of the cross. and let us never take that gift of faith for granted.

Set Your Faith and Hope in God (v. 21)

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.*

Since Christ's sacrificial death on the cross for you and I was known long before the world was created, and being recipients of that grace and new birth, we have a responsibility to reflect God's holiness and obedience in our lives, and our hope and faith is anchored in the future revelation of our full and complete salvation which will be revealed when Christ returns. We are only able to believe because Christ caused us to believe and gives us the faith and grace necessary to keep believing and keep hoping in our promised inheritance. This is especially true when we face trials that test our faith and cause us to grow to spiritual maturity, all within God's sovereign plan for each of us.

Conclusion

Theologian F.F. Bruce writes, *"Christian holiness is not a matter of painstaking conformity to the individual precepts of an external law code; it is rather a question of the Holy Spirit's producing His fruit in the life, reproducing those graces which were seen in perfection in the life of Christ."*

Oswald Chambers writes, *"It is quite true to say, "I can't live a holy life," but you can decide to let Jesus make you holy."*

Where does our hope and obedience come from when we are faced with trials?

Joel Scandrett summarizes holiness well in an article for [Christianity Today](#) in 2012, *"Be holy, because I am holy," says our Lord. Holiness is not primarily about moral purity. It's primarily about union with God in Christ and sharing in Christ's holiness. It's secondarily about life in grateful service to God and others. Only a biblical, Christ-centered holiness will safeguard evangelicals from the trap of moralism and help us recover our spiritual footing in today's world.* (Joel Scandrett, Ph.D., Drew University)

Christianity Today is written for the Evangelical masses. Dr. Scandrett does a nice job clarifying holiness from a Biblical perspective, but even after reading this article I wonder how many Evangelicals still fail to grasp the true glories of our salvation and our future hope and revert to moralism and legalism to create a false sense of personal holiness?

Be holy because God is holy. Prepare your mind for action and be self-controlled. Do not conform to your former life.

It is God's grace alone through our union with Christ, and our focus on the cross which makes obedience possible. Holiness cannot come through your own works and efforts but only by setting your hope on the richness and completeness of your full and final salvation that you will receive

only when Christ returns. If God has caused you to be born again, then you are holy. You are set aside as God's child, now get up each day and live like it...no matter what difficulty or trial God allows you to face!