

1 Peter 1 : 13-16

“Therefore prepare your minds for action; be self controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus is revealed. As obedient children do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “ Be holy because I am holy..”

The story is told of a young boy who had just driven an almost perfect driving test. The only mistake he made said the examiner later was as he had stopped to let me out of the car. After breathing a sigh of relief the boy exclaimed, “ I’m so glad I don’t have to drive like that all the time!”

Can I suggest that he was like a fair number of churchgoers today. They put on a good front when they know someone is watching , but the rest of the time they let down their standards. There’s not too much difference between them and the rest of the world, except that they go to church a little more. The divorce rate among Christians is about the same as in the secular world. In fact the third highest divorce rate occupationally after doctors and police is church pastors!

Some Christians watch the same TV shows and movies for the same number of hours weekly as everyone else. Some Christian youth, and older folk as well, are involved in sexual immorality to pretty much the same extent as non Christians. Many Christian business men have bad reputations as employers. In fact it would seem that our Christianity in a lot of cases doesn’t have much effect on the way we live.

I can think of no Bible text that needs to be taught and received by Christians not only in the UK but also many other countries around the world than our text today.

Peter is writing to many who had come from pagan backgrounds, living in a pagan society where there was great pressure to conform; not unlike today many Christians would say.

Peter calls his readers (fellow Christians) to holiness in light of the coming of Jesus Christ and the holy character of the God who calls us to salvation. He makes three points

To be holy people:

we must be focussed on Christ’s coming

obedient in all of life, and

growing in our knowledge of God’s holiness.

Only God is truly holy but He calls us to holiness and we will only be truly holy when we meet Him face to face but we can take steps towards it in this life.

The moment we put our faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour we are sanctified or set apart (made holy) unto God.

We then need to grow in holiness. This process will not be complete on earth but we need to actively work at it.

Gal 5.16 tells us **“So I say live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”**

And Rom 8.13 **“For if you live according to the sinful nature you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live”**

As I said we will never be perfect in this life but we can make every effort towards it although by our very nature we will fail from time to time.

And then when we go to meet the Lord in heaven we will be perfectly sanctified or made holy, made completely like Him

1 John 3:2 **“ Dear friends now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”**

I need to perhaps say at this point that you cannot get to heaven by striving to be holy. Good works cannot pay the penalty for our sins. Only the blood of Jesus can satisfy the justice of God. We must put our trust in Him not our good works. But if our faith in Christ to save us is genuine it will result in a life of progressive holiness.

Heb 12:14 tells us **“Without holiness no one will see the Lord.”**

Peter here shows us three ways that we can develop a holy lifestyle as those who have trusted in Christ:

Firstly; To be holy people we must be focussed on Christ's coming. I Peter 1 13-16 in the Greek text has only two commands: **“ Fix your hope”** and **Be holy”** everything else follows from these two.

So we could paraphrase as **“ Girding your minds for action, keeping sober, fix your hope completely on the grace being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”**

There are three aspects to this grace:

1. It begins in the mind: Gird up the loins of your mind stems from the fact that in those days men wore long flowing robes which got in the way when they needed to run, work or fight. So they would tuck their robes into a belt to free them up.

Holiness begins in your thought life. What you think determines how you live. So you need to deal with every sinful thought as it occurs, confess it to God and replace it with Godly thoughts. Be it envy, lust, greed or any other sinful thought. Paul states in **“ Cor 10:5 “Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”**

It's on the thought level that your Christianity is either real or fake. You can fool everyone else, but God knows your thoughts. If you are faking it and not cultivating a holy thought life sooner or later it's going to come out in the open in some form of sin that everyone can see. You need to guard what enters your mind as carefully as what you eat. You wouldn't eat scraps out of a dustbin because it would make you sick. If your daily thought diet is the secular stuff of television, cinema and other media and you seldom feed on God's word you will not become a holy man or woman.

Peter says that we must fix our hope completely on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Holiness begins in our mind as we think often of our Saviour and the gracious salvation we will fully experience when He returns and we are changed into His likeness!

2. It requires spiritual alertness:

“Being sober” is a favourite phrase of Peter. Its spiritual application is to be alert and self controlled. It refers to clarity of mind and the resulting good judgement. The point is we live in enemy territory and the Devil prowls about like a marauding lion. If we feed our minds on the stuff of the world and don’t feed on God’s Word then you become easy prey for him. You are not going to become a holy person.

3. It is motivated by grace:

“Fix your hope completely on the grace being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

God’s grace is the motivation for holy living Why does Peter tell us to focus on the grace that will be brought to us when Jesus returns rather than the grace we’ve already received? I believe it was because his readers were going through intense trials. Peter is telling them, “ You’ve already tasted of God’s salvation in Christ but that’s just the beginning! Just hang on through the trials and focus on the fact that God is going to bless you beyond anything you can imagine , not based on what you deserve but based on His undeserved favour.” That future grace should motivate us to live holy lives right now no matter how much we suffer.

Secondly to be holy people we must be obedient to the Father in all of life

Again there are three aspects to this:

1. We must make a break with our past lifestyle.

“Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you were in ignorance”

The word “conformed” is used in only one other place in the New Testament by Paul in Romans 12:2: **“ And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”**

Our past lifestyle was marked by our efforts to fulfil selfish desires. But as Christians growing in our knowledge of God we don’t have to be controlled by selfish desires. We make a break with the self centred desires that marked us before we met Christ and now live under His Lordship and for His purposes.

2. We must establish a habit of obedience.

V 14 says: **“ As obedient children”**

The Hebrew means “characterised by obedience” or “habitual obedience” The implication is that God is our heavenly Father whom we obey. His Word tells us how He wants us to live. We should desire to obey God not out of legalism but as a response to His grace and mercy in our lives. As God’s children we need to get into the habit of asking, “ What does God’s Word say?” Then we obey it.

3. WE must erase the distinction between sacred and secular.

V15b says, **“be holy in all you do”**

Peter here is emphasising that living the Christian life is not a part time occupation he tells us that we need to be holy in ALL we do. Peter is saying that our separation unto God is to affect every area of life, both private and public. There is no such thing as secular life that is not sacred for the Christian. This doesn't mean that you must be perfect. It means that you live with integrity , confessing sin when you mess up, and you will; making your Christianity practical in every aspect of life. We're the only “Bible” many non believers will ever “read”. Just as we can learn quite a bit about a father by watching his children, so the world learns about our heavenly Father by watching His children. That means we must learn to obey our Father in all of life in order to reflect His glory to the world.

Thirdly to be holy people we must be growing in our personal knowledge of God's holiness

“But just as He who called you is holy” (15)

“Be holy because I am holy” (16)

These two verses imply that we know something about who this Holy God is. The Christian life is a process of growing to know god as He has revealed Himself to us in Scripture. This knowledge of the Holy One has a transforming effect on our lives. We can never be as holy as God is holy , since such absolute holiness belongs to God alone. But we can and must grow in personal holiness as we grow to know our Holy God. The one follows on from the other.

Unfortunately today we can be somewhat flippant and shallow in our knowledge of God. Some Christians talk about God without any fear of the awesomeness of His Absolute Holiness. When we vread in the Bible of people encountering God face to face or Jesus in His resurrected state they fall on their face in wonder and reverence.

I'm sure you've all had those moments in your life when the awesomeness of God suddenly strikes you and you are amazed that this awesome God still wants a personal relationship with each and every one of us despite all of our baggage. I remember driving through a valley in Scotland with no one else around us and mountains towering up on both sides. In that moment I had a glimpse of how small and insignificant we are in comparison to all that God has created and yet He still loves us with an everlasting love not only as a people group but individually. How amazing! We need to experience that more and more as we grow in our knowledge of who God really is.

Someone far cleverer than me wrote this:

“The greatest miracle that God can do today is to take an unholy man or woman out of an unholy world and make them holy and put them back into that unholy world and keep them holy in it.”

How can He do that for us?

As we focus on Christ's coming; as we're obedient in all of life and as we grow in our personal knowledge of God's holiness.