

We Are to Be Holy as God is Holyⁱ

1 Peter 1:13-25

1. **Desire the Beauty of Being Like a Holy God**—1 Peter 1:13-16: *¹³ Therefore, having girded your minds for action, being sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, not being conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your conduct; ¹⁶ because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”*

Because of the great “*salvation*” that Peter describes in verses 3-12, we should think and act in certain ways. The grammatical structure of verse 13 suggests a sequence of actions:

- First, “*gird up your minds*”—focus on God’s will and obey Him now.
- Second, “*sober in spirit*”—be spiritually alert,
- Third, eagerly and confidently expect great blessings when Christ returns.

“*Gird up your minds*” suggests spiritual alertness. Such spiritual alertness is appropriate to New Covenant theology which is characterized by God’s Spirit working powerfully in the hearts of His disciples.

The “*gird up*” phrase refers to the ancient custom when men would gather up their long robes by pulling them between their legs, then wrapping and tying them around their waists to prepare for strenuous activity (e.g., running). It is an athletic analogy that would encourage us to get our minds ready to consider how God works and to respond with immediate obedience.

Being sober forbids not only physical drunkenness but prohibits the tendency to allow our minds be subject to any mental addiction that might inhibit spiritual alertness or carelessly lull our thoughts toward sin (*notice that Peter also uses the same word in 4:7 and 5:8 to encourage spiritual alertness both in prayer and in resisting the devil*). Peter realizes how easily believers can lose spiritual concentration and become enticed by the “things of this world” (e.g., “good things” like career, recreation, friendships, education, and children *development*).

“*Fix your hope completely*” establishes an expectation that is much stronger than when we might use the word, “hope,” to mean “desire” or “wish for”—here, Paul conveys a sense of absolute certainty—in other words, a very confident and eager expectation!

When we have such a confident hope in our future, we are not only encouraged, but we tend to reorder our priorities and align our will accordingly—such willful decisions lead to ethical and moral changes in our lifestyles.

Paul's exhortation regarding "*hope*" forms a transition in his letter where, for the rest of his letter, he presents an extended section of moral commands. Paul understood that if his readers could grasp the great truths about their salvation, realize their unique relationship to God through Christ, and visualize living a life that would inevitably lead to an unimaginable heavenly reward, they would then strive to live a life of holiness before their holy God!

"*The grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*" refers to the undeserved blessings which God will pour out on believers when Jesus returns to receive believers to glory!

As obedient children (v. 14) express Paul's view that believers are children in God's family whose lives have been changed, and which should be characterized by obedience to their heavenly Father (cf. 1:1 and 1:22). Such children should NO LONGER conform to the actions of their former *lustful* and *ignorant* lifestyles. Doing God's will is the opposite of doing what our sinfulness might cause us to "feel like doing."

The fact that Paul would give such a command indicates that he knew such desires yet remain and still influence the hearts of genuinely born-again believers. At the same time, he agreed with Paul that the Holy Spirit's regenerating power has broken, but not yet eliminated, the sinful desires yet present in the lives of believers (cf. Romans 6:11; Galatians 5:24). In other words, by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, born-again children of God experience a significant measure of victory over sin as we live by faith.

Verse 15 begins with the conjunction, "but" indicating a strong contrast to the behavior that would *conform to the lust of former ignorance*. Children of God should pattern our holiness after God's holiness!

By mentioning "*calling*" here, as well as four other times in this letter (2:9, 21; 3:9; 5:10), Peter reminds his readers that it was the Almighty, Holy God who initiated their salvation, summoned them out of darkness, forgave their sins, and brought them into an intimate, eternal relationship with Himself! God called His children both to live for Him, with Him, and be like Him!

To say that God is *holy* means that He is unique—He is separated from anything ungodly and completely devoted to truth, justice, righteousness, faithfulness, honesty, and goodness! Therefore, for God's people to be holy, they must be morally separated

from anything evil and devoted to a life of righteousness (cf. Romans 6:19; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:10).

To be holy *‘as God is holy’* includes a wholly complete and encompassing holiness that impacts every aspect of our personalities. It involves not only avoiding outward sin but also maintaining an instinctive delight in God and His holiness as an constant attitude of heart and mind!

Peter’s father-child analogy is appropriate because it is the nature of children to imitate their parents. Christians should delight in imitating God, both because He is our heavenly Father and because His moral excellence is inherently wonderful and desirable—to be like God is the best way to live (cf. Psalm 34:8; 73:25).

2. ***Fear the Displeasure of a Father Who Is an Impartial Judge*** –1 Peter 1:17–21:

“¹⁷And 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 sojourn, ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold from your futile conduct inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but 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.”

Peter adds an additional motivation for holy living: fear of God’s *fatherly* discipline! When we address (invoke/pray to) the Father, we need to always remember that He wears another hat—Judge of the universe! As our Father, He loves us, but as our Judge, He shows no favoritism to anyone. He is continually judging and rewarding each person according to what he is and does!

Therefore, we should live our lives in fear—not of condemnation, but fear of appropriate discipline! Though membership in the family of God is a tremendous privilege, it comes with responsibility and expectation. We should always be aware that disobedience will not pass unnoticed nor undisciplined!

Although our deeds will never exclude believers from heaven, we will be judged and rewarded according to our deeds in this life (cf. Romans 14:12; 1 Corinthians 3:10–15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). However, the context of this verse indicates that the discipline refers primarily to present judgment and discipline and not future retribution (*sojourn*) (cf. 1 Peter 4:14, 17). The exhortation to “*fear*” would be inappropriate in addressing Christians if the reference were to the *final judgment* because we have NO fear of final condemnation (cf. Romans 8:1). *The time of your sojourn (exile)* refers to this present

life, during which Peter's readers are *temporary earthly residents* who are awaiting the Lord's return.

"Conduct yourselves in fear" refers to the whole pattern of life. In context, *fear* refers primarily to the fear of God's discipline. The *fear* of God's discipline is a good and proper attitude (Acts 5:5, 11; 9:31; 2 Corinthians 7:1, 15; Colossians 3:22; 1 Timothy 5:20). The fear of God is associated with increasing holiness in other New Testament passages (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:1; Philippians 2:12; Romans 3:18).

The fear of God is not inconsistent with loving him or knowing that He loves us! In our physical lives, the fear of displeasing our earthly father is the other side of loving him.

We have been *redeemed* (ransomed) from the *futile ways inherited from our fathers*. We have been removed from one place (*futile disobedience = empty, worthless, having no meaningful or lasting results*) to another place (*obedience to God = holiness, fullness, hopefulness, blessings, meaningfulness, and eternal existence*).

The value of our redemption cannot be calculated or compared to anything earthly! The blood of Jesus is inherently more precious than anything that could be considered valuable on earth or in heaven!

By the blood of Jesus:

- Our consciences are cleansed (Hebrews 9:14).
- We gain bold access to God in worship and prayer (Hebrews 10:19).
- We are progressively cleansed from sin (1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5b).
- We can defeat our accuser (Revelation 12:11).
- We are rescued from a sinful way of life (1 Peter 1:19).

The incredible truth is that this was God's plan from the very beginning! It is as a *suffering Savior* that God '*foreknew*' (His thought of the Son) before the foundation of the world. The '*foreknowledge*' of God was really an act of God in eternity past whereby He determined that His Son would come as the Savior of the world He loved.

It is through Christ that believers have confidence in God. The God who planned our redemption is now the object of our love, trust, and life! The phrase, *who raised him from the dead and gave him glory*, refers to Christ's resurrection, His ascension into heaven, and His reception of honor and glory from the Father (cf. Philippians 2:9; Ephesians 1:20–23). Therefore, our faith and hope rest in God!

3. **Love one another, now and forever—1 Peter 1:22–25:** “²² Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a love of the brothers without hypocrisy,

ferently love one another from the heart,²³ for you have been born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For, ‘All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, ²⁵But the word of the Lord endures forever.’ And this is the word which was proclaimed to you as good news.”

We have experienced the same birth. The only way to enter God’s spiritual family is by a spiritual birth, through faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:1–16). Just as there are two parents in physical birth, so there are two parents in spiritual birth: the Spirit of God (John 3:5–6) and the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23).

The new birth gives us a new nature (2 Peter 1:4), as well as a new and living hope (1 Peter 1:3). Our first birth was a birth of “flesh,” and the flesh is corruptible. Whatever is born of flesh is destined to die and decay. If we try to build Christian unity on the basis of our natural birth, it will fail, but if we build unity on the basis of our supernatural new birth, it will succeed.

Each believer has the same Holy Spirit dwelling within (Romans 8:9). We call on the same Father (1 Peter 1:17), and we share His divine nature. We trust the same Word, and that Word will never decay or disappear. We have trusted the same gospel and have been born of the same Spirit. We experience and express the same love (v. 22).

Peter used two different words for love: *phileo*, “brotherly love,” and *agape*, “sacrificial love.” Of course, we should share both kinds of love. We share brotherly love because we are sisters and brothers in Christ. We share *agape* love because we belong to God and are willing to submit to His authority. Thus, we are empowered to overlook differences.

By nature, all of us are selfish, so it took a miracle of God to change our selfish hearts and implant His selfless love. Because we “*obey[ed] the truth through the Spirit,*” God purified our souls and poured His love into our hearts (Romans 5:5).

Love for one another is certain evidence that we truly have been born of God (1 John 4:7–21). As a result, we are “obedient children” (1 Peter 1:14) who no longer want to live out the selfish desires of the old life.

It is hypocritical when people try to “manufacture” love—it is obviously cheap and artificial. The love that we share with each other and with a lost world must be generated by the Spirit of God. Of course, His presence is a constant power in our lives—certainly not something that we can turn on and off.

Not only is this love a **spiritual love**, but it is also a **sincere love** (“not hypocritical”). In Christ, we love “with a pure heart.” Our motive is not to get but to give. We must avoid the temptation to use the pretense of love to manipulate someone to get what we want. If love is sincere, from a pure heart, we would never “use people” for our own advantage.

This love is also a **fervent love**—“striving with all our energy.” Such Love is work! It is not a feeling; it is a decision—a matter of the will. We express this love when we treat others the same way God treats us:

- God forgives us, so we forgive others.
- God is kind to us, so we are kind to others.
- God is patient with us, so we are patient with others.

It is not a matter of feeling but of willing—it requires intentionality and an attitude of mercy and grace. It is not a character attribute that we will finally achieve—we must constantly practice and pursue such love, if we are to succeed. Of course, We have two powerful “assistants” to help us: the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

The same truth that we trusted and obeyed to become God’s children also nurtures and empowers us to love. The Spirit of God produces the “*fruit of the Spirit*” in our lives (Galatians 5:22–23). If we are filled with both the Word of God (Colossians 3:16ff.) and the Spirit of God (Ephesians 5:18ff.), we will manifest the love of God in our daily experiences.

In these verses, Peter intensifies the idea of the permanence of God’s word by contrasting it with the fading glory of human achievement. Strength, power, wealth, beauty, fame—all the ‘glory’ of man—will quickly fade. However, because we have been ‘born anew,’ we will live with God forever!

ⁱ Adapted from: Grudem, W. A. (1988). [*1 Peter: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 17). InterVarsity Press.