

## Victory In Our Biggest Battle

1 Peter 1:13-21

Simon Peter begins his book in the very first verse by telling us he's writing to "to the elect exiles (aliens) scattered all over Asia." 1 Peter 1:1

Throughout the book, he will remind us "*I urge you as sojourners and exiles...*" (1 Peter 2:11) In other words, your citizenship is not here. You're an exile, an alien. Getting that identity right is going to be key to interpreting life correctly. When you're not from a country, you can be one of several things:

- An Immigrant

You're not from here, but you've made this place your new permanent home. This is what a lot of Christians do with the world. They live as citizens of this world and treat this world as if it is their permanent home. They use most of their resources to make a comfortable life here.

- A Tourist

You never really get involved, you just pass through. You speak your language, stay in your group, eat your food, live in comfort, and look for Starbucks. That's the attitude a lot of Christians: stay separated, never get involved.

- An Exile

You're not trying to become an immigrant (you realize you're a citizen of heaven). You also realize that, for a time, you are stationed here and you need to plant part of your life here (you don't live as a tourist). When Israel was in exile in Babylon, this is what God said to them.

*"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce... Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."* Jeremiah 29:4-7

Peter uses the image of an ambassador in 1 Peter 2. An ambassador is someone who is sent into one country with a mission from another country. You are in the new country for the purposes of that country, but your citizenship and your mission are from your home country. You're not an immigrant. You're not a tourist. While you are in exile, you are an ambassador. Because you are an exile, and since you don't really belong here, you should expect to be in a hostile environment.

### 1. God's Purpose for His People

*"Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming."* 1 Peter 1:13

Peter is saying, "Roll up your sleeves. You're about to do battle." "*Fully Sober*" means you are aware of the environment you're in. You're in a hostile environment and engaged in a cosmic battle. 1 Peter 5:8 says that Satan, your adversary, "*prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour you.*" If you knew that, you'd be alert.

If you don't have an active, wide-eyed sober faith in God's promises, you're going to get overwhelmed or drift into temptation.

*“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.’”* 1 Peter 1:14-16

"As obedient children." There are three reasons people obey someone else. A slave has to obey his master. An employee needs to obey his boss, but a son wants to obey his father.

We are God's children. We bear his nature and carry his name. And our family name is holy. The word “holiness” means “separated, to be reserved for a special purpose, to belong to someone for their private and particular use.” We are to be set apart. We are to be conformed to his character. We are to be holy, just as he is holy. A lot of Christians are interested in heaven, but they are not interested in holiness. They are interested in health, but not holiness. They want happiness, but not holiness. But what God wants for us more than anything else is to be holy. A lot of people are interested in the gifts of the spirit, but they're not interested in the fruit of the spirit. They are interested in the gifts of the spirit, but not the grace of the spirit.

There are two words translated “holy”—“kadosh,” in the Old Testament and “hagios” in the New Testament. Both mean “separated or cut away from.” When God told the Israelites that He was “holy,” He meant that He was different from them, separated from them, unique; and one of a kind.

*“There is none holy like the Lord.”* Exodus 15:11

When Israel got in trouble, it was because they forgot the holiness of God. They started to think casually about God. God is not just a slightly smarter version of us. He's totally different.

*“My thoughts are not your thoughts; my ways are not your ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* Isaiah 55:8-9

Everything in the universe can point back to something that caused it, except God. Nothing caused God. *He said, “I am the alpha and omega.”* Revelation 22:13

He is the great I AM; the transcendent one. You give Him a certain respect, reverence, and honor.

Holiness also meant “separated” from all that was impure. The Jewish people had regulations to keep them from entering the presence of God with any defilement because God was absolute purity. He was totally perfect, with no defilement.

Jesus was holy and everything he touched became holy. His holiness was not defiled by us. His holiness healed our unholiness. Jesus is not only holy in His purity, but He is also holy in His love and power. His holy love absorbed our unholiness and suffered our death for it. His holy power conquered it by rising from the dead. The greatest display of God's holiness was not in His separating Himself from us, but in His entering into our sin and corruption and taking it upon Himself and putting it away forever.

*“When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, ‘Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.”* Matthew 8:1

Sometimes we talk about God as if He wanted to merely be at the top of our priority list. Our devotion to God should be of a whole different kind. Jesus isn't just the top of the list. He gets His own list. Nothing else in our life created the universe we live in and died for our sins. How we adore God should be on a whole different level.

*“Clap your hands all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.”* Psalm 47:1

*“May those who delight in salvation shout for joy.”* Psalm 35:27

*“I command men everywhere to lift up holy hands.”* 1 Timothy 2:8

## **2. God's Provision of Salvation**

*“Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.”* 1 Peter 1:10-12

Jesus *“Was chosen before the creation of the world,”* (1 Peter 1:20) and it took *“advanced planning.”* Not only did God know what Jesus was going to do, but He planned that Jesus would come to this world and die on the cross for the sins of all mankind. This plan was in the heart of God before sin was ever in the heart of man! Before Adam ever sinned in the Garden, God has already started a plan into action that would culminate in the death of Jesus on the cross and the reconciliation of lost sinners to God.

- There Was A Payment For Sin.

*“Since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.”* 1 Peter 1:17-21

Jesus is without blemish or spot. His blood was spilled to ransom us from sin. If my unholiness looked upon God, I would die. Jesus took my unholiness upon Himself, looked into the face of God, and died in my place. The gospel is *“Jesus in my place.”* God’s holiness was given to us as a gift. Peter says that the gift of His blood is precious to us. Precious is what you say about something that cannot be replaced. There was no other way! His blood is precious!

Only one thing could save—the perfect death of the eternal Son of God. Jesus said to the Father before He died, *“If it is possible, if there is any other way...let this cup pass from me.”* Matthew 26:39

Two guys were hiking in the Himalayas and got caught in a snowstorm, and ended up being stranded at night and lost. The temperature drops about 60 degrees in the dark. One of them reached in his pocket and finds 1/3 of a match. It was broken off but still had the match head on it. It’s about 20 degrees below zero. They gather the kindling and you have 1/3 of a match. You have one shot with one matchhead. That’s what precious means. It’s something that can never be replaced.

A large religious service was conducted at the Golden Gate Exposition held at San Francisco's Treasure Island, where the World's Fair was celebrating, among other things, the city's two newly built bridges. The San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge opened in 1936 and the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937. Many people quickly became aware that the minister delivering the main address was not thoroughly orthodox. Although a gifted speaker, he began to direct most of his eloquence against the power of the blood of Christ. Ruth E. Marsden relates that when his fluent oratory ended, a timid, elderly lady stood up in the midst of the crowd and softly began to sing a great hymn by William Cowper as a touching rebuttal to the modernist's remarks. A hush fell

over the assembly as they heard those faint but familiar words: "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains." Before she could begin the second stanza, approximately a hundred people rose to join her. By the time she reached the third verse, nearly a thousand Christians all over the audience were singing that blessed song of faith. The triumphant, thrilling strains rang out, loud and clear: "Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood shall never lose its power, till all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more." Many were deeply moved as that humble believer stood up for her Lord and with the light of Heaven upon her face gave testimony that she had found peace through the blood of His cross!

After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, he would often point to a red spot on the map that covered the area of Waterloo. Then he would say, "If it were not for that one red spot, I would be the Emperor of the entire world!" Satan must spend time pointing to a red spot called Calvary and declare, "If it were not for that one red spot, I would be emperor of the world." Thank God for that red spot called Calvary!

2 Samuel 23:16–17 is a story from the life of David. The Philistines, Israel's enemies, have taken over Bethlehem and stationed a bunch of soldiers there. David is on the run. He's an exile. After a long day of travelling, he wishes, "*Oh, that I could have a drink from the well by the gate...*" Where he was they had water, but he was nostalgic for water from his hometown. He wasn't giving a command, but his men heard his wish, and so they decided to go get it for him. This is where the Philistine army is stationed, and the well is by the gate, which means it's out in plain view. They fight their way into the city, get the water, and then they fight their way back out! Then, they travel back through the desert carrying the water, but not drinking it. They present it to David, who refuses to drink but instead pours it out on the ground. David says "*Far be it from me oh, Lord to drink the blood of these men!*" 2 Samuel 23:16–17

What you see there is that there was such a tight sense of devotion. What total devotion looks like: they were wholly devoted to David. This was produced by a sigh, not even a command. David's men felt that way about him because they knew that's how he felt about them!

Jesus not only risked His life to get us what we needed, He sacrificed it! And He didn't just honor us by pouring out a cup of water on the ground, He poured His lifeblood itself, His precious lifeblood, out on the ground, for us! He was "wholly devoted" to us. Our hearts should rise up to be "wholly" committed to Him. If this is how wholly committed David's men were with him, how much more should we be "wholly committed" with Jesus!

*"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."* 1 Peter 1:17

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- There Was A People To Save.

*"Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."* 1 Peter 1:21-23

*"I am the LORD, and besides Me there is no Savior."* Isaiah 43:11

Have you felt the value of Christ's blood given for you? Is it moving you to be wholly devoted to Him? Has the preciousness of what He did for you overcome you, so that your hope and love and devotion are in God?