

# Be Ye Holy

1 Peter 1:13-16

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."

(1 Peter 1:13-16 (NKJV))

These words, "Be Ye Holy" might possibly be the most important words in all of scripture. Yes, we do quote other verses and memorize other passages more often, like those of John 3:16 and the comforting words of the 23rd Psalm, and others. But these words are very different from those words and those precepts from God. And they have a different calling required within them.

These words are clearly a "command", issued to each and every person who is called by the name "Christian". Yes, it is "grace" that first brings each believer to Christ in salvation, but from that first moment of salvation forward, this "command", "Be ye holy", becomes an ever-so important demand upon our souls, upon our character and upon our lives.

Such unbending commands are sometimes confusing within the church today. "Grace" is being given so much emphasis within our teachings that "commands" and "commandments" are often relegated to the level of antiquated teaching from the Old Testament; and they are treated as being replaced by New Testament "grace".

Too often those words in Romans 6:14 where we are told that we are "no longer under the law but under grace" get narrowly defined, and in error well-meaning church goers assume that all the Old Testament commandments, and statutes, and commands, and precepts, and testimonies have been completely replaced with New Testament "grace". But not so! Recall that Jesus said,

18 . . . verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:18-19 (KJV))

And He also said in John 14:21,

21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." (John 14:21 (ESV))

And then here in our worship text, through the mouth of His prophet, the Apostle Peter, God is giving us a clear and unyielding command to,

16 . . . "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16 (NKJV))

Simply put, God is saying to us who are saved, "By grace you are now a part of who I am, I am in you and you are in me; and because I am Holy and can be no other way, then so also you must be Holy, otherwise you will have no part in me".

That folks is an ever-so unyielding demand. And God will have it no other way. He cannot! He is holy and He cannot violate His own holiness by allowing you and me who are in Him to be unholy.

But how do we get to be "holy" from where we begin in life, a lost sinner, poor, wretched, naked and blind? Jesus answered that question for Thomas when Thomas said to Him, "Lord we want to follow you, but we don't know the way". And Jesus said to Him,

6 . . . "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. (John 14:6 (ESV))

The "way" that leads to "life" and holiness is through the very person of Christ, and Him alone. It begins with the first moment we surrender our souls over to Him in salvation. In that first moment, His blood immediately cleanses us from all our sins and it sets us apart for His purposes. And it is from that moment forward that we are "holy" before God the Father.

But unfortunately, as we well know, the world, the flesh and the devil, do not back away and allow us to rest in our new-found holiness of Christ. As we studied recently in the Book of Ephesians, spiritual forces from realms of darkness continually wage war against our soul and our spirit. And because they are who they are and because they do what they do, there is much that is required of you and me to resist them and to maintain that blessed holiness that Christ has put within us.

Our part requires that we have an ongoing surrender of all those "unholy" "matters of self", those "former lusts" that continually try to resurrect themselves within our newly-cleansed souls. And that is ever-so difficult for us! That is why it is necessary for God to give us these stern words of reminder here in our text! Listen!

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." (1 Peter 1:13-16 (NKJV)

May I ask us to stop here for a moment and to ask God's Holy Spirit to tell each of our spirits what these words should mean to us!

"Holy Spirit, explain these words of us."

Folks, this is difficult and this is demanding upon our souls. Why is that so! It is because of our flesh. Our flesh remembers how much we liked and enjoyed all those things and behaviors that are "unholy", those "former lusts". And to add to those temptations we are also constantly being pulled and ensnared by "the world, the flesh and the devil" to join back with them in more unholy conduct. That is the battle that we read about in Romans chapter 7. Our spirit knows the things we should do, but our flesh still remembers and wants its old ways.

But may I encourage us about such trials and struggles, that our "being holy" may not be quite as difficult as we allow ourselves to believe. Why is that so? It is because of the "grace" that we spoke about a few moments ago. Just as it was "grace" that taught my heart to fear and to repent, it is by "grace" that my fears and my struggles will be relieved. Listen again to our worship text!

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.  
(1 Peter 1:13-16 (NKJV)

Did you catch those words given in verse 13, "rest your hope fully upon the "grace" that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"? Yes, we are personally accountable to "gird us the loins of our mind, and with sober resolution step forward", but then "grace" begins to take on the "heavy lifting". Grace is the "strength" by which we take the next steps of resisting the world, the flesh and the devil, and of taking steps of "holiness". Verse 13, "rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ",

Folks this "revelation of Jesus Christ" is not as some preach it to be, that it is something that will take place later on when Jesus returns. No! This revelation spoken about here is now and it is provided to us daily and continually by God's Holy Spirit. Jesus told us so in John chapter 16. He said in Verse 12 . . .

12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:12-15 (ESV))

From the first moment we are being drawn to Christ for salvation and then continuing on throughout all the days of our lives as a Christian, God's Holy Spirit will be continually revealing the Lord Jesus to us. And as He reveals Jesus to our soul and spirit, by His grace, changes begin to take place within us, changes that will turn us from that condition spoken about in Revelation 3 of being "poor, wretched, pitiful, naked and blind" (Revelation 3:17) turning us into the very image of Christ Himself.

And yes, that seems like an impossibility to us, especially as we take a close look at our wretched souls and know the thoughts we think and the deeds we do, especially in secret. But folks, grace is powerful and it is sure. It can accomplish anything it sets out to accomplish.

But again, we do also have our part to do. And we must do it. The command to us is, 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." (1 Peter 1:13-16 (NKJV))

Over these past few days, as our family grieved the loss of my dear sister Jean, we could see so many of these dynamics taking place in our loved ones' lives, one in particular, one who probably has not yet taken that first step of surrender to Christ, my nephew. He has led a hard and difficult life. Recently released from prison, he was able to stay with us and to attend his mother's funeral, for which we were very grateful to God.

During his few days with us, we shared the gospel with him on several occasions. And he was very receptive. He despises the way his life has turned out and really does want to change. Having spent the majority of the past 35 years in various jails and prisons, he desperately wants to spend his next years differently. And I really believe that he genuinely understands that such changes can only take place if he gives his heart to Christ.

Well, my nephew listened carefully to our words, received them and sincerely wanted them to be real for his soul. But in only one day after leaving our company, he returned back to his old ways and habits; and is now back in jail, and probably for a long time.

These words of our worship text,

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. (1 Peter 1:14-15 (NKJV))

Again, my nephew most likely has not taken even that first step of holiness, the step of salvation, but we can now see the effects of these “former lusts” and “ignorance” spoken about here. Those “lusts” and that “ignorance” were all that my dear nephew knew and understood, and so, he returned to them.

I recall in one of my conversations with him, as he was declaring so strongly that he did not want to go back to that way of life, I quoted a very descriptive verse from Proverbs to him and pleaded with him to not go back to that old way of life. Those words in Proverbs 26, verse 11,

11 Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.  
(Proverbs 26:11 (ESV))

I know that today as my nephew languishes in his jail cell, he mourns the bad decisions he made that took him back there again.

I don't know all of God's plans for my nephew, but I do know that His plan surely did not include the recent choices he made.

And folks, we too must be warned. As these words exhort us, we who do have Christ within our hearts must be very careful. We too can do many of the same things that my dear nephew did, conduct that reaches back to the days of our “former lusts” and “ignorance”. Please do remember that these words being given by the Apostle Peter were given to believers, some of them very strong believers. Unholiness can come back into our souls if our “former lusts and ignorance” are left unattended. And so God tells us . . .

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."  
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As I pondered these words, my mind quickly went to what I would call the “Ralph Newman” approach to dealing with the potential sins of this life. As some of you know, Ralph was probably the toughest man we will ever encounter in this life. I have often thought that Ralph was probably very much like Joshua, “tough as nails” and resolute in his character.

And that is the attitude that you and I must take with sin, especially those “former lusts” that we remember so fondly and too often resort to getting caught back up in. Oswald Chambers said in one of his writings that we must get “ruthless” with the attractions of our old “sin nature”. Our old nature has been killed out within us by God’s saving power, but it refuses to lay down and die. And so, you and I must do that for it. We must daily deal one more death blow after another to our old sinful nature until it and its ways can no longer reach up and get control over us.

Ralph would quickly tell us that we had better know the answer to those temptations long before they ever come our way and we had better be ready to “gird up the loins of our mind” and stand firm against those wiles and schemes of the evil one.

May I add one more “need” for our strong stand for holiness? It is simply that we are ever and always a witness to others with our behavior and our conduct, especially our family members, but also to everyone else around us. And the things we do influence all of them, often misguiding them into sinful behavior.

And that is especially true when we are perceived as being a “spiritual leader”, strong in our faith and someone deserving of being listened to and followed. Folks, the “holiness” that we exhibit had better be true holiness and not just some “want-to-be” holiness. If we are just “want-to-bes” then we will train up “want-to-be” followers. And woe be unto us if we do that.

Before we close, may I reemphasize these words, “be ye holy”. Note very carefully that the emphasis is on “being”. We must first “be holy”, before we can ever hope to “do holy” things. That is absolute! The “being” must come before the “doing”! It is only as you and I have the holiness of Christ dwelling within us, both in our salvation and in our daily surrender to Him, that we will then be able to step forward resolutely and

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