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Holiness

Explained and Encouraged

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



104



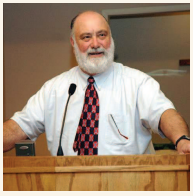
Be ye holy; for I am holy.

1 PETER 1:16

Holiness is defined by God rather than by changing human traditions. John Weaver presents the holy character of God and His Word as the believer's standard, urging a diligent, lifelong pursuit of obedience. These messages connect hope in Christ with the practical work of putting off sinful habits and putting on what is good.

"The believer must therefore give diligence to holiness; it is not an accidental result or something received merely through an outward religious action."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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Old Testament Studies

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CHAPTER 1

Holiness Explained and Encouraged

Part One of Two

Introduction: The Necessity of Holiness

In 1 Peter chapter 1, beginning with verse 13, the Apostle Peter writes, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Holiness is absolutely necessary in the Christian life. Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 14 says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Holiness is a necessity, a requirement, and a demand of a holy God. I suppose that one of the greatest curses of our times is that Christendom as a whole, while being a body of professing Christian people, is totally devoid of biblical holiness.

I understand that not everyone who professes to be saved is saved. I also understand that there is a vast difference between profession and possession. But unhappily, one thing I have observed in all my travels and preaching and teaching is that those who are genuine Christians really have no idea what biblical holiness is. We do not understand its essence or its demands.

Holiness is defined by God; it is not defined by man. Holiness is not tradition. Holiness is not legalism. Holiness is not churchianity.

I have been in many churches and observed over the years, even in most fundamental, independent, Bible-believing churches, that as long as you are in church Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night, as long as you have come to visitation, and as long as you tithe, you can just about get away with anything: adultery, fornication, theft. Why? Because you are measuring up to man's standards, but you are not measuring up to God's standards. The average church has set a different standard of holiness from the standard God has set. Holiness, then, is not found in the traditions of men. It is not found in religion or in churchianity. It is found only in God and His Word.

Holiness Demanded in Both Testaments

There can be very little doubt that God has ordained and demanded that we be a holy people. This was the same demand in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament. Let me show you. Go back in your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 7, and look at verse 6. Deuteronomy 7 and verse 6, and then Deuteronomy 14. Notice what God says: “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God. The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all the people that are upon the face of the earth.” Note, He said, “for thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God.” Again, in Deuteronomy 14:2, we read: “For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself above all the nations that are upon the earth.”

So all of the Old Testament saints were to be holy, peculiar, and set apart for God and for God alone. If you turn now to the New Testament, you will see that the demand is absolutely the same. First

of all, turn to the book of Ephesians, chapter 4 and verse 24. Note what the Apostle Paul writes: “And that you put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” So we are to put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Turn over to 1 Thessalonians, chapter 3, verse 13. Here the Apostle Paul writes: “To the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” Note the purpose: “to the end that He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness.”

In 1 Thessalonians 4:7 we read, “For God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness.” It does not really matter whether you study the Old Testament or the New Testament, either covenant, concerning the doctrine of holiness, because in both Testaments and both covenants you will find that God demands that His people be a holy people.

Since holiness is demanded in the Word of God, the questions that must be answered are these: What is holiness? How do we obtain it? And how do we know whether or not we have it—whether or not we are a holy people?

Let me begin by showing you two aspects of holiness. The first aspect simply refers to the fact that we as Christians have been set apart for God and have been made holy in Christ. This aspect is known as positional sanctification, or positional holiness.

Two Aspects of Holiness: Positional and Practical

If you would turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and look at verse 2. Whenever you read verses like this, it is referring to positional sanctification. Let me explain. In fact, let us read verse 1. Paul writes, “Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” Note the words, “to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus.”

Now skip down to verse 30 and notice what he says: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Here, then, is what we call positional sanctification. We should immediately rejoice when we learn that we have been made positionally holy in our Lord Jesus Christ.

That means simply this: when God the Father looks upon us, instead of seeing our sins, our wretchedness, and our disobedience, He sees the perfect righteousness, the perfect obedience, and the perfect holiness of Jesus Christ. So we have been sanctified in Christ. However, there is another aspect of holiness, and this is the aspect I really want to emphasize. There is a personal and practical sanctification, or a personal and practical holiness. Those who have been positionally sanctified in Christ Jesus will certainly have an interest in and a desire to be personally and practically sanctified.

Now look at Philippians chapter 2, verses 12 and 13. I want to show you the connection between positional holiness and personal and practical holiness. The Apostle Paul writes, “Wherefore my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” “For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure.”

Notice that the Apostle Paul says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Then he says, “For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure.” The truth of Philippians 2:12–13 is evidenced many times in Scripture and is applied in many areas of doctrine. Let me give you a parallel truth that demonstrates the relationship between positional holiness and personal and practical holiness. That parallel doctrine is what we know as the preservation and the perseverance of the saints.

If I had the time, I could take you through the Scriptures and show you where the Bible says undeniably that we are preserved in Jesus Christ. In fact, that is what Jude 1:1 says: we are preserved in Jesus Christ. God preserves us; it is clear from Scripture. But God's preservation comes to light by His enabling us to persevere in repentance, faith, and obedience.

So there is a correlation between these truths. You cannot have one without having the other. Those who have been preserved by God the Father in Christ Jesus will certainly persevere. The preservation is the foundation of perseverance.

The Diligence Demanded in Holiness

The same thing is true when it comes to sanctification. Those who have been positionally sanctified by Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ will always be personally and practically sanctified in time and in history. If God did not work His grace in us, we could never work it out. Holiness is like any other grace: it is simply in us and through us only by the power and mercy of God. God works it in; it is our responsibility to work it out and make applications to every area and sphere of our life. If we have been made positionally holy in Jesus Christ, we will also seek to be personally and practically holy in living obedience to Him, giving Him honor and glory. In that sense, we are to be His peculiar people, zealous of good works, that we may honor and glorify Him.

The holiness under consideration here is not positional holiness, but personal and practical holiness. This brief exposition has three points, though only one is covered today: the diligence demanded in holiness. Verses 14 and 15 will be considered next week, but today the main attention is given to verse 13. Peter says, "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." He continues:

The Diligence Demanded in Holiness (1 Peter 1:13)

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."

At the end of verse 13 there is a semicolon; verse 14 has a colon; verse 15 has a semicolon; and verse 16 has a period. Therefore, the sentence actually begins in verse 13 and runs through verse 16. All these verses are intimately connected.

The Diligence Demanded in Holiness

According to verse 13, there are three things to which we are to give due diligence. First, we are to gird up the loins of our mind. Second, we are to be sober. Thirdly, we are to hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Consider these one at a time, remembering that we are talking about the diligence demanded in holiness.

Gird Up the Loins of Your Mind

First, Peter says, "Gird up the loins of your mind." Albert Barnes gives a helpful explanation of this phrase: "The allusion here is the manner in which the Orientals were accustomed to dress. They wore loose flowing robes so that when they wished to run or to fight or to apply themselves to any business they were obliged to bind their garments close around them. The meaning here is that they were to have their minds in a constant preparation to discharge their duties or to endure the trials of life like those who were prepared for labor, for a race, or for a conflict."

If an Oriental in those days needed to run, he had to gird up his loins. He had to pull that long, flowing robe up under his belt so his legs would be free to move and would not get entangled in his robe. Thus, when Peter says, "Gird up the loins of your mind," he is using this illustration. Just as you would gird up a bathrobe if you had it on in the morning and needed to run, you are to gird up the loins of your mind. This is equivalent to what we would say: "Take off your coat" or "Roll up your sleeves."

In other words, you get ready to do some serious work. You get ready to apply yourself to some serious action. Literally, what Peter is saying is this: roll up the shirt sleeves of your mind, or take the coat off your mind, and get ready to use your mind. Get down, he is saying, to some very serious, hard, and difficult thinking.

The command to gird up the loins of our mind means that we have been commanded to remove all impediments from our thinking and from our minds. We are to release our minds from all worldly cares, vain desires, and wrong thinking, and allow our minds to rise upward to God and His Word. Literally, he is saying, get down to

some very serious and hard work. Now, interestingly, there may be another allusion here in verse 13 when Peter says, “gird up the loins of your mind.”

That allusion could refer to the first Passover. In Exodus 12:11, the Lord told Moses and the Israelites, “And thus shall you eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's Passover.” What did God mean when He said you shall eat it with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand? Here is what He meant: You be ready to move when I command you. You be ready to act.

So, girding up the loins of our mind means that we are ready to act; we are ready to obey. Our Lord uses this illustration again in Luke 12:35: “Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning.” In other words, girding up the loins of our mind means that we must be ready to think and to act obediently.

No one will ever be holy if he has a lackadaisical mind or never has a serious thought in his head. What Peter is trying to teach us is that, in order to be holy, we have to have some serious thoughts running through our minds. Do you realize that, although we are going to give an account for every idle word, we are also going to give an account for every idle thought? Is it not amazing how many idle thoughts run through your mind—how many stupid, worthless, flippant thoughts? If you do not believe you have those thoughts, you have just never prayed. When you start really praying or studying the Scripture, all of a sudden something comes into your mind: “Oh, I need to do this. I need to do it right now.” And it is worthless.

You see people in church who do not turn their heads to look out the window, but their eyes are drifting off into Never Never Land somewhere. David said in Psalm 119:113, “I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.” I hate vain thoughts.

I am going to be honest with you folks: it is a constant and continual struggle and fight to keep your minds pure, biblical, and holy. In fact, God asked in Jeremiah 4:14, “How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?” Stop and think about that. How long?

Now, I realize that we cannot always be so serious and sober-minded that we have to think this way twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. However, look at what the Apostle Paul says in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." If I cannot be just serious twenty-four hours a day, I can think of just things, honest things, pure things, lovely things, and virtuous things. Most of the time our thoughts are running rampant, and we have never disciplined our minds.

Remember Proverbs 23:7: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The command to gird up our loins, especially the loins of our minds, means that we are to control our thoughts, direct them, and use them for a further understanding in obedience and an increase in holiness. So Peter says, "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind." This command concerns the mind and its direction in obedience, not merely an outward religious appearance. Now, look again at verse 13, because here is the second thing he says: "Be sober." Be sober.

Be Sober

The Greek word for sober is nepho, and it really does not have anything to do with drunkenness. We tend to think that if a man is sober, he is not drunk; if he is drunk, he is not sober. Certainly there could be an application here, but the word sober really and truly has nothing to do with drunkenness. The word simply means to be calm, collected in spirit, dispassionate, temperate, circumspect, and even-minded. Thus, the command is to be sober in this sense: calm, collected, serious-minded, and controlled.

For instance, in 2 Corinthians 5:13, the Apostle Paul says, "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." Here, sober does not mean the opposite of drunk. Paul is saying that whether they are sober—that is, even-minded and serious-minded—it is for their cause. Then, in 1 Peter 4:7, the Apostle Peter writes, "But the end of all things is at

hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." If the end of all things is at hand, do you not think you need to be a little serious-minded? A little even-minded? Controlled? Temperate? Of course. These are the qualities required when we are to watch unto prayer.

Certainly, when Peter says in 1 Peter 1:13, an application could be made to not being drunk with what we call alcoholic beverages. When a man is drunk, obviously he cannot think straight. That is why he is drunk to begin with. All you have to do is read all the Scriptures about drunkenness, especially in Proverbs, where the man wakes up with stripes, does not know how he got beaten up, and yet says he will seek it again. The application may be made, but the meaning of the word itself remains calmness, temperance, circumspection, and an even-minded spirit.

One of my pastor friends, whom I have not seen in years, used to make me laugh. Before God saved him, this man was a drunk. He was much bigger than I am—not only a little taller, but barrel-chested. His wife was about the size of Alice, or perhaps even smaller. I never will forget her telling me that, before God saved him, he came home drunk and fell on the walkway in the front yard. That little, sweet wife of his went out. I do not know how she did it, but she got him to his feet, put his arm around her, and helped him into the house to put him to bed. Bill looked at his wife and said in his drunken stupor, "If my wife knew I was going home with you, she'd kill me." I would have dropped him right there, to be honest with you. He would have stayed on the cold concrete all night long.

Was he thinking straight when he said that? Of course not. You cannot think straight. But let me tell you something: do you realize that you cannot think straight when you overeat? Have you ever noticed that after a heavy meal, when you have really eaten, you get to where you want to doze off and go to sleep? You cannot concentrate. You cannot think.

There are so many applications here. In fact, you could go to Matthew chapter 13, the parable of the sower, though we are not going to turn there. It teaches us that many issues in this life will choke the Word and make it unfruitful. It is our intoxicated thinking concerning the pleasures and temptations of this life that causes us,

the Bible says, to fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts. We often think that a little sin or transgression will not really hurt anything, but it does, and it will. We think, "Is it not a little one? I will just do it this one time." No. We have to avoid anything and everything that will make us dull of hearing—dullness of hearing.

That is, being intoxicated physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually makes us unprepared to hear and receive the things of God. Our Lord said this in Matthew 13 and verse 15, as He was talking about the parable of the sower: “For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” Notice that He talks about the people's heart being waxed gross and their ears being dull of hearing.

I want you to look back a few pages to the book of Hebrews, chapter 5 and verse 11, because the author of Hebrews uses the same thought. He is trying to teach them concerning the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and he tells them this. In fact, let us read verse 10: “Called of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.” Isn't it amazing how quickly we get dull of hearing? He said, “I'd really love to teach you a lot of things, but you're too muddle-headed to understand them.” It's pretty sad.

So, when the Apostle Peter writes, “wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, and be sober,” he is saying, gird up the loins of your mind so that you can think accurately, so that you can think circumspectly, and so that you can think scripturally. This being sober-minded is to be a constant and continuous habit in our lives.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, beginning with verse 6, you understand what the apostle meant when he said, “be sober,” and how it is to be a constant and continual habit in our lives: “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.” When the apostle tells us in verse 6, “therefore let us not sleep,” he is not saying to stay awake twenty-four hours a day. He is

not saying that at all. Go back to verse 5: “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” For they that sleep, sleep in the night.

"They that be drunken, are drunken in the night." When are most sins committed? When are most crimes committed? Usually at night. Then he says in verse 8, he explains it: "But let us, who are of the day, be sober." How are we being sober here? By "putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." So the apostle is telling us that our lives are to be a continual and constant being sober.

We cannot go around sleepy or sleepy-headed. It's impossible to be on your guard when you're sleepy. How many people have you tried to talk to who had not had sufficient rest? And while you're talking to them, they nod off. I've had it happen to me. If Alice and I don't get some rest tonight, we'll be doing that tomorrow ourselves. But I am saying, you cannot think.

I remember when I was in college, I could never stay up late and study. I simply could not do it. When I became sleepy, I had to go to bed. I could get up at four or five o'clock and study without difficulty, but once I became sleepy, I could not think or concentrate. It does you no good to walk around as if you were in a daze or a fog. No.

You have to be aware. You have to be able to think. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” This should give you sufficient reason to be sober.

If you were out in the woods, in the wilderness, and there were lions around, and you knew there were lions around, would you just stumble aimlessly along, not paying attention? Of course not. You need to pay attention. You need to be sober. You need to stay awake. So when Peter says, “gird up the loins of your mind,” take off the shirt sleeves of your mind, or roll up the shirt sleeves of your mind. He is saying, basically, you better get ready to think and you better be sober. You better be able to comprehend and to understand and to perceive and to know.

Now, if you go back to 1 Peter 1:13, here is the third thing: “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Hope to the End for the Grace to Be Brought at Christ's Revelation

I must confess that I believe there are two applications to this admonishment. The Greek word for revelation here is apocalypsis. It refers to a revelation, a manifestation, a coming, and also a disclosure of truth and instruction. It can also refer to that which we would say is laying bare. When someone bares his soul or unburdens his mind, that is the kind of thing meant. It is the same exact word used concerning Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:1: “the revelation of Jesus Christ”—the apocalypsis of Jesus Christ, the unveiling and manifestation of Jesus Christ.

If you consider the context of 1 Peter 1:13, there are actually two revelations that must be considered. We have a revelation that has already been given to us, and a revelation that is coming to us. First, the revelation already given to us is the Word of God. In 1 Peter 1:10-12 we read, “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

“Unto whom it was revealed,” that is the word of God to these prophets, “that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you”—and I might add, recorded in the Word—“which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.” In the context, undoubtedly it refers to the Word of God. God has revealed His Word. He has inspired His prophets, His apostles, and His teachers to testify concerning Jesus Christ and His truth. We are also told that Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God. Jesus Christ is the living Word, and the Bible is indeed the written Word.

They stand or fall together. We do have the revelation of God in the Bible. That is why in Deuteronomy 29:29 we read, “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Notice the secret things belonging to the Lord our God, but the things which He has revealed belong unto us that we may do them.

Ephesians 3:5 says, “Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” He is talking about the truth of God being revealed. In 1 Peter, we are shown this first revelation, which I believe is indeed the Word of God. Verses 10 through 12 speak of the revealed Word of God. Then, in verses 23 through 25, Peter ends this chapter: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” Very obviously, in the context, the very first revelation is indeed the Word of God.

We should gird up the loins of our mind and be sober, looking unto the revelation that God has already given unto us in His Word.

If we do this, it will give us hope. Romans 15:4 says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." God has given us hope in His Word. Romans 15:13 says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." God has given us His Word and His revelation, and that revelation enables us to hope, trust, and lean upon Him.

The second understanding and application is found again in verse 13: "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you." When Peter wrote this, the New Testament canon had not closed. It was not finished. In context, he was still speaking of the Old Testament and of what portion had already been revealed in the New Testament at that time. Yet he says, "...and hope to the end for the grace that is to

be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." There is a revelation of Jesus Christ, and there is grace to be brought unto us when He comes again.

This second application refers to the coming of Christ. Isaiah 40:5 says, "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed," which refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Second Thessalonians 1:7 says, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." Very obviously, there is grace yet to be brought unto us at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One cannot doubt the glory that is to be revealed in us at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Romans 8, verses 18 and 19, the Apostle Paul writes, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature”—that is, the creation—“waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” So the Apostle Paul teaches very clearly that there is going to be a glory manifested in us.

In 2 Corinthians 4, verse 17, he says, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” I get tickled when I read that. When the Apostle Paul says, “for our light affliction”—light affliction? Let us see: stoned and left for dead, beaten with forty stripes, in prison, having his head cut off. Our light affliction. It is but for a moment, but he said it works for us a far more exceeding weight of glory. The Bible says in Colossians 3, verse 4, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

Peter is endeavoring to do something in 1 Peter 1, verse 13: “Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” The one point is the diligence demanded in holiness. What Peter is endeavoring to do is to excite us, to encourage us, and

to exhort us to greater holiness. He tells us that it begins with a proper mindset, a proper attitude, and learning to think the way God would have us to think.

Applications: Holiness Requires Diligence and Internal Transformation

Now let me make some applications. I want you to listen to this first one very carefully. Holiness does not just happen. Holiness does not come by accident. Holiness does not come by a lack of intent to be holy. “Oh, he’s just holy. He didn’t have anything to do with it.” Oh, no. Holiness is not acquired by a trip to the altar or a trip to the front of the church. Holiness, according to Peter, involves a great deal of hard work.

And it is something that must be done daily, all of our lives. It is a continual and constant work. It requires us to roll up our sleeves in our minds, enabling us to think soberly, righteously, obediently, and scripturally. This will lead us to a biblical hope, not only in the Word of God but also in the second coming of Jesus Christ. According to Luke 1:75, we are to live in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives. Peter is saying that this can come about only through a proper mindset, a proper attitude, and a proper perspective concerning the Word of God and Jesus Christ.

It is not enough to avoid the grosser and fleshly sins. You have heard the old adage, "I don't smoke and I don't chew and I don't go with the girls that do." That is wonderful, but it does not make you holy. Holiness begins internally and then works its way out; then it becomes external.

You remember the Pharisees? They were holy externally. Our Lord called them whited sepulchres: "You're like whited sepulchres. Oh, you're beautiful on the outside, but on the inside, you're full of dead men's bones and putrefaction and rotting. You're worthless, you're putrid, and you're corrupt." Just because someone is outwardly and externally moral and pure does not mean that he is holy on the inside. Holiness does not begin on the outside and work its way in. It begins on the inside and works its way out. The average pastor would be delighted to have a church full of Pharisees.

Consider what the Pharisee said in Luke 18: "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." The Pharisees would always show up at church, tithe, participate, and help, but they were Pharisees. They were doing it for show. Our Lord said to His disciples in Matthew 5:20, "Verily I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Wow.

It is not enough to abstain from fleshly sins. We should abstain from fleshly sins, but holiness is more than external. If we desire to be genuinely holy, we must be holy inside, internally, as well as externally. We must have pure spirits, as well as pure minds and pure bodies. Do you remember the passage in 2 Corinthians 7:1?

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." If we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the Spirit, that means we get rid of bitterness, resentment, anger, ill will, unforgiving attitudes, and all kinds of things. Holiness is more than simply abstaining from fleshly lusts. Should we abstain from fleshly lusts? Sure; we have been commanded to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

But if we want to be genuinely holy, Peter says to gird up the loins of your mind, get ready for serious thinking, meditation, and contemplation, and be sober. Assess everything accurately and scripturally, and it will lead you to a biblical hope in the Word of God and at the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to be holy, there has to be diligence.

It would be easy to say, "Lord, I want to be holy; now that's over with, let's forget it and get on with our lives." It does not work like that. It is every day, many times every hour, and sometimes every minute: renewing your mind, girding up your mind, being sober, and learning to have faith in the Word of God and in Jesus Christ. If we are going to be a holy people, Peter says it starts right here—learning to think scripturally and biblically with a proper attitude and mindset.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word and Your truth. As we contemplate, think, and meditate on these things, we ask for holiness. O God, enable us to gird up the loins of our minds, to be sober, and to hope to the end, that we may bring glory and honor to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Holiness Explained and Encouraged

Part Two of Two

Review of Part 1: The Diligence Demanded in Holiness (1 Peter 1:13)

Peter writes, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.”

“But as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, ‘Be ye holy, for I am holy.’” Holiness is absolutely necessary in the Christian life because the Bible clearly teaches in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 14, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Holiness, then, is a necessity. It is a requirement, and it is demanded by a holy God.

Christendom as a whole, while we are indeed a professing Christian people, is practically totally devoid of biblical holiness. I realize there is a vast difference between a professor of faith and one who possesses faith, and I realize that our churches mostly are filled with unsaved people. I understand that. But unhappily, even those who are saved do not have a right understanding concerning biblical holiness. That is why this matter must be considered carefully, not merely assumed because someone professes faith.

There are three points in this message, and two of them are being covered today. The only point considered previously was the diligence demanded in holiness. If you look back in verse 13, this is the only verse discussed in that first point: "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Holiness does not simply happen. It does not slip up on us, nor is holiness acquired by a trip down the aisle to the front of a church building. Holiness, according to Peter, is something that must be worked at. He said, "gird up the loins of your mind," and that expression was explained literally. The believer must therefore give diligence to holiness; it is not an accidental result or something received merely through an outward religious action.

Of course, the Orientals wore those long, flowing robes. If they were to fight, run, or do anything that required movement, they would take their robes and gird them up under their loins. They usually had a belt, a rope, or something that allowed them to move. Peter is literally saying, "Roll up the shirt sleeves of your mind," or, "Take the coat off your mind." Get ready to do some very serious and hard thinking.

In other words, you have to develop a biblical outlook, a biblical perspective, and a biblical worldview. By girding up the loins of your mind, Peter tells you that something serious is going on. Then he says that you are to be sober. The opposite of sober here is not necessarily drunkenness, although that could certainly be an application. The word sober literally means that we are to think accurately, circumspectly, and seriously. We are to be serious-minded in this aspect. When he tells us to be sober, he has

already told us to roll up the shirt sleeves of our mind, and the Scriptures show us how that word is used.

Thirdly, he says that we are to hope to the end for the grace that has been brought to us with the revelation of Jesus Christ. There are actually two revelations referred to. The first, in context, is the revelation of the Word of God, and the second is the second coming of Christ. We must literally gird up the loins of our mind, be sober, and be serious. Hope is encouraged and evidenced by an understanding, first of all, of the written revelation of the Word of God, and secondly, by personal, intimate fellowship with the living Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is returning.

To sum up verse 13, holiness is not a hit-and-miss, every-now-and-then activity. It is a lifestyle, a worldview, a mental attitude, and a perspective on life that pervades our thinking in every sphere and every action of our lives. Holiness is not something that just happens. According to Peter, it is something that must be worked at, and as we continue, you will see how he teaches this. We will now look at verses 14 and 15: the diligence developed in holiness.

The Diligence Developed in Holiness: Obedient Children (1 Peter 1:14)

We have already looked at the first point: diligence demanded in holiness. Now consider the diligence developed in holiness. In verse 14 he says, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

As you look at verse 14, there is a positive that must be developed in our lives, and there is a negative that must be avoided in our lives. The positive is "as obedient children." The negative is "not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts of your ignorance." Let us take the positive first. He says, "as obedient children."

The word obedient comes from a Greek word that basically means "to hear under." It refers to submission and obedience based upon hearing. It means that we learn submission, obedience, and

compliance to our Father's words and counsel simply upon hearing His instruction. We do not argue, bellyache, whine, or criticize; we simply obey.

There are two basic ways of instructing and educating children. The first way is verbal, and the second way is punitive. Verbal simply means that we talk to them, instruct them, give them directions, and teach them. Punitive means the use of the rod; that is, we chastise them and whip them for not obeying our commands.

It is interesting that in the New Testament our Lord said four times, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." What is an obedient child? An obedient child is one who hears and immediately, instantly obeys. Delayed obedience is disobedience. Delayed obedience is disobedience. Intending to obey is not the same as obedience. I have had my children and my grandchildren tell me, "Well I intended to do that." But you did not. Intended obedience is not obedience. Politeness, respect, and reverence are pointless without obedience. Hold 1 Peter and turn back in your Bibles to Matthew 21. I am going to make that statement again, and then I want you to see it from the Scripture. Matthew chapter 21, beginning with verse 28. Listen to what I am telling you; it is very important. Notice Matthew 21. Here is the statement again: politeness, respect, and reverence are pointless without obedience. In Matthew chapter 21, verse 28, our Lord said, "But what think ye?"

A certain man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, “Son, go work today in my vineyard.” He answered, “I will not.” But afterwards he repented and went. He came to the second and said, “Likewise.” He answered, “I go, sir,” and went not. Then our Lord asked, “Whether of them twain did the will of his father?” They said unto him, “The first.” Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” The second child simply said, “Yes, sir. Yes, father. I’ll do it right now,” but he did not. The first one was rude and ugly, but he repented and went.

The point is that you can be polite, reverent, and respectful, but if you do not do what you are told, it is still disobedience. That is why our Lord said in John 14 and verse 15, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” If we love Him, we will obey. Every one of us

admires children who hear and obey instantly. When we see children like that, we tend to think they must have wonderful parents who have spent a great deal of time with them, meticulously instructed and trained them, and done so very lovingly and kindly. Has it ever entered your minds that this is exactly the kind of children we should be toward our Heavenly Father?

Punitive instruction is demanded only when verbal instruction fails. That is why Proverbs 22 and verse 15 says, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of the child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” It is foolishness and sin that require the rod, and when they require it, it is applied. If we applied the rod to our disobedient physical children, shall God do any less to His children? If we whipped, chastened, and disciplined our children because we love them, is not God going to do the same toward us? Our Lord has promised that all believers who sin will suffer. This does not mean that He ceases to love us or that we cease to be His children; it means that we will be chastened if we sin.

The Bible tells us in Psalm 89, verse 32, God said, “And one of my favorite verses is found in Micah 6 and verse 9, and here’s all it says, the latter part, ‘Hear ye the rod, and him who hath appointed it.’” In other words, God says, if you won’t hear my words, then you need to hear my rod, because I’m going to bring that rod upon you. The rod only comes when we fail to hear, heed, and obey.

What Peter is saying in 1 Peter, chapter 1 and verse 14, is that, as obedient children, we need to learn to hear under. That is, when we hear our Lord’s instruction and directions, we instantly and immediately obey and bring our lives into conformity to His Word. It is just that simple. An obedient child is one who hears and obeys instantly and immediately. “As obedient children” is the positive. Now here is the negative: “Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.”

The Diligence Developed in Holiness: Not Fashioning Yourselves to Former Lusts (1 Peter 1:14)

It is very important that you understand this. What were your former lusts? Ephesians chapter 2 tells us exactly what they were: “Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this

world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others."

Our former lusts, then, describe how we lived before we were converted. We lived according to the world, according to the flesh, and according to the spirit of this world. We were disobedient and rebellious. We did what we pleased and what satisfied our flesh. According to 1 Peter 1:14, if we are to be obedient children, we must not fashion or mold ourselves according to our former lusts in our ignorance. That means this.

We must change. How do you change? In Ephesians 4:17, Paul says, "This I say therefore and testify of the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, how? In the vanity of their mind." Paul is saying that you do not walk as the unsaved walk. How do they walk? In the vanity, the uselessness, and the worthlessness of their mind.

"Having the understanding darkened, that's in ignorance, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart." He says you do not walk like that. "Who being past feeling, have given themselves over into lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness." But you have not so learned Christ. Now, let us go to verse 21.

"If so be that you have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, that you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Paul says that we are to put off the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, and then, "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." When Paul says, "be renewed in the spirit of your mind," it is the same thing as Peter saying, "gird up the loins of your mind."

Here is what he is teaching us very plainly: in order to change our lives, we must learn Jesus Christ. There are biblical principles. We

must learn to put off the old habits, the old ways of thinking, and the old ideas, and learn to put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness. The only way we can learn these things is by girding up the loins of our mind, being sober, thinking seriously, and studying the Scripture to find the principles of the Word of God.

An ignorant man will never be a holy man, and an ignorant man will never be a godly man. I am not talking about someone who has never been to school or who has never had a higher education. I am talking about a man who is ignorant of God's Word. Such a man will never be a holy man, because we must learn Christ. We must be constantly putting off our old habits and putting on new, godly, biblical habits.

I have told people that I have done far more repenting since I have been saved than when I got saved. It is amazing: when you think you have everything under control, all of a sudden you see things in your life that are wrong and wicked. It must be a constant and continual change. The Bible tells us in Romans 8:29 that God's will for each of us is that we be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

We have to continually go through this putting off and putting on until we have acquired new habits, new attitudes, and new perspectives. It is just like when you go to bed: you put off the clothes that you have worn all day and put on your nightclothes. The next morning, you get up, put off your nightclothes, and put on your dayclothes. You have to put off before you put on. You have to put off these old habits, but you cannot merely put them off; you must put something else in their place, and that is a new habit, a godly habit.

Peter says, "as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as He which called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation." All manner of conversation. Our God is holy. He has called us unto holiness, and therefore He demands holiness in all manner of conversation.

Holiness in All Manner of Conversation (1 Peter 1:15)

The word conversation does not just refer to talk. It refers to behavior, deportment, conduct, and your manner of life. What he is saying is that every sphere, every area of our life, is to be controlled and regulated by holiness. In other words, we have no choice in the matter. Holiness is His requirement. Holiness is His demand. Therefore, there are no neutral zones.

There are no king's exes. There are no times out. I cannot say, "Well, Lord, I want to be holy in every area but this. I am dealing with Henry Klingler. You know how Henry is. No, Lord. No, no, no, no, no. I do not care if Henry is wrong. I have to do what is right." I cannot say, "Time out, I am not going to be holy when I deal with Henry," or, "Time out, I am not going to be holy when I deal with Doc." No, I cannot do that. God demands holiness in every area and every sphere of my life. How do we accomplish becoming holy in every sphere of our lives? I want to show you the answer to that question in Romans chapter 6, beginning with verse 11.

How to Become Holy: Reckoning and Yielding (Romans 6:11-19)

In Romans chapter 6, beginning with verse 11, God says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Now go back to verse 11: "Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The word reckon means to count; it means to impute. So he literally says, count yourself dead indeed unto sin. That's first. Count yourself dead indeed unto sin.

Let me ask you a question. Suppose I had a casket in this room with a dead man in it, and I pulled out a fifth of whiskey and looked at the dead man and said, "Come on, buddy, let's get drunk." Is he

going to get drunk? No. What if I said, "Come on and let's go commit adultery"? Is he going to do it? No. Why? He's dead.

Sin has nothing to do with him now. He is dead. What does God say? Count yourselves dead unto sin. When temptation comes along, you tell temptation, "I'm sorry, I'm a dead man. I've died in Jesus Christ. I've been crucified with Christ. I'm dead. You have no power over me. You have no persuasion over me. I'm counting myself dead."

Then he says, do not just count yourself dead. You then count yourself alive unto God through Jesus Christ. The Bible says that Christ died indeed unto sin once, but after he liveth unto God. Once we have counted ourselves dead in Christ, we have to understand that we are alive in Christ and are to live for Him. Now notice what He said in verse 11: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Then verse 12 says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Notice what He did not say. He did not say, "Let not sin be in your mortal body." Would to God it wasn't there.

And one day by His grace it won't be there. But it is there now. What He did say was, "Let not sin reign in your mortal body." Sin is no longer in control for the child of God. Sin is no longer our Lord. Jesus Christ is our Lord; Jesus Christ is in control. When sin comes to us, we say no.

This is the difference between a saved man and an unsaved man. An unsaved man has no power to resist sin because sin is his lord and king. That's what Romans 5 teaches, and Romans 6 teaches it as well. Only those who have been saved by the grace of God have been delivered from the dominion and power of sin; now they are under the dominion and power of Jesus Christ.

You may ask, "How does reckoning myself dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God make me holy? How is denying the lordship, kingship, and dominion of sin in my life going to make me holy?" Look at verse 16: "Know you not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness?"

Whomever you obey, his servant you are, whether it is sin unto death or obedience unto righteousness. If I want to be the servant of sin, I obey sin. If I want to be the servant of Jesus Christ, I obey Jesus Christ. Obedience demonstrates and evidences in whom we genuinely believe and trust. The one we obey is the one we genuinely believe in and trust. It is a very practical test and demonstration.

Our Lord said in Luke 6:46, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?" You remember the word Lord? Curiosity means boss, owner, master, sovereign. He said, "Why are you calling me Lord if you're not going to do what I'm going to say unto you?"

Look at Romans 6:19: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh." He says, "I know you're weak." Therefore, He puts it where we can understand it: "For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."

Before you were converted, you gave an eager, willing, ready, and practical obedience to sin. Now that you are saved, you give a willing, ready, and eager obedience to Jesus Christ. If you served sin eagerly, willingly, and readily, giving a very practical obedience to it before you were saved, shall you do less for Jesus Christ, who saved you and took you out of your sin? No.

Before we were converted, when we walked according to the course of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the lust of our flesh and the lust of our mind, and the pride of our life, we planned to sin. We schemed to sin. We sacrificed to sin. We wanted what saved and satisfied us, and we worked it around so that we could have that. We were giving a practical obedience to the lust of our flesh and the lust of our eyes and the pride of life.

Now that we are saved, can we not think, plan, and scheme to give a practical obedience to Jesus Christ? Can we not sacrifice to do that? I believe anything less is an act of blasphemy. Because we willingly gave that to sin, how can we give less to Jesus Christ?

What the Apostle Peter is telling us, as well as what the Apostle Paul is telling us, is that we must continue to change our lives and

bring them into conformity to His Word until we have completely put off those old habits, put on new habits, and learned Jesus Christ. All holiness is a very practical application of salvation that is to be developed in our life. Therefore, diligence is demanded in holiness, and there must be a diligence developing holiness in our lives. I want you to see one last point today: the diligence designed in holiness.

The Diligence Designed in Holiness: Be Holy as God is Holy (1 Peter 1:15-16)

Look at verses 15 and 16 together: "But as He who hath called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'" I read these verses together because I want you to see the thought that really nailed my hide to the barnyard door.

Look again at verse 15: "But as He who hath called you is holy, so be you holy." How can you come up with anything other than this? Since God is holy, He demands that I be as He is in holiness. Now, we know that God is holy. In fact, Revelation 15:4 says, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For only thou art holy." In 1 Samuel 2:2, the Word of God declares, "There is none as holy as the Lord."

Since God is all holy, only holy, and always holy, how can we be as holy as He who has called us to be holy? Look at verse 15 again: "But as He who hath called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation." Obviously, we are to be like Him in holiness. Since we are sinners, however, we can in no way reach perfection in this life. So how can we be holy as He is holy? That is an interesting question. How can we be holy as He is, because God is only holy, all holy, and always holy? Those of you who are saved, ask yourselves this question: Are you all holy, only holy, and always holy?

How can we be holy as God is holy? It is important to understand that the basis of God's law is the holy character of God. The law of God is an expression of God's righteousness and God's holiness. God's law is a manifestation of His character. It is also a manifestation of the conduct, action, and disposition of heart that God approves of and delights in. We know that God is righteous, and so are His judgments.

Please remember: a king rules by his law. God's law is the expression of His nature and of His will. As God is holy, so is His law. The Bible says in Psalm 11:7, "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; His countenance doth behold the upright." Psalm 19:9 says, "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Unhappily, when God's law is mentioned, most people think only of the Ten Commandments. It is true that the Ten Commandments are a summary of God's law, but they are not all of God's law. God's law is also revealed in the context of case laws, historical narrative, prophecy, psalms, Proverbs, the Gospels, and the Epistles. All of God's Word is law. The Ten Commandments summarize the essential principles of the moral law, but those principles are also developed, explained, illustrated, and applied throughout the rest of Scripture. A king rules by his law.

That is why Isaiah 8:20 says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Everything must be held according to the light of the law of God. In Matthew 22:35, one of them, a lawyer, asked Jesus a question, tempting Him and saying, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is likened to it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Interestingly enough, when the lawyer asked Him, "Master, what is the greatest commandment of all?"

Our Lord never quoted any of the Ten Commandments, but He gave a summary of all God’s law, just as the Ten Commandments are a summary of the moral law. The summary of God’s law is to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, body, spirit, being—everything we are. The second is likened to it: We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Then He said, “On these hang all the law and the prophets.” That is the totality of God’s Word.

Do you remember what our Lord said in Matthew 5:17? “Think not that I’m come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I’m not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” He continued, “For 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." What did the Apostle Paul say in Romans 7:12? "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

If the law is a manifestation of God's holy character and will, and if it is holy as the One who gave it, when we obey God's law, are we not being holy as He is holy? That law is an expression of God's will. How do we become holy as He is holy? By bringing our lives into conformity to His law, which is not only an expression of His holy nature, but also an expression of His holy will for our lives. We become like Him when we obey Him and do that which He has ordained and given to us expressly for our holiness.

God's Law as the Standard of Holiness

Psalm 119 says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." We become holy as He is holy only as we obey His holy law, which is the totality of Scripture.

In 1 Peter 1:16 we read, "Because it is written, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'" Well, isn't that interesting? Where is it written? Where is that written? The answer is that it is written throughout the older covenant. The New Testament, or the New Covenant, is verifying the Old Testament's immutability because God is immutable. We have the same God, the same law, and the same demand for holiness. So when the New Testament says, "because it is written," it is referring to everything that the Old Testament has written concerning God's holiness. The command, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is not new with the New Testament; it is written throughout the older covenant.

In Leviticus 11:44, Scripture says, "For I am the Lord your God: you shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God: you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

Leviticus 19:1-2 says, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 'Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.'" Again, Leviticus 20:7 says, "Sanctify yourselves therefore and be ye holy, for I am the Lord your God." Notice the command: "Sanctify yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God." Did God demand holiness of the saints in the Old Testament? The answer is yes. Leviticus 20:26 declares, "And you shall be holy unto me, for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that you should be mine."

"And you shall be holy unto me." God says, "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself above all the people that are upon the faces of the earth." Again, He says, "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself above all the nations that are upon the face of the earth."

There are at least two very important points to grasp. First, God's law can never change because God in His own essence cannot change. God is immutable. He is unchangeable, and therefore that law which He gave, which is holy, just, and good, is just as immutable and unchangeable as God is. Second, if we desire to be like Him, to please Him, and to honor Him, we must conform to His law, which is His standard of holiness and righteousness.

Application: Holiness Determined by God, Not Man

Now, in light of this truth, consider 1 John 3:1: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." Look at the greatness of His love, which He has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

"Beloved, now, right now, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. For we shall see Him as He is." So here is the question: If we are going to be like Him when we see Him, should we not be like Him now, before we see Him, if we are His sons, if we are His children? Of course. If we are going to be like Him

when we see Him, in order to please Him and obey Him—for God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His dear Son—we need to learn to be like Him now. God designed it that way. He told us to obey Him.

Holiness Is Determined by God

One of the plainest passages is found in Matthew 5:48, where He said that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven. I will guarantee you that the child born to Clay and Jennifer is going to look like them. Hopefully, if it is a girl, she will look more like Jennifer. That child is going to look like them. Let that child live with them for fifteen or twenty years, and the child is going to end up acting like them and having the same attitude and mindset that they have.

What did He say? That you may be the children of your Father in heaven. In other words, just as our earthly children look like us, think like us, walk like us, and act like us, we should think, walk, and act like our Heavenly Father as obedient children—not fashioning ourselves according to our former lusts and our ignorance. But as He who called us is holy, so we are to be holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

My first application is this: Holiness is determined by God and not by man. I do not care one whit for all the traditions and declarations of men. They cannot and will never make you holy. Like the Pharisees, you may keep them until you die, yet you will die in your sins and never be holy. You may belong to every church in the land, be baptized by every preacher available, and walk down the aisle into the front of every church, but unless your life is one of obedience to the Word of God, you will never, ever be holy.

I distinguished for you in the first message the difference between positional holiness and practical and personal holiness. I am not talking about positional holiness, the perfection that we have in Christ.

I'm talking about the personal and practical holiness that He demands. It is only as we have been regenerated and converted and empowered by the Holy Spirit that we're enabled to bring our lives in

conformity to His Word. Our Father has designed that we be like Him, and we must therefore personally and practically be like Him and conform to His standard. We must diligently, by girding up the loins of our mind, by being sober, by hoping to the end, by being obedient children and not fashioning ourselves according to our former lusts and our ignorance, be holy in all manner of conversation because He who has called us is holy.

We have to diligently, consistently, and constantly put off the old man and put on the new man and become more and more like Christ. That is holiness. Peter is exhorting us, explaining to us what holiness is, and encouraging us to be more like our Heavenly Father. If we're His children, we genuinely want to be like Him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your love and Your mercy. We thank You for Your truth. Lord, we have to confess we've failed so miserably in our lives. We've been so unholy. We've been so disobedient. But Lord, I pray that You will convict us, enable us, and empower us by Thy Spirit to be more holy, to be more godly, to put off the old man, to put on the new man, and to bring our lives into greater conformity to Your Word.

Thou didst say, Father, without me, you can do nothing. And Lord, holiness is something. We must have You, Your power, Your help, and Your direction. So we ask, Father, for Your blessing and power. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen.

Source Notes

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