



Session 2

BE HOLY

Jesus' resurrection empowers believers for holy living.

1 PETER 1:13-25

¹³ Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be serious and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance. ¹⁵ But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; ¹⁶ for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy. ¹⁷ And if you address as Father the One who judges impartially based on each one's work, you are to conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your temporary residence. ¹⁸ For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from the fathers, not with



perishable things like silver or gold,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.²⁰ He was chosen before the foundation of the world but was revealed at the end of the times for you²¹ who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.²² By obedience to the truth, having purified yourselves for sincere love of the brothers, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,²³ since you have been born again—not of perishable seed but of imperishable—through the living and enduring word of God.²⁴ For All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like a flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls,²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word that was preached as the gospel to you.

Underline the commands given in this passage. Highlight the reasons for following the commands, looking for how the two are connected. Focus on the motivation for obedience to the commands.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Many of us remember where we were on September 11, 2001. So many things have changed since that day; some are directly related to the events of those days while others are not. Security practices, economic realities, definitions of marriage, and the rise of terrorists groups are just a few of the changes we have seen. You have no doubt changed a great deal as well. Relationships may have started while others ended. Maybe you've had children (or grandchildren). Perhaps you changed jobs or had a major illness.

Narrow the question of personal change to the matter of your relationship with the Lord. Think about how you're different now, for better or worse, than you were then. Perhaps you began participating in a congregation for the first time or you changed churches. Maybe you began studying Scripture more seriously, or participated in a mission trip, or began leading an adult Bible study group.

What has changed in the past 15 years? How do those changes impact people spiritually? How has your walk with God changed in the past 15 years?

Peter wrote his first letter to Christians suffering in Asia Minor. They faced localized persecution and needed encouragement to continue in their faith. The presence of persecution did not give them a license to compromise their standards. Even more importantly, those who experienced persecution needed to maintain their standards of holiness even if it put them at odds with those who threatened them. They were accountable to God for how they conducted their lives. The way they lived reflected their belief in the gospel. Just as he had connected future hope with Jesus' resurrection, so here Peter made the point that the resurrection of our Lord empowers believers for present-day holy living.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Sanctification*

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

1 PETER 1:13-25

In 1 Peter 1, the apostle wrote to encourage Christians in Asia Minor who faced difficult persecution. Peter began the chapter by reminding them of their living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is a living Savior, He promised that the persecuted Christians would live forever with Him. This created much hope and encouragement for those who needed an eternal perspective in their lives.

In verses 10-12, Peter reminded his readers that the Old Testament had prophesied Christ would suffer many things.



However, Christ would also be glorified as He obeyed God's will. Peter's hope was that the early Christians suffering in Asia Minor would also remain faithful in their suffering. As God glorified His Son for remaining faithful in His suffering, He also wanted to honor those who followed Christ. However, they needed to remain faithful in living holy lives.

The Christians in Asia Minor had an advantage over people in the Old Testament because the gospel had been preached to them by the Holy Spirit (v. 12). This was a mystery so great Peter said the angels desired to look into the glory of the gospel. The angels had no need to experience the gospel in the sense sinful man did, so they looked upon it as outsiders.

The gospel was so great that not only did the angels desire to look into it, but Christians who had experienced the gospel desired to live holy lives because of it. They were to live lives that were obedient (vv. 13-16), reverent (vv. 17-21), and compassionate (vv. 22-25).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OBEDIENT (1 PET. 1:13-16)

VERSE 13

¹³ Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be serious and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Peter began his letter to persecuted Christians by reminding them of what they had believed (vv. 3-12). As he proceeded in the letter, he emphasized how belief affects life. First, they were to be *serious*. This word has the general sense of living alert and with sound judgment.

Second, they were to *set their hope completely on the grace* that Jesus would bring at His return. They were to live alert in the present age, but with a hope toward the age to come. Before calling believers to holiness, Peter inserted a brief reminder that only the grace of God can make that possible.

VERSE 14

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance.

Obedience does not produce a believer in Jesus Christ, but true belief does produce obedience. As believers, ungodly desires still beckon and tempt us from following the Lord. Certainly when believers face trying circumstances, as they did in Peter's day, it is important to live alert and obedient lives. *As obedient children* of God, Peter reminds us we are different from the world.

Peter admonished believers to *not be conformed to the desires of their former ignorance*. Holiness is a possibility only because of the new birth. We are now *obedient children* because we have been born again (v. 3). Since we have experienced new birth, we are not to return to the former way of life.

Why is it important to remember the teachings about the new birth before we begin understanding the call to holy living? Why is the order of the new birth and holy living important?

VERSES 15-16

¹⁵ **But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct;** ¹⁶ **for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy.**

In addition to reminding believers of their new birth, Peter reminds us of the reason for holy living: God *is •holy* (see p. 6). Quoting Leviticus 11:44-45, he challenged believers to measure their lives by the Lord, not by some inferior standard of holiness. Peter's injunction to live holy lives came directly from the Hebrew Scriptures. He grounded his instruction not in human opinion, but in Scripture. When it comes to holiness, we have little room to form our own opinions about what is right and what is wrong. In a world of shifting ethical standards, it is important to know the Bible and ground all of our decisions in its teaching.

How would you describe the connection between God's character and a believer's conduct?



BIBLE SKILL: *Observe when and for what purpose a New Testament passage includes an Old Testament quotation.*

Identify the sources of the biblical quotation in 1 Peter 1:16. Read Leviticus 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:7,26. Why did Peter use this quotation? What factors are different in the old and new contexts? What factors are the same or similar? How does the quoted passage help you better understand God, His holiness, and the call to holy living?

REVERENT (1 PET. 1:17-21)

VERSE 17

¹⁷ And if you address as Father the One who judges impartially based on each one's work, you are to conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your temporary residence.

Right belief not only results in holy lives but also in reverence for God. Those who truly believe that the Lord is the ultimate Judge live their lives in reverent *fear*. Addressing God as *Father* but refusing to show Him reverence in the way we live is foolish. Because God is our ultimate Judge, we should respect His authority in our lives. He holds us accountable, and we should respond to His authority by showing honor to Him.

VERSES 18-19

¹⁸ For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from the fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.

God is worthy of our reverence not only because He is our Father and Judge, but also because He is the One who has *redeemed* our *empty way of life*. The word *redeem* was a word used in the

slave trade. Someone could purchase another's freedom by paying a ransom price. Peter reminded his audience that they inherited an *empty way of life* from their own earthly *fathers*. Sin had spread from Adam to his descendants, and is passed down to all like some dreaded disease. It enslaves all who inherit sin, and sinners need a redemption that cannot be bought with *silver or gold*.

Only heightening the level of reverence for God, Peter told how God redeemed believers *not with perishable things ... but with the precious blood of Christ*. God offered His own Son to release those who were enslaved to sin. He has set them free to become His own children. By referring to the *lamb without defect or blemish*, Peter pointed to Christ being the sinless Lamb who was sacrificed for our sins (Lev. 22:19-25).

VERSES 20-21

²⁰ He was chosen before the foundation of the world but was revealed at the end of the times for you ²¹ who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

The plan of God to redeem humanity was so carefully crafted that it proved God to be worthy of reverence. Peter reminds us Jesus *was chosen before the foundation of the world*. Peter did not mean simply that God knew ahead of time Jesus would die in this way. Rather, the death of Jesus was God's intended way of salvation even before creation. The cross was not an afterthought. God didn't make humans and then wring His hands when they fell into sin. God in His sovereignty knew that Adam and Eve would fall, and He also already had a plan in place. Jesus was not "Plan B." Though people did not always understand His plan, God continually revealed Jesus in the writings of the Hebrew Scriptures and then revealed Him in due time so people would believe in Him.

In verse 21, Peter further unpacked God's work of redemption through Christ. By believing in Jesus' resurrection *from the dead*, Christians express that their *faith and hope are in God*. We must meet Him not on our own terms but on His terms. On our terms, we could never please God because we are all sinners who fall short of His glory (Rom. 3:23). However, it pleased God to crush His own Son as the payment for our sin (Isa. 53:10). By believing in the sacrificial death of Jesus, we are showing the ultimate reverence for God.



How does the knowledge that God planned Jesus' death and resurrection long before you ever sinned heighten your reverence for the Father? How does rejecting the death of Christ disrespect God the Father?

COMPASSIONATE (1 PET. 1:22-25)

VERSES 22-23

²² By obedience to the truth, having purified yourselves for sincere love of the brothers, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again—not of perishable seed but of imperishable—through the living and enduring word of God.

True belief leads to obedience and reverence; it also leads to a compassionate life. Having a passion for holiness without practicing compassion can result in legalism. As we revere the Lord, we will experience both a desire for holiness and a compassion for others.

The practical outgrowth of holiness is not that others will view us as better people but that we will have a more *sincere love* for others. We can show grace because we have been shown grace by God. If our heart is pure, we will reach out to others with that same grace that God lavished on us.

What is the connection between holiness and compassion? What is the connection between humility and a person's love for others?

The command to love others is rooted in the saving work of Christ. We can love because Jesus first loved us. Again referring to new birth (1 Pet. 1:3), Peter reminds us of the importance of loving others. Salvation is forever since it is of *imperishable* seed, and in that sense it mirrors the *word of God*, which is *living and enduring*. The *seed* is yet another reference to the new birth, which comes through the life-giving message of Jesus' death and resurrection.

What did we do to deserve salvation? Nothing. We simply believed the Word of God, from beginning to end, reveals the

gospel of Jesus Christ. God did the work, and we believed in it. Since He did the work, we have reason for humility and grace in the way we relate to others. We show sincere love to others because it has been shown to us.

VERSES 24-25

²⁴ For All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like a flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word that was preached as the gospel to you.

To illustrate the importance of showing compassion toward others, Peter turned to Isaiah 40:6-8. These verses had provided comfort to the exiles in Babylon that God would one day restore them to their land. God would show compassion to them even though in the course of history people and nations are like the grass and flowers of a field. The grass and flowers are good while they last, but they are temporary. ***The grass withers, and the flower falls.*** So also God's people fell as a nation to Babylon after the ministry of the prophet Isaiah. But God's people would endure because God had already spoken on the subject. He had promised Abram that his descendants would be numerous and would bless all other nations through them (Gen. 12:1-3). He had promised David that his reign would endure forever (2 Sam. 7:13). God, who always keeps His promises, showed compassion on His people in Babylon even though they did not deserve it.

The text of Isaiah 40:6-8 is a reminder that even though the grass and flowers are temporary, God's Word is not. It ***endures forever.*** God showed compassion toward His people because He had made promises that He would not revoke. Because God set a pattern of loving people in spite of their failures, we too may show grace toward others, whether they deserve it or not. As a result of our salvation, we can reach out to love others.

How is our love for others rooted in the gospel?



IN MY CONTEXT

Believers are to live in a holy manner because God is holy. They are accountable to God for how they conduct their lives. The Christian life is motivated by a pure love based upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Would you say that your life leans more toward a passion for holiness or compassion toward others? Identify actions you need to take to maintain a healthy balance between the two.

Review the motivations for actions presented by Peter in this passage. Which motivation do you need to incorporate the most into your life? What steps do you need to take to instill that motivation for action?

Identify some groups of people around you that your Bible study group can adopt to show Christ-like compassion toward them. Make a plan as a group for how you will demonstrate compassion to the identified groups.

MEMORY VERSE

By obedience to the truth, having purified yourselves for sincere love of the brothers, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.
—1 Peter 1:22