

Live Holy Lives

Bible Background • GALATIANS 5:22–23; 1 PETER 1

Printed Text • 1 PETER 1:13–25 | Devotional Reading • 1 PETER 1:3–12

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **COMPREHEND** the meaning and power of holy living that Peter commends to the exiled community, **AFFIRM** our rebirth in Christ through obedience to God, and **COMMIT** to living holy lives of imitating Christ.

In Focus

Nicole pulled her car into the church parking lot where she could see small clusters of young people heading into the building. The meeting was scheduled to begin in ten minutes, but Nicole remained in the car. This was the day she would be installed as the new community activity director.

When she returned home from college, she had accepted an assignment as the ministry assistant. In this role, she worked closely with Sister Woodson. Sister Woodson secured funding from local businesses to install a computer lab in the church activity room, worked with the local college to provide tutors, coordinated the seniors' monthly outings and fun activities, and so much more.

A month had passed since Sister Woodson announced that she and her husband would be leaving, retiring in another state. Nicole was surprised the pastor asked her to take the position. The pastor had assured Nicole that she was the best candidate. He had also told her that the Trustee Board had unanimously agreed, and Sister Woodson had written a letter recommending Nicole. As she walked to the church, two girls ran up and threw their arms around her. One of them looked up, smiling, and said, "We're going to miss Sister Woodson. But we're so happy you are going to be our new director."

How can we be confident in following and serving great leadership?

Keep in Mind

"So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy" (1 Peter 1:14–15, NLT)

Words You Should Know

A. Purified (v. 22) hagnizo (Gk.) — Made holy

B. Pure (v. 22) katharos (Gk.) — Cleansed

Say It Correctly

none

KJV

1 Peter 1:13 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;¹⁴ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

24 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:

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

NLT

1 Peter 1:13 So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.¹⁴ So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then.

15 But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy.

16 For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."

17 And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time here as "temporary residents."

18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value.

19 It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. ²⁰ God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake.

21 Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.

22 You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.

23 For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.

24 As the Scriptures say, "People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades.

25 But the word of the Lord remains forever." And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.

The People, Places, and Times

Holiness. For people and their possessions, holiness means separation from what is common or unclean, so that consecration to God can follow. A key part of what it means to be a follower of Yahweh is to separate oneself from outside influences that are not God. Again and again, in the Law, the Israelites are told not to be like other nations and to stand out as unique because they follow God. As God’s representatives to the nations and unbelievers, His people must reflect His nature. A primary characteristic of God’s nature is His holiness. Around His throne, God is praised as “holy, holy, holy.”

Background

In this letter, the first of the Petrine epistles (i.e., those written by Peter), the apostle is encouraging a congregation that is in the midst of persecution. This was probably a reference to the sufferings that were common to first-century Christians, whether it was ridicule, slander, or violence. Writing from Rome, referred to as “Babylon” in the text, Peter pens this epistle to “the Dispersion” using language often associated with the Jewish Diaspora to describe the state of early Christianity, where Jewish and Gentile Christians are spread throughout the Roman Empire. In the midst of the difficulty of everyday persecution, Peter offers encouragement, affirming that Christ’s church lives in the world of the already and the not yet, where the kingdom of God has broken into the world but has not been fully realized. In the light of this reality, the believer, though suffering, also awaits the greatest of joys. Ultimately, this is an epistle of hope in “an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” and it is that hope that sustains the Christian in the midst of any trial. That hope, however, is not static but dynamic, and Peter explains what it looks like to live a life that is infused with Christian hope (1 Peter 1:13–25).

How do you usually think of hope? If your hope in Christ is imperishable, what does this mean when you face seemingly insurmountable trials?

At-A-Glance

1. Be Ye Holy; For I Am Holy (1 Peter 1:13-16)
2. A Great Price Was Paid For You (vv. 17-25)

In Depth

1. Be Ye Holy; For I Am Holy (1 Peter 1:13–16)

The “wherefore” at the beginning of verse 13 refers to the fact Peter was expounding just prior to these verses: that our God has caused us to be born again to a living, active, glorious, joyful hope. In fact, God’s grace, as it has been lavished upon us, is so great that the angels are almost jealous! The greatness of God and his work, however, deserves a proper response. Those to whom God has been wondrously gracious have been given marching orders by that grace. So Peter calls us to “prepare our minds for action,” focusing forward on Christ, who has redeemed us. How do we do that? By seeking to be “holy in all manner of conversation” (v. 15). Apart from the Holy Spirit, such a command is impossible. But with the understanding that this is precisely one of the reasons that Christ died and rose again, such a command to be holy becomes freeing. Before Christ’s death, He assured His disciples with the promise that He would send the Holy Spirit to indwell all those who are united to Him by faith. Holiness is not an option. It is a joyous imperative.

According to Scripture, where do you find the strength to live a holy life?

2. A Great Price Was Paid for You (vv. 17–25)

Peter encourages his audience that God the Father “without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work” (v. 17). It is important to see this as encouragement, not as a burden. If one follows a message that stipulates obedience and blessing are linked so closely that if you suffer, it is purely because of your deeds, then the concept of “works” becomes a burden. God’s impartial judgment might also be seen as a burden if one views it through the lens of works of righteousness, which would encourage us to work in order to gain God’s favor.

Instead, Peter reminds us that God is our Father, into whose family we have been adopted. Thus, we must live out of fear, respect, and love for our Heavenly Father who showed His love for us by redeeming us with the precious blood of Christ (v. 19). That life involves forsaking the “vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers” (v. 18) and the “former lusts in your ignorance” (v. 14) and instead clothing ourselves with the Holy Spirit. This can only be done when we recognize and affirm that we have been made believers in God through our union with Christ and that our only hope rests in Him alone. With this truth firmly set in our minds and the Spirit firmly in our hearts, we can focus on loving one another, encouraging one another, and persevering in doing so because we do so with the strength of the Good News.

How can a focus on Christ bring energy to your spiritual life?

Search the Scriptures

1. What does this text tell about how to live a holy life?
2. How do we prepare our minds for action (v. 13, NLT)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. How does keeping our identity as children of God at the forefront of our minds help us to navigate the world?
2. In what practical ways does our redemption by the blood of Jesus help us face persecution and struggle?

Liberating Lesson

The holiness of conduct is not reducible to mere one-on-one relationships. It includes those, but as technology continues to develop, our webs of influence tend to grow. As these webs of influence grow, our conception of our neighbor must grow as well. As our understanding of who our neighbor is grows, our understanding of how to love our neighbor has to change with it. Thus, holiness has to be the framework within which we consider our decisions, such as where to live, where to shop, and even how to vote. Peter encourages us not to be holy in some of our conduct but in all of our conduct. Such intense self-interrogation can only happen through the lens of the Word, consistent prayer, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the support of the Christian community.

Application for Activation

This passage of Scripture presents a number of concepts we should examine in our lives as we try to always demonstrate faith and love. For example, we should consider the care of the poor, the widow, and the orphan when making life decisions. If you find yourself being frustrated in attempting to do what is right, remember that your hope is not in your results but in Christ. We might expect that at times the Christian life can be difficult, but we should also expect to be given the necessary resources to persevere.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

1 Peter 1:13 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 imperatives of Scripture are always grounded in the indicatives of Scripture. It is the same way with this passage. The great blessings that God has granted the believer in salvation recorded in verses 1–12 are the grounds for Peter’s exhortations in verses 13–25. It is in light of the blessings described in verses 1–12 that believers are to “gird up” the loins of their minds. It is a call to keep ourselves free from addictions, either physical or otherwise, that would keep us from being mentally vigilant. “Hope” (Gk. *elpizo*, el-PID-zo) is “confident expectation,” a certainty that what God has promised is coming.

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

Peter exhorts believers to refrain from a life patterned after their former ignorance of God. There was a time when they did not know God or His will, and they did whatever they desired. This can no longer be the pattern of their lives. As obedient children, believers are to live in a way that pleases God. They are children of God. He brought them into His family, and that familial relationship calls for a new kind of life, lived apart from the evil passions of their former lifestyle.

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

The word “but” (Gk. *gar*, GAR) here indicates a strong contrast. Believers are not to live a life patterned after their former evil passions. Instead, they are to pattern their lives after the one who called them, God the Father, who is holy. Thus in every aspect of their lives (i.e., KJV: “all manner of conversation”), they are to seek to be holy as well. Believers are called to imitate God in His holiness by living lives marked by holiness in every sphere. The Apostle Peter roots this exhortation in Scripture. God, who called the people of Israel to be His own special people, gave them this charge: “You shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). The character of our lives is to be shaped by the character of our God. We are to be holy because He is holy. When we live as God’s holy people, we are living as God always intended humans to live. We are being truly human.

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

Believers are children of God. But this familial relationship with God, while giving us a sense of belonging, should not cause us to be presumptuous. Our status as His children does not give us an excuse to live recklessly. Our God is impartial. He judges us according to our works. Just because we are His children does not mean that He will overlook our disobedience. Though believers will not miss eternity because of their sin, we must certainly expect the Lord’s discipline in this life when our behavior is contrary to His will. Thus, says Peter, we should “pass the time of [our] sojourning here in fear” (Gk. *phobos*, FO-boce), meaning reverential awe, rather than terror. It is fear born of respect. God is the Judge of all the earth and our Father as well, and as such, should command our deepest respect.

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Deep respect for God should be coupled with a deep sense of gratitude and awe at the costliness of redemption. No silver or gold redeemed us from our past life of sin. God rescued them from the sinful traditions (Gk. *patroparadotos*, *pat-rop-ar-AD-ot-os*), “beliefs, values, and behavior” inherited from their ancestors, through the precious blood of Christ. Peter strengthens his point about the value of the blood of Christ by dramatically devaluing the substance used for currency. He reminds the Christians that they were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The imagery that Peter uses is from the Old Testament: God’s deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt required the sacrifice of a lamb without blemish. The people were commanded to place its blood on their doorposts in order that the death angel commanded to kill the firstborn throughout Egypt might pass over them (Exodus 12:6–11). Of course, this was a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Christ for us, the one who gave His own blood that we might be delivered from eternal death.

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, 21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

Christ’s sacrifice—His death—was no accident. Rather, events had already transpired, and Christ was “foreordained” to be our Saviour (v. 20). God planned our redemption from the foundation of the world and carried it out in Christ. In the course of human history, Christ was revealed; He came into the world for our salvation. This was all the plan of God. Through Christ alone has every believers’ faith in God been established. Through Christ, the One who redeemed them is now the object of their faith. The foundation of their trust in Him is the truth that God raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at His right hand with all power and authority. How can they not trust Him, who redeemed them and who validated that redemption by raising Jesus from the dead and glorifying Him!

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

The first part of this verse expresses that Peter’s readers are considered sincere believers. They are a people who have been purified (Gk. *hagnizo*, *hag-* NID *zo*, “made holy”) by obeying the truth of the Gospel and responding to it in faith. The imagery of purification is from the Old Testament’s ceremonial washings, which the priests and Levites serving in the Temple were commanded to do. These washings made them ritually clean. Peter picks up the imagery here to denote the spiritual cleansing that occurred once these believers put their trust in the Gospel, the Word of Truth.

They are a people who experienced the renewal of the Gospel, a fact manifested by their sincere love for fellow believers. Now they are encouraged to deepen that love for one another. Purifying their souls has also given them “pure” (Gk. *katharos*, “cleansed”) hearts, with which they ought to love each other. This is what demonstrates that the renewing power of the Gospel is at work in our lives: our continued pursuit to love one another as God in Christ has loved us.

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 24 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: 25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

This call to a sincere love for one another is grounded in the new life that God has given us through His incorruptible (Gk. *aphthartos*, *AF-thartos*, the opposite of “corruptible” vv. 18, 23) Word. The Word of God is unfailing. Indeed, God’s Word cannot fail because God will not fail. He lives forever, and so His Word abides

forever. In verse 24, Peter quotes the words of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 40:6–8), and draws the comparison between the fading glory of humankind and the Word of God. The glory of humankind is like the flower of the field. Its beauty and splendor are temporary. It lasts for but a moment. But the Word of God endures (Gk. *menounge*, *men- OON-geh*, “remains”) forever. That Word comes to us today, through the Gospel. What confidence we should draw from this: The Word of God, on which our salvation is grounded and which we have believed, endures forever!

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

God's Word Is True and Reliable
(Isaiah 40:6–9)

TUESDAY

Jesus Enables Victory over Sin
(Romans 7:14–25)

WEDNESDAY

Love One Another
(Romans 13:8–10)

THURSDAY

New Life Through the Spirit
(Romans 8:1–11)

FRIDAY

Live by the Spirit
(Galatians 5:16–26)

SATURDAY

Rejoice in God's Actions in Christ
(1 Peter 1:3–12)

SUNDAY

Call to Holy Living
(1 Peter 1:13–25)