

1st PETER BIBLE STUDY

1 Peter 1:10-16

Lesson #5

Introduction

You Shall Be Holy

10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look .

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix 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 former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

1 Peter 1:10-16 (NASB)

Verses 10-12:

The point that's being made in verses 10 through 12 is that this whole salvation by the grace of God, through the actions of His Son Jesus, was something that was kept as a mystery for all the time of the Old Testament prophets. They were told it was coming, and that it was a New Covenant that included new provisions, and it revolved around someone who would suffer and die, and then be resurrected again to glory, but all the particulars, and the time table was kept a mystery until the time was right. Just who was this person being described, and when was He coming? These are the things that the prophets sought to know. But all they were given was an understanding "*that they were not serving themselves*" is what the Scriptures say. In other words, it wasn't something they themselves were ever going to see in their lifetime, but their prophesying was for future coming generations.

Verse 12 says that now it is us. So who is the "us" that's being referred to? The verse goes on to say it is to those who have now received the announcement of the gospel, preached from those who were sent from heaven by the Holy Spirit. The Father has a definite predetermined timetable which He providentially controls. Everything has a time, and a place, and a particular means and agent by which it's carried out. The Father formulated the eternal plan. The Son came to earth at the exact appointed time, according to the Father's plan, and performed the predetermined work that He was sent to do. And then the Holy Spirit is engaged to administer that plan of the Father, and work of the Son, toward those for whom it was predestined, by the sending out of preachers and the impartation of the gift of saving faith. This is a beautiful and magnificent work of the whole Trinity, all functioning in perfect unity, to achieve the immutable eternal plan of God the Father.

I do not believe we need to look for some kind of deep hidden meaning in the last phrase which says "*things into which angels long to look.*" In keeping with the context of the sentence it's merely declaring that this secret, which was kept from the prophets of old, and not revealed until the proper time, was of such profound significance, and mysterious operation, that it was not even made clear to the angels in advance, and may even still be somewhat a mystery to them as to its operation upon the human spirit. Furthermore it somewhat hints of something that's stated a few verses later, which says:

20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of 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.

1 Peter 1:20-21 (NASB)

We will cover this in length when we get to this verse, but this verse amplifies what we are discussing right now. Which is that God has a predetermined plan, and a predetermined timetable for that plan, and a predetermined agency by which He brings forth that plan. By the word “agency” I’m referring to all of the people, and places, and things, and circumstances, and situations which form both the motivating causes, and provide the means of the implementation of every facet of God’s predetermined plans. He plans it, and He makes it happen, through the judicious use of various and diverse means. He is absolutely sovereign (that is, in absolute and total control over) all that takes place in creation and beyond. No one, and no angel, will ever hear God declare “gee, didn’t see that coming.”

These verses make it clear that God the Father not only knew about the fall of man and his need for a Redeemer, but He actually planned it that way Himself from the very beginning, and built into that plan all of those things necessary to bring it about in its appointed time. And He did this in the initial planning stage, before He ever began any of the actual tangible creation itself. A proper and thorough understanding of the sovereignty of God, and what that actually means, and all its ramifications, is sadly absent from the vast majority of evangelical Christianity. And much of the error, and the silly ideas like Arminianism, and Open Theism, would be put to rest if we preached more thoroughly and accurately on the sovereignty of God.

But alas, we’ve spread our entire banquet table with the love of God, and canned up His sovereignty and stored it on the back shelf of the refrigerator, somewhere behind last week’s leftovers. We really just want to keep it out of sight, so we can perhaps forget that it’s even there. But I suspect, in due time, we’ll get a pungent reminder of its presence. But now, let’s move on to our next verse:

Verse 13:

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Now we have one of those “therefore” versus. In other words, because of everything that I’ve just told you in my preceding comments there is a logical resultant conclusion. If you’ve properly understood, and you grasp the significance of all the things that I’ve just told you, then it’s logical, and even necessary, that you demonstrate your understanding by reacting in a certain manner. If you’re crossing a street, and someone yells to you “look out for that car” then you quickly jump out of the way so it doesn’t hit you. This is a logical reaction to relevant information. It affects your life and safety, and calls for an active and immediate response on your part. You don’t simply smile and say “thanks for that information” and then continue to walk in front of the car.

If you believe the information is true, then a response is absolutely mandatory. And the appropriate response is to immediately get out of the way of that car. Your response isn’t to study the car, to ponder the pretty color, to wonder who’s driving it, or ponder the ramifications if we choose not to respond. All of those things might be interesting, but they aren’t the response that’s necessary to keep you from serious harm. There is only one useful response, and that’s to get out-of-the-way before you’re hit by that car. If you fail to respond the damage will be done, despite the warning.

Now I’m stressing this to make a particular point. And that point is that there is a particular logical response that is called for by those things that Peter has taught us. Just like the car, if we don’t make the right response then we will not successfully avoid the danger. Peter says that our response should be to prepare our minds for action, to keep a sober minded spirit, to fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In other words, we should set our minds on the things which are above, not the things of this earth, as we go about our lives and daily activities. By doing so, we will be prepared to avoid the common dangers that the world imposes on believers. Which dangers are the worldly temptations of sin, self-satisfaction, pride, and lusts of the flesh. We are to prepare our minds in advance for these attacks, so that we are prepared to take appropriate action when they come.

Our hopes and expectations should be centered and grounded thoroughly, and firstly, on that grace that will be afforded to us at the actual tangible return of the Lord Jesus. We’re instructed to have our minds prepared, and be living in such anticipation of His return that we will be prepared to reject the sinful temptations of the world and of the flesh.

Like the shout to “look out for that car,” we must keep our minds ready in advance to immediately jump out of the way when we see or hear danger approaching. We shouldn’t need to think it over, to contemplate the ramifications and dangers, but we must recognize the severity of the danger and be already prepared to make an immediate response to get out of the way. And if we fail to respond, the damage will be done, despite the prior warnings.

In our day-to-day life we encounter many warning signs. We have signs warning us of dangerous road conditions, signs that warn us about wet paint, and signs that warn us about wet slippery floors. If we choose to ignore those signs we may suffer the consequences. A warning is only valuable if one makes an appropriate response to it. We know that the Scriptures warn all mankind that the wages of sin is death, and to disobey God will bring eternal judgment. But this warning is only as efficacious as it is acted upon by those who hear it. Every warning is entirely dependent upon the response of the recipient. Every person who is cast into the eternal lake of fire will be able to say they heard the warning in some manner or another but simply took no action.

But that’s not what this verse is talking about. This verse is both a warning and an exhortation to believers as to what is their proper and appropriate response to all the things that Peter has told them in the first nine verses of his epistle. This is made clear by the next verse.

Verse 14:

14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

We can see that this verse is written clearly to those who are addressed as children. And not just children, but obedient children. This verse is the logical and appropriate response of those who have been told that they are the predestined and chosen children of God. We are told that our proper response is to actively prepare our minds for action. To so set our thoughts, and our hopes upon the grace that we await at the return of our Savior, so that we are mentally prepared to take immediate action (to jump out of the way) when we’re tempted to be disobedient. We are told to prepare our minds in advance to resist being conformed to the former lusts which were ours in our previous ignorance.

What previous ignorance? That ignorance of the sweetness and value of the righteousness of God and his Holiness. That ignorance of the utter destructiveness and defilement of disobedience to His commands. We cannot continue in the former ways in which we lived, and behaved, and spoke, and thought. Which ways we pursued in our ignorance of God and His righteousness. But now we are no longer ignorant, and thus we cannot, and especially, we do not want to continue in those former ways of life. A child must be obedient to his father, both because of respect and because of affection. And thus, a child of God must obey their heavenly Father, both from reverent respect, and because of their affectionate desire to be pleasing. This is illustrated perfectly by Jesus’ statement to his disciples that simply said **“if you love me you will keep my commandments.”** (Jn 14:15) Authentic love **will** produce obedience from the heart, without fail.

One of the most visible consequences of the easy believism of the past century is that it has spawned masses of false converts. These false converts have not been regenerated, so they don’t have a new heart attitude, they don’t have a new innate desire for holiness and righteousness. When we get to verses like these that tell us we must not be conformed to our former lusts, they are helpless to respond, because they haven’t received the means. Therefore, what they do is to push this into the future, after the return of Christ. But that’s clearly not what this verse is teaching. This verse is teaching that part of the means to avoid our being conformed to our former lusts, right now, is our fixing of our hope completely on the grace to be brought to us at this returning of Christ. This verse can only be understood, appreciated, and put into practice, by a heart that has been regenerated and transformed by the Holy Spirit. A mere emotional profession will not enable anyone to rightly respond to the dangers of continuing in a life of sin.

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear, to anyone who has an ear to hear, that authentic saving faith is composed of both justification and sanctification. We discussed this thoroughly in verse two at the beginning of our study, which told us that those who had been chosen by the foreknowledge of God were then set upon by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, to induce obedience to Jesus Christ. And that means right now, in this day and age, not in a future age or millennial kingdom.

From the very beginning announcement from an angel of the Lord to Joseph, when he learned of Mary's pregnancy, was for him not to be concerned to take her as his wife, for the child that was in her was of the Holy Spirit and furthermore, in verse 21 the angel tells him:

21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

The announcement of this angel was that this coming Son would save his people "from" their sins. First Corinthians 6:11 tells us that we have been "washed" and "sanctified" and "justified." The clear implication here is that reaching a point of justification involves a kind of process. It involves a washing process from all the defilements of a previous way of life, and a sanctifying process that is clearly intended to be a change of life direction, and then a justification in the eyes of God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The thought being conveyed is that the Lord Jesus saves His own **from** their sins as opposed to **in** their sins. A small word difference, but a very significant meaning difference. There is no such thing as salvation that is apart from sanctification, as we were told already in verse 2.

I have a dear friend from a former church who was in my Sunday school class one morning. I don't remember the precise context of the discussion but my friend made the comment "the Holy Spirit goes straight to the heart and bypasses the mind." Now I love this dear brother, but I had to take immediate exception to his comment, particularly because it was made in the midst of a whole class of people, and I couldn't let that mistake go unanswered. Now I understand the intent of this dear brother, which is that the Holy Spirit certainly does, through his diverse means, affect an emotional response in those who love the Lord. But He does not do this **apart** from the mind, but rather **through** the use **of** the mind. A mindless stirring of emotions is not the biblical description of the work of the Spirit, but that of the world.

As we read the Scriptures, and perceive with our minds all those precious and valuable truths, and revelations of the Lord, our emotions are appropriately stirred in proper response to our mind's understanding of those truths and revelations. We do not simply stand in the room and expect the Holy Spirit to somehow excite our emotions totally apart from the word of God. This is where so many, particularly the charismatics, make a critical error, in mistaking an emotional response invoked by worldly stimulus as a movement of the Holy Spirit. If it wasn't invoked by the word of God then it's quite unlikely to be a genuine response by the Holy Spirit.

The point I'm making is that verse 14, concerning the obedience to the Word of God, and the desire and ability to **not** be conformed to the former lusts which were ours in our ignorance, is not separate from our "preparing our minds for action" as we were told in verse 13. The mind of the believer is a critical part of his sanctification. And this is why we are told that our mind must be transformed, (Rom 12:2) not turned off as some suggest. And further clarifying this thought Peter goes on and says:

Verses 15-16:

15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Whenever I read this verse, I can't help but be reminded of a similar verse that I read when I was a young Christian. I was on my first pass through the New Testament, reading the gospel of Matthew. I got to chapter 5, which began Jesus' sermon on the Mount. He began with what we call the Beatitudes which were quite amazing to me, and then moved into what we often refer to as the similitudes, which were equally amazing. Then in verse 21 he moved into a section that's often return to as personal relationships. He ended this portion with a summary statement, and I will never forget my reaction when I first read it. He summed up his foregoing with this statement, he said "therefore, you shall be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect," verse 48.

I immediately understood two very clear facts. One, God's standard for me was perfection. And second, there wasn't a chance in the universe that I could do it. I was still very young in the Lord, and I'd been converted under a minimal gospel, and really had no understanding whatsoever about the imputed righteousness of Christ. I knew I was a sinner and was willing to confess it and repent. I believed that Jesus was Lord and Savior. But being unaware of the imputed righteousness aspect of Jesus Christ, and only aware of the substitutionary atonement, I was totally unequipped to deal with what I had just read in this verse. Immediately my mind said "then it's hopeless, I'm toast."

You see, the problem was I did correctly grasp the intent of this verse concerning God's standard for salvation; that God's standard was nothing less than perfection. There is absolutely no such thing as not perfect, but good enough. And as a young Christian, and former pagan, this was my whole concept. That obviously I couldn't be perfect, nobody can, but if I cleaned up my life a little bit then maybe the Lord would overlook the shortcomings. That verse from Matthew chapter 5, and this verse that we're studying now in first Peter, totally shatter and obliterate that concept.

So the question becomes, what do we do with verses like this? What do we do when we're told that we are to be perfect, and we are to be holy as God is holy? This dilemma has caused much anguish throughout New Testament history. It has sparked much debate, like those who say "well certainly God would never ask us to do something that he knows we can't do." I mean, that wouldn't be fair would it? There are many who profess to be Christians, and probably many actually are, who have no idea how to deal with this apparent dilemma.

But it's not just a New Testament dilemma. God gave His laws and statutes and ordinances to national Israel, and in the same breath told them what would happen when they disobeyed them. Let me come right out and say it clearly, God most certainly does set a standard that He knows mankind cannot achieve, and He most certainly does command us to a perfect holiness which He knows we cannot possibly attain. While this may pose a dilemma to the minds of some, it is undeniable that the Scriptures impose mandates on humanity that exceed our capabilities. To try to deny this for the sake of easing our minds regarding God's fairness and righteousness, is like painting ourselves inescapably into a corner.

When the plain and obvious meaning of Scripture either intrudes upon, or exceeds our mind's ability to comprehend, then the problem is with our mind, our comprehension, and our perspective, not the holy Scripture. When the holy Scripture says, in plain language, that God expects us to be perfect, and He expects us to be holy, then that's exactly what it means, it isn't a trick question or semantic twisting of words.

I've said several times before, and have to repeat here, that the absence of the preaching and teaching concerning the sovereignty of God has severe ramifications, and this is a perfect example. When we read the word of God, and then interpret it from the perspective of man, rather than the perspective of God, then we start making foolish mistakes. Like thinking that we can impose our human perspectives of fairness and righteousness on the One who created us out of nothing for a purpose entirely of His own choosing.

And if He chooses to teach us important truths that He wants us to learn and understand by setting standards upon us that He knows we cannot possibly achieve, then He has every right to do so, not to mention that He has a logical purpose behind it. The scriptures teach us that the whole point of God's commandments, and call to holiness, is to reveal to us His own character, and inform us of His unyielding standards. Our verse 16 says that we are to be holy "because" He is holy. If we are to ever be *with* Him then we must become *like* Him, or He won't accept us into His presence and into His kingdom. Therefore He sets the standard in no uncertain terms - perfection. And He won't back off of that standard one scintilla, ever, for anyone. This is what He absolutely requires that we firstly come to understand.

Only when mankind rightly understands and accepts this, is he ready for the second part of the equation. God has chosen to prepare His elect by teaching them firstly their condition of absolute inability, and then, secondly, from this backdrop He demonstrates His own glory and His mercy by providing the solution to that dilemma by His grace alone, through the work of His beloved Son. And verse 20 of this chapter anchors that when it tells us that He was foreknown from before the foundation of the world as the coming Redeemer of a fallen and helpless humanity.

It was clearly preplanned by God that we couldn't live up to the standard He set, and from that, we would learn for ourselves that we must look elsewhere than ourselves if we were ever to be saved from destruction. We just have to learn that on our own, by first hand experience, to be able to grasp the significance, and then be able to rightly appreciate the true value of the grace of God. In His mercy He has given us a very good and understandable reason to love Him, to serve Him, and to worship Him for evermore, beyond the obvious fact that He's altogether worthy of that anyway. He has freely chosen to show us His heart, not just His fist.

It is through our knowing the standard, striving endlessly toward that standard and yet never being able to achieve it in this lifetime, that we develop a deep hunger and thirst for it, so that we come to realize the immeasurable value of that perfect righteousness that awaits us at the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Therefore, our inability to accomplish what God has commanded, in no way relieves us of our obligation to earnestly seek it with all our hearts and all our strength. For it is in the unrelenting, even though unsuccessful, attempt to perfectly obey God that we are being molded and shaped into that vessel that He has determined that we eventually shall be when all has been accomplished. In the final analysis, It is only those who earnestly pursued His holiness, and those who diligently sought His righteousness that will eventually be the ones who find it. It is altogether far too valuable a gift to be squandered on those who have demonstrated no desire for it in the first place. To be freely afforded the imputed perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ himself, as our direct substitute, it was the Father's plan that we be thoroughly educated as to the value of that gift. A lifetime of diligent pursuit, of unsuccessful striving, with all of our strength, is the necessary and mandatory education before any will be afforded that precious gift of perfect righteousness.

Jesus said to His disciples that if they loved Him they would keep His commands. (Jn 14:15) and then a few moments later said that if they kept His commandments they would abide in His love. (Jn 15:10) You see, the keeping of the commandments of God is about a heart attitude and a vibrant relationship. We earnestly seek to be holy because we love our Lord, and in so doing we keep our relationship with Him pure and clean. We pursue holiness because in that way we pursue the Lord Himself, and stay in His loving favor, not to mention avoiding His chastening.

The desire to be holy, as He is holy, is the natural outcome of our love for Him. Jesus said if you love Me you "will", He didn't say "should" keep my commandments. True love "**will**" produce true holiness and obedience, even though somewhat flawed by human weakness. Holiness is **our** desire because it's **His** desire, and we pursue it because we know that's what pleases Him, and pleasing Him in the manner that He desires is what love is all about. This is what salvation is all about, it's not about escaping from hell, it's about a love relationship with the Lord that brings Him glory as it's demonstrated by our visible actions. (Mat 5:13-16)

The book of revelation begins with an assessment of the state of the churches. It begins with the church that's doing well in its service, but is sadly said to have lost its first love. The following six churches, with few exceptions, show the progressive downgrade of the situation once that first love had diminished, and it's exactly as Jesus had said. Once the love diminished, the obedience fell off rapidly, and sin rushed back in like a flood. The church in Sardis is pronounced "dead" as far as a functioning church is concerned, because it had nothing of the holiness and righteousness of Christ to display on its lampstand. It was salt that had lost its flavor, and was useless for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by mankind. And it all began with the loss of that essential ingredient of love. We're told that we must love Him with all our hearts and all our souls and all our minds and all our strength. (Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27)

And if we aren't being obedient, and our desire isn't for His holiness, then it's because our heart isn't right with Him. Something else is attracting our affections, and the result is a visible departure from keeping His commandments. When our love is strong and health and vibrant, obedience is easy and painless and natural. It's when our desires are diverted to the flesh and to the world and its attractions that we start to slip into unholy thoughts and unholy behaviors. And so we're warned to keep our minds sober and rightly prepared for immediate action. We know this is done by constant and daily reading of the word, and beginning and ending every day with prayer. By fixing our hope completely on the grace to be brought to us at that glorious revelation of Jesus Christ. (v.13)

Satan and the world desperately want our attention and affection, but we are chosen and sanctified for obedience to Jesus Christ, and this is demonstrated by our intentionally keeping our minds prepared and focused on His glory and His holiness, so that His desire will be our desire. We ourselves must fight the good fight of faith to be considered worthy to share that winner's circle with our beloved Lord and Savior, at His return. And only those who pursued His holiness earnestly and diligently will ever receive it.

Verses 13 through 16 tell us plainly that our minds are involved in this process of sanctification and pursuit of holiness. We are commanded to prepare and to use our minds as tools of righteousness. It's very common to hear teaching that our minds aren't involved, that it's some kind of ethereal spiritual process that we're incapable of perceiving that's taking place behind the scenes, and our minds just get in the way of all that. We're told to "Let go and let God" as if that actually means something.

But that's not at all what the holy scriptures teach. They teach that our minds are thoroughly and crucially involved in this process of sanctification that leads to the salvation of our souls. We are most certainly commanded to take appropriate action in response to warnings and exhortations regarding our mind's and our thinking. We're told to keep our mind's in a certain condition of sober readiness and holiness, so that we're prepared to visibly demonstrate the glory of God by our own behaviors and obedience to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It is a visible life of holiness, by way of obedience to His commandments, which God has called His chosen to demonstrate to the world, as a display of His own glory. For Him, we are His light of righteousness to the world, we are the salt that gives taste to a flavorless humanity. It is through His work performed in us, that He has chosen to display His own glory, His own righteousness, and His own holiness. We're going to see this more clearly in chapter 2 where Peter refers to us as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood.

And this all involves the desire to be holy as He is holy, because we have been regenerated in heart and mind and affection. Our love fuels our obedience, and our intentional pursuit of that love, by the preparation of our minds through the study of His word, fuels the love. We are commanded in these verses, and countless others, to take an active role in that sanctifying preparation process, and in that pursuit of holiness, because; from the very beginning of creation, this has been our designated part in the visible demonstration of the manifold glory of God. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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