

## EXPOSITION OF I PETER

### Message #4

### I Peter 1:13-21

It would be nice if when we believe on Jesus Christ we would be instantly raptured. We would have no chance of messing up. We would have no battles with our flesh. We would never fail because we gave in to some temptation. But that is not how God's plan works. He has saved us and deliberately left us here for awhile in this lousy, sin cursed world. It is a world that is crooked and perverse or as Dr. Stedman said, a world filled with crooks and perverts (Charles R. Swindoll, *Hope Again*, p. 28). God has left us here to reflect His grace.

In the first 12 verses, the Apostle Peter motivates the believer to maintain a hopeful and joyful testimony in trials by reflecting on grace theology. In this section, the Apostle Peter challenges the believer to maintain a holy and obedient testimony by a lifestyle transformation. But the process of transformation is a process that keeps its focus on God (I Peter 1:21). Our faith and our hope are in Him, not ourselves.

We may observe that **verse 13** begins with an inferential conjunction "therefore." **Peter is saying, in view of the great grace salvation we personally have been given, it should influence the way we are personally living.**

One cannot be holy if one is not a believer. No one can achieve holiness by their works. Holiness is produced by the Holy Spirit as we yield to Him. Only one of the elect may develop in accordance with this truth. What Peter was after when he wrote this section was this:

**IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT WE ARE GOD'S ELECT, WE MUST SET OUR MINDS ON THE GRACE OF GOD, AND OUT OF A FEAR AND REVERENCE FOR GOD WE MUST ALLOW OUR BEHAVIOR AND CHARACTER TO BE CONTINUALLY TRANSFORMED INTO A HOLY LIFESTYLE UNTIL THE TIME WE SEE JESUS CHRIST AND ARE JUDGED BY GOD.**

Now one might ask how do we get a holy transformed testimony or character? What is the process involved that will make us holy? In this section there are two parts to the process:

**PROCESS PART #1** – Set your mind and hope completely on the grace of God. **1:13-16**

This grammatically is the main challenge of these verses. Everything else is subordinate to this challenge. We are to get to the place where our hope is completely in God's grace and not anything else. As Dr. Clowney said, "our hope is in God's gift" (*I Peter*, p. 61). Keep in mind that this is written by a guy who at one time was so law-oriented that he would not eat pork or even associate with Gentiles. But God had changed him and his theology.

Please do not miss Peter's point here. Peter will drive this home again later (5:12). You and I will not become holy or transformed focused on us or by our choices. We will not fear God nor live for God looking at ourselves. **We become holy as we focus our minds and hope on the Sovereign Grace of a Sovereign God.** We must keep continually focusing our minds on God's Grace that saved us and on the fact that one day we will see Jesus Christ. **God wants our minds riveted on His Grace.**

This is the critical key to a transformed character. Do not fix your mind on you, or your works, or on O.T. law; fix your mind on the Sovereign Elective Grace of God. When you promise God this or that, you will fail every single time because you are focused on you.

Peter's doctrine is a missing, vital part of most people's spiritual life. Holiness does not come by us or by our choices. **Holy character comes by the Grace of God and we need to fix our minds on this very critical point.** The ability to be holy is not ours; it is by God's grace. The ability to make right choices is not ours; it is by God's grace. The ability to not give in to temptation is not ours; it is by God's grace. We need to fix our hope and our minds on this very critical point.

When you are faced with a choice of doing right or wrong, you and I will end up doing wrong just about every time. You will think about doing the right and you will choose to do the wrong or you will think about not doing what is wrong and you will do it anyway. You will discover there is no power in you. But when you let your mind zero in on the fact that God, in His grace, must give me victory here, something wonderful takes place. The Holy Spirit begins to produce a holy character.

Now as we are setting our minds and hope on God's grace, we will discover that we are not conforming ourselves to our former lusts which dominated our lives prior to salvation and will continue to dominate us until we focus on God's grace. As we focus more on God's grace, we will continue to reflect more and more the reality that we are God's obedient children. The participle "conform" (v. 14) is either middle (person involved in the action and in the results of the action) or passive (person is the recipient of the action) and in view of the next verse I take it to be passive. What this is teaching us is that transformation of character comes as we focus on God's grace. When you are in a tempting situation and you set your mind on the fact that left to you, you will choose wrong, but left to the Sovereign Grace of God, God will do right, transformation begins.

Now there are five key ingredients involved in the grace focused process:

**(Ingredient #1) - Prepare your minds for action. 1:13a**

The greatest battle you and I will ever fight will be the battle of our own mind. What you continually think in your mind is what you will become in your life. A critical key to this is to really zero in on God's grace. **The more you set your mind on God's grace the holier you will become.**

We are in a fierce battle that rages a vicious war against God's pure grace salvation. The word "prepare," or some translate "gird up" (*αναζωονυμι*), is a rare Greek word which only is found here in the New Testament. It literally means to bind up the hips of your mind. The image is of a man wearing a long robe and he draws it up and tucks it in his belt so he can travel.

It is an aorist middle verb which means there is to be a point in time when you as a believer decide to raise up your mind for action. The preposition "up" added to the verb means the mind must be focused upward on God's grace, not downward on us. This is decisive mental action. We have the responsibility to see to it that nothing interferes with our mental focus on God's grace. We need to surround our minds and discipline our minds to stay focused on God's grace. This is going to be a war, a long drawn out war. It will be a war against grace and we need to make a

mental decision that our minds will be focused on it. As we focus our minds on God's grace, the transformation process that produces obedient behavior as a child of God will take place. So we need to prepare our minds by keeping them focused on God's grace.

**(Ingredient #2)** - Keep sober in spirit. **1:13b**

This particular word "sober" (νηφω) is used by Peter three times in this Epistle - **1:13; 4:7; 5:8**. When you first think of this word "sober" you think of just the opposite of one who gets drunk by drinking alcohol. But the word has more to do with being calm, circumspect and reflective in mind (Smith, p. 308). One who is temperate and calm in mind is sober. Contextually, Peter is saying, keep your spirit calm and circumspect by always zeroing in on God's grace. Stay levelheaded and steady and don't get drifting into intoxicating or fascinating ideas. You stay steadfast in God's grace.

**(Ingredient #3)** - Fix your hope completely on grace. **1:13c**

The verb hope is an aorist imperative. This is a command of God. We have been commanded by God to make a one point in time decision to make our total and complete hope for our salvation the grace of God. The basic idea behind hope is what you are looking for or expecting to happen. **Our total and complete hope for present survival and victory and for the future is to be in the grace of God that** will ultimately be experienced by us when Jesus Christ is revealed to us, via either the rapture or our death. When we are hurting or suffering or under attack, our hope won't ever be found in us, but it will be in God's grace.

**(Ingredient #4)** - As obedient children, we must not allow ourselves to be conformed to our former lifestyle. **1:14**

Here is the first challenge concerning being obedient and it is a negative challenge, specifically don't go back to your former pagan, lust-crazed lifestyle. We have been commanded not to fashion ourselves after our old lusts. For some the lusts were sensual in nature. For some the lusts were for success or power in nature. For some the lusts were for material and financial in nature. Whatever the lusts were of our former lifestyle, we do not want to be conformed again to them.

Now when you think about former lusts, you must think about God's grace. The idea behind "former" is that we had an old life that featured lustful things in it. We are not to fashion ourselves after that again, which means, we are not to do the kinds of things that lead us to that former lifestyle. Certain places, certain people, certain priorities are now off-limits to us. Some of us experienced God's grace from a totally corrupt background.

**(Ingredient #5)** - As an obedient child, we must allow ourselves to become holy by a mind focused on the grace of God. **1:15-16**

The word "holy" (αγιοι) is an attribute of God, which is applied to Him many times in the Bible. It describes Him as set apart in nature and character in a manner that is free from any failure, frailty, or moral imperfection. This kind of holiness is found in the O.T. law, but as Dr. Huther observed, there is no hint of Mosaic legality anywhere in this book (Vol. 10, p. 180). The kind of holiness Peter is after will never be achieved by setting our mind on the O.T. law, but on N.T. Grace.

If we are honest and truthful and have any theological wits about us at all, the first thought that should go through our minds when God says “Be Holy like Me” is, “I can’t.” There is no possible way I can be holy in “all” my behavior like God is holy in “all” His behavior. In fact, most of the time when faced with a choice of my will versus God’s holy will, I will choose just the opposite of this kind of holy, God-honoring behavior. At best, holiness will be seen in a little of my behavior, but not in all manner of my conduct as Peter suggests.

I am convinced that this is exactly what God wants us to think and admit. This was precisely the problem Adam and Eve had in the Garden; they thought they could be Holy like God and know good and evil and then choose good. They soon found out they could not be as holy as God.

This is where the verb tense becomes so critical to proper interpretation. I own over twenty commentaries on I Peter and almost all of them totally overlook the parse of the verb, which is **aorist, imperative, passive** (γενηθητε). Very few commentators spot this point and those who do tend to somewhat minimize it. Henry Alford spots it, but says you don’t want to stress it (*Alford’s Greek Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 340). Richard Lenski, spots it and says “the passive form is only a form” (*Interpretation of Peter, John, Jude*, p. 56). We would agree with Dr. Lenski that it is only a form, but we would ask “what is the purpose of the grammatical form?” The only answer verbal inspiration permits is “to reveal Divine grammatical verbal inspired truth.” **The verb “be holy” is a passive verb. This is the verb God inspired. What this means is that we are the recipients of the action, not the cause of the action.** In other words, we are to be the recipients of a holiness produced by God. As Dr. Lenski said, this is “the result of God’s call which furnishes the power and the ability” (Ibid., p. 56).

God is commanding that we permit Him to produce His kind of holiness in us. God is the only One who can produce this in us and **He will only do this as we our setting our minds on His grace.**

Here is how this works - when we find ourselves in a tempting situation or moment (aorist tense), we fix our minds on the truth that we aren’t holy, but God is Holy. As we acknowledge to God that only He in His grace can transform us, the process of holiness begins to kick in and we become the recipient of God’s gracious action (passive voice). **The ability to obey the command (imperative mood) is not our ability, it is recognizing our inability.** There is a great illustration of this very thing from Peter’s own life in Luke 5:8. Peter says to the Lord, “Depart from me for I am a sinful man” and the Lord says to Peter “from now on you’ll be catching men.” Once Peter acknowledged his inability, God’s ability took over.

Our holiness is never achieved by our flesh, which is exactly what Peter says in this very context (**1:23-24**). Our holiness comes as we set our minds on the Grace of God, and ask Him to intervene and produce in us what we cannot produce in ourselves. This is the formula for spiritual victory and holiness.

**PROCESS PART #2** – Live your life under grace in a fear and reverence for God. **1:17-19**

Our lives are to be lived in a fear and reverence for God, not in a fear and reverence of ourselves. It is God who is able to produce a holiness in us that is truly like Him. But He will not do this for one focused on themselves, but on one focused on His grace.

Peter gives three reasons why we should live our lives in fear of God. As D. Edmond Hiebert said this becomes the “basis for reverent living” (*First Peter*, p. 87).

**(Reason #1) - We pray to God. 1:17a**

We address or appeal to God for a variety of things in life, but most significantly in this context, that He would grant us the blessing of being holy. The point is if you are going to call on God in prayer, you need to fear and reverence God.

**(Reason #2) - We will be judged by God. 1:17b**

God is going to judge each believer impartially on the basis of what we did. How we conducted ourselves, how we feared Him, how we depended on Him will all come into play at our judgment. This fact that we will be judged by God should cause us to stand in fear and reverence of God.

**(Reason #3) - We were redeemed by God. 1:18-21**

This particular passage was called by one commentator “one of the greatest redemption passages of the New Testament” (Charles S. Ball, *First and Second Peter*, p. 255). Knowledge of our redemption should promote a fear and reverence for God. These next verses present a touching view of the amazing grace of an amazing God.

The verb “redeem” is aorist passive, meaning we were the recipients of the redemptive work of God at a point in time and we did not have anything to do with the action. We received the action and did not cause the action. We were not redeemed because of our merit or works; we were redeemed by the Sovereign Grace of a Sovereign God.

The word “redeem” used here is a Greek word ( $\lambda\upsilon\tau\rho\omega$ ) refers to an actual payment that was made to get us out of our sinful and cursed state. This particular verb has to do with paying a ransom price for something and then releasing or freeing the thing purchased.

There are three words which may be used in reference to redeem:

- 1) Agorazo ( $\alpha\gamma\omicron\rho\alpha\zeta\omega$ ) - I go to a horse auction and pay the price for a horse and then turn around at the same auction and resell it;
- 2) Exagorazo ( $\epsilon\chi\alpha\gamma\omicron\rho\alpha\zeta\omega$ ) - I go to a horse auction and pay the price for a horse and then take it home to be my horse;
- 3) Lutroo ( $\lambda\upsilon\tau\rho\omega$ ) - I go to a horse auction and pay the price for a horse and then take it to the mountains and set it free.

This is the word ( $\lambda\upsilon\tau\rho\omega$ ) Peter uses here. Jesus Christ made the acceptable payment to God to purchase us and set us free from our sin. This thought should produce a tremendous reverence for God.

(For a complete discussion of redemption, see our *Soteriology* book, pp. 42-44).

There are four facts brought out about God's redeeming us which should promote solemn fear and reverence:

**Fact #1** - God did not redeem us with perishable things. **1:18**

We do not inherit anything from our forefathers that can save us from our sin. It doesn't matter if you are talking about our money or our nature. Neither will save us or redeem us. What we actually inherited from our forefathers was a sin nature that was so depraved that it does not seek God, and a death penalty because we have all sinned against God.

In fact, Peter, later in this very Epistle describes how dark and depraved our inherited nature actually was. It pursued sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries (I Peter 4:3). We certainly have nothing with which we may redeem ourselves for everything we have is perishable, including us.

**Fact #2** - God did redeem us with imperishable precious blood. **1:19**

The only thing that can save us from our sins is the shed blood of Jesus Christ. It is beyond our ability to grasp how pure and powerful the shed blood of Jesus Christ truly is. This was the price God demanded that be paid for our redemption. For us to be set free from our sin required a member of the Godhead shed His blood.

The adjective "precious" means this blood had tremendous value to God. Christ had no blemish, no spot, no sin. He was the perfect sacrificial Lamb, whose blood could save us and He was willing to shed it. Even though there was evil and sin all around Him, it never touched Him. He walked through life as the Perfect, Holy Son of God and when He went to His cross, He shed His blood so we could be redeemed. We were purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ.

W.A. Criswell said that he had been in churches where every hymn that referred to Christ's blood had been removed from the hymnal (W.A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on the Epistles of Peter*, p. 44). But without Christ's shed blood our sins cannot be washed away.

If the fact that Jesus Christ shed His blood for you does not cause you to reverence God, I don't know what will.

**Fact #3** - God foreknew His redemptive plan for us from before the foundation of the world. **1:20**

We get a good glimpse here as to what God's foreknowledge actually is. It is not just knowing something beforehand, it is knowing what He is going to do and bringing it to pass. Before the world was created, God planned the entire program that would send His Son into this world to save sinners. By virtue of the fact that His son "appeared" on earth, indicates He was already in existence.

Now this action is moving. It was known at the Godhead level before the world was even created that Jesus Christ would have to die to save sinners. The thought that moved Peter was that of all the moments in history, he actually got to physically see this one. He actually appeared in Person during their lifetime. He appeared because this was the time of the Gentiles, which is Church Age. In other words, for the sake of non-Jews, Jesus appeared to begin the final epoch moment in the program of God.

Your salvation is not some questionable matter of soteriology. God planned it. He chose you and He allowed His Son to appear to you in the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. You stand in a privileged position in your relationship with God.

**Fact #4** - God permits us to become His through faith in Jesus Christ. **1:21**

You are not a believer until you believe in Jesus Christ. You may say you believe in God, but you are not truly a believer in God until you believe in Jesus Christ. God has given a great demonstration of the fact that we need to believe in Him in that He raised Him from the dead. Christ was raised from the dead and ascended into glory so that we now have a faith and hope in God.

The basis of our faith and the basis of our hope is the resurrected Savior. Without a living Savior we have nothing to believe in and nothing to hope for.

If you want a life that reverences God and one that will transform you into becoming holy to the point that you will be honored in eternity, you fix your mind and your hope on God's grace that is found in Jesus Christ.