

God's call to Holiness

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[0 : 0 0] All right, all right. Good morning, good morning. Okay, in a second, Zoe's gonna come up and read God's Word to us. I hope you have got yourself some Bibles. There's some in the front. Before we read God's Word, here's a well, here's a small reminder. Hey, this is God's Word. This is what gives life. This is where we encounter God. This is the Word of the true and living God. And as Zoe reads, let us open our hearts to receive what he's telling us, what he's calling us today into. So Zoe, would you like to come and read God's Word to us?

Oh. Today we'll be reading from 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 13 to 21. You can follow along in your own Bible. If you're following along with the church Bible, this is on page 953. Let's read.

Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. But as he who called you is holy, you also will be holy in all your conduct. Since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy. And if you call on him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves for fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of the lamb, without blemish or spots. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you, 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. This is the Word of God.

Let us pray, and then we can dive into God's Word. Father, we need you. We need you this morning. God, as we look at your Word, through your Spirit, would you open up these words into our hearts. May my few words and opinions serve to draw your people to you, God. And may any word that comes out from my lips that's not true, that's not helpful, fall on deaf ears, but God, may your Word be rooted deep in our hearts so that we can love you, so that we would behold who you are and your beauty and your greatness of Jesus Christ.

So, God, would you come and do that work this morning, not for our glory, but for your glory. Father, we praise you and thank you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

[3 : 1 4] Amen. So, we're doing a standalone series. So, last week, Oscar did one standalone, today one. We'll have a retreat next Sunday, and then we'll be diving into the Advent series from December.

So, today we're looking at this passage, 1 Peter. So, let me start off with this. I'm sure most of you know that the king of UK is King Charles III. He became king around 2022. Now, let us imagine. Let's imagine this. Imagine is the day of ordination, coronation, whatever. And coronation, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Coronation. And it's the celebration. As people are flocking in, you see King Charles in all his gold and jewels, dressed up. And there's, as the crown is put on his throne, on his head, there's a massive celebration across the country. And then, as the king sits on his throne, people shout and cheer for their king is there. Now, imagine this. The next day, King Charles is seen in LKF having a drink of a beer with his friends. And he's dead drunk, and his friends has to carry him home. And the next day, he's seen on the MTR going to work. Even though he has so much money, he's like, I still need a little bit more. And he's seen going to work. And on the way, he ends up fighting with someone for a coin that's on the floor. And then he bumps into another person for a cup of coffee and another brawl starts there. Now, it seems that the whole coronation and the glory and the gold and jewels did not even happen at all. It seems that his life, him being a king, him being declared a king, and yet his life seems to be completely unchanged. I mean, his wealth is secured as a king, and yet he's fighting with people for pennies. It seems that his status has changed.

Who he is has completely changed. And yet his life seems to be unchanged at all. Now, obviously, that's just an imagination. We're just trying to imagine this. But in reality, that's a lot of how we Christians tend to live. Very unaware of what God has done, is doing, is doing in Christ, and who we are in light of that, and live a life that seems to be very unaffected or have parts of our life that are unaffected by who God is and what he has done. So what today's passage is seeking to do is, is seeking to call the readers, us, who are Christians that have been spread around the provinces, to live a life that is different. So if you have a passage, let's dive straight into it. Let's look at the first verse, verse 13, right? It starts with this.

It starts with, therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Christ Jesus. Now, what I want us to do for a few seconds is look at the word, therefore. You see, because every time we see the word, therefore, in the Bible, we need to question what it is, therefore. In other words, you get it.

Okay, so, and the truth is, there's always a reason why therefore is therefore. So, and here's the thing. Every time there's a word, therefore, it all, there's something that comes before it. It gives us the truth and the reality of who God is, and then it calls us into an action. In other words, which means that every Christian living, everything that we do and don't, every obedience, every sacrifice that we do always begins with a therefore. Without a therefore in our lives, every Christian living is just moralistic rules and actions which is put on hopeless sinners.

[7 : 21] that are either crushed or are driven into this useless and presumptuous efforts. We need, therefore, in our Christian life to give us this truth that drives us into a Christian living. So, what does this, therefore, tell us? So, before verse 13, if you look at their beautiful 12 verses in 1 Peter, that tells us about this living hope in Christ Jesus, of how we are in light of our future is secure, it's this great truth of what God has done in Christ Jesus and who we are in light of that. And now, at the end of that, Peter says, therefore, in light of all of that truth, all of what Christ has done, therefore, preparing your minds for action. In other words, it's the equivalent of us saying, rolling up your sleeves, get ready for action, being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Christ Jesus. In other words, live a life that is actively putting our hope in this grace when Jesus will return one day, when all sins or suffering will be taken away, and when everything will be put right. Now, the question for us this morning is this, so what does it look like to live a life with such a hope? What does it look like to live with one eye to the future when Jesus will return? And from verse 14, Peter is going to unravel that question as we go along. So, if you have your Bible, this is our first thought of the day.

So, first thought is, therefore, pursue holiness. We'll be looking at verses 14 to 16. So, verse 14 to 16, it says, As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, your God, you shall be holy, for I am holy. Now, Peter is very clear here. His call is, be holy in all your conduct. And he gives a reason for that here, right? He says, because your God is holy, and since He has called you, you to be holy. Now, we need to ask the question, what does holy mean? And I'm sure you have heard the phrase, holier than thou, which is used to describe people that are something more pure and more religiously superior than others. And we tend to think of the word holy as to mean something that is pure and morally perfect or purity. But the fact is, the word holy actually means separate.

When scripture says that God is holy, it is telling us that God is separate from everyone and everything else. He alone is the creator God. One commentator puts it like this. He says, when we say God is holy, we're saying He is altogether and wholly other. In both His character and His deeds, He is transcendently different from and greater than all His creatures in every conceivable respect.

Therefore, holiness is not solely a reference to moral and ethical purity. It also entails with it a transcendent and unparalleled beauty. You see, sometimes we make the mistake of thinking God is like one of us. He isn't. He's on a whole different level. He is transcendent. He's conceivably, unconsumably, way greater than we can ever imagine and even try to imagine. He is holy.

[11 : 14] Now, when Peter calls us to be holy here in this passage, is he calling us to be transcendent and have unparalleled beauty and be on a whole different level? Well, no, not really. And verse 14 and 15 gives us a hint here. Verse 14 says, Do not be conformed to your passions of your former ignorance, but be holy in all your conduct.

Now, Peter says, don't be conformed here. Now, he's speaking here to Christians. When he talks about the passions of your former ignorance, he's talking about the life that they had before knowing Christ.

Peter is calling them to not go back into that previous life and the life that they had before knowing him. Or he's calling them to be holy or to separate yourself from that life that used to be there. Now, it's almost like this. Imagine an orphan who is adopted, who's given three meals a day.

He's a son. And yet, at the end of the day, he goes out to steal food because he's scared that he's not going to get food. But the fact that he's adopted and he's a son means that he no longer has to go back into that way of life. He can separate himself from stealing food because he's the son of the house.

He's adopted. You see, one of the ways we Christians are described as are orphans that have been adopted as sons and daughters. I mean, look how Peter addresses the readers in verse 14. He calls them obedient children. And being conformed to the passions of your former ignorance is like us going out to steal food again when God has provided everything. Now, it is very easy to spot when we do that. It's very easy to spot when we start conforming ourselves into our former ignorance because, according to this, the opposite of being conformed here, according to Peter, is to be holy.

[13:17] So, in other words, we have to ask ourselves a few questions then. Does our life look different from the way it used to be? Maybe a few habits have changed. Maybe there are still parts of our lives that are still untouched. But it's not just comparison with our former life, is it? It's comparison with the world, the people around that has not known Christ yet. If we were to take our thoughts and our actions and have it scripted and recorded, would it look different from the people around us? The things that we do in our personal, when we are alone, in our free times, would it look different? Do the way we handle success and joy look different? Do the way we steward suffering and loss look different? Or does the thing that give us joy and satisfaction in life look different from the people around us? You see, in a very similar way that the adopted orphan does not need to steal in light of who He is. We, too, are called to be holy, to separate our lives from our previous life in light of what God has done, is doing, and will do. And to do that in all parts of our lives, in our jobs, in our desires, in our life pursuits, in our education, in our relationships, in our singleness, to look different from that of other people around us.

Well, Peter does not just stop there, does he? Because he tries to push this. He really challenges the reader in this section. Because all of these things are not passive. It's not about, okay, I believe this and I'm going to be this. It's all about Peter saying, be holy. Be actively thinking about this. Be actively pursuing this. Be actively holy where God has placed you. Now, that might look very different for each one of us in our lives. And it might look very painful because we are sinners, longing, still holding on to things like Kevin said, holding on to things that we hold there while Christ is calling us. So you might want to ask yourself, what does it look like for you to pursue holiness in where God has placed you? And here Peter goes on to say, which leads us to our second thought today, therefore pursue holiness with fear. So let's look at verse 17.

Peter says, and if you call him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deed, conduct yourself with fear throughout the time of your exile. Now, Peter again calls us into something.

And he says to conduct yourself with fear. Now, we have to ask ourselves again, what does fear mean? Now, we understand it to mean something very terrible, something scary. We don't want our kids to fear us because it might mean we have done something terrible and they're scared of us.

[16:33] But this one is a very different kind of fear. It is a reverential awe of the glory and power of God. Now, imagine King Charles is in the hall here, right at Viva. And I'm pretty sure a lot of you are stronger than him and taking him on a fight. I mean, he's 77 years old. That sounds sad. But as sad as in, we don't want to fight him. But you would still show him respect. You'd still show him some kind of fear because of his authority and who he is, isn't he? And that he is a king. Now, when we talk about God, he is infinitely higher than any authorities and anything in all creation and in time. He is unconceivably higher than all glory, power, might, and wisdom, anything and anywhere, everything in all creation. In other words, fear of God is having this reverent awe, a respect for all that who he is, is being in awe of all his power, knowing that he's wholly transcendent and sitting all under that awesomeness of who he is. By the same time, fear of God also means it's to acknowledge all that who he is. Imagine King Charles was here and you stand up and you shout at

him.

What that says is you're not just only disrespecting him and not fearing, but you're also saying with your actions that I don't acknowledge that you're a king and you have no authority over me. In other words, to have fear of God is not just being in awe of who he is, but it's also to acknowledge that he is God. Is to live in fear of God means that you're saying that he is king and that he is God and that we are not and in all aspects of our life. You know the very famous verse, the beginning of wisdom, is there? Fear of God. It starts with that. It's not just being in awe, it's actually submitting ourselves and acknowledging that he is God, that he is king and I'm not.

In my pursuits, in my careers, in my singleness and dating life, he is God, not me. He has the final say, not me, even when I don't like what God's word says, that he is king and God.

So what Peter is calling here, the readers, is to pursue holiness in all their conducts, in all parts of their lives, and to do that with this reverent fear.

[19 : 19] This amazing, awesome, in light of who awesome God is. You see, in our Christian journey, we sometimes tend to fall towards being very passive and apathetic, without being without passions and seriousness.

But this is very serious to what Peter is calling us. You see, the way we deal with our sin, our lifestyles, our pursuit of God, it becomes very stagnant, passive, and passionless.

Peter here is calling us to pursue holiness with reverent fear. This passage is challenging.

It is very, it is calling us into something. But then, at the same time, Peter also reminds us of another truth here. Look at verse 17. He says, conduct yourself with fear throughout your time of your exile.

And he's telling us that we are in exile. He's reminding us of the exile that began all the way in the beginning of time in Genesis, when, because of our sin, we could no longer be in our real home, which is with God.

[20 : 36] There was that time in that fall where our relationship with God was broken, and we were separated from the source of life and all things good, and we were broken, our relationships were broken, our life were broken, and the Word of God says we were dead in our sins.

We were not struggling with sins, we were dead in our sins. And the great news is that while we were still dead sinners, Christ died for us, taking our sins upon Himself, paying the price of our transgressions.

He died and rose again, ascended into heaven, and with the sure promise that He will come again, return, and everything that we lost in Genesis in the beginning will be restored.

Our true home, our relationship, our brokenness, our true home with God will be restored. But right now, at present time, we are journeying through time as sojourners, still in exiles, to that time when Christ will return.

It's verse 13, right? To put our hope fully, set our hope fully, when one day this grace will be revealed in Christ Jesus. So what Peter is saying here is this, is to pursue holiness, to set yourself life apart from other people, to have our life aligned with who God is and what He has done, at the same time doing this with this reverent awe of who God is, acknowledging who He is, and having Him as God and King of our life, but at the same time knowing that we are not there yet, that we are still exiles, we are still on our journey to our real home and it's not here.

[22 : 25] Churches, let us think about that. Do we live our lives, pursue holiness, deal with sin with that kind of attitude? When there are conflicts within your friend circles, and I know conflicts are difficult and complicated, but do we still pursue resolution with fear of who God is and in awe of how He has forgiven us?

How about ongoing sins in our lives? Have we fallen into a pattern and have started taking things very lightly and not really dealing with our sins?

How about the plans and pursuit of our lives and careers of our lives? Do we look at our jobs and career pursuits and education as exiles or do we invest everything like our time and resources here rather than keeping one eye on our real home and investing there with the way we spend our time and energy?

What's our heart attitude towards life? What's our heart attitude in our pursuit of holiness? Now, it feels like it's all heavy.

The passage is really challenging us and calling us to pursue holiness. To think of our life is challenging parts of our lives that we have kind of let the ball drop.

[23 : 57] So, we begin with the word therefore. Now, I want us to remember that because all of this, the pursuit of holiness with fear, it begins with therefore.

It begins with this incredible truth of who God is and what He has done. Now, but amazing thing what Peter does at the end here is Peter actually takes a U-turn and he goes back to therefore and we're going to look at verses 18 to 21 because Peter again steps back and he starts reminding us of the great truths of the good news of Jesus Christ which leads us to our last thought today.

Therefore, pursue holiness with fear knowing that. Look at verses 18 to 21 because it seems that the Christian living does not just start with a therefore.

It also ends with a knowing that, right? God is good therefore live a life of holiness knowing that another great truths of God. It just, this tells us that the Christian living is surrounded and centered around God and His mighty works and who He is.

So what does Peter want us to know here at the end? Well, there are two things here. Look at verse 18 and 19. Verse 18, In other words, Peter here is saying that you have been bought out of your former life.

[25 : 37] Remember verse 14 when Peter says, don't be conformed to your former ignorance? Here, Peter is saying that because, don't do that, because you have been bought out of it by the blood of Christ.

Church, do you see what Peter is saying here? The reason Peter is giving us not to go back into your life but to pursue holiness is not because so that being holy is going to save you but he's saying that because you have been saved, because you have been bought out of it by the precious blood of Christ, don't go back there.

Pursue holiness. You know, there's a story of a well-known pastor, Paul Washer. I don't know how many of you know. Very serious guy. Yeah, you know.

He's very serious. He talks about a story where one person asked him, how is it that one soul is able to save billions and trillions of souls in past, present, and future?

That doesn't seem to add up, you know. It's like paying one dollar and getting billions and trillions of dollars in hand. It doesn't make sense. How can one soul of Jesus Christ save billions and trillions of souls across history?

[26 : 53] And this was his answer. I'm paraphrasing, by the way. And he says this, imagine a scale. Imagine a scale and on one side you put everything of all creation, you put all the money, all the gold, you put all the mountains and planets and animals and humans and music and poetry and wisdom and knowledge, everything there is, the whole universe on one side of scale and you put one other side, you put Jesus and you weigh it and Jesus will still be infinitely more precious and more worthy and more valuable than all of this creation put together at the end of it all because he is the son of God.

He is the creator, king of all kings and he is the one where everything and everything that we see was where through him and for him created.

And church, you were ransomed by his precious blood. Now I can go on and give an example of how a man gives a billion dollars and saves you out of jail but nothing in all creation comes to close to Christ pouring out his precious blood to save sinners like us, to save sinners like me.

And Peter, the reason he gives us to pursue holiness is that you have been ransomed not by gold, not by silver, not by anything most precious and diamonds and jewels but by the most precious thing in all creation that is the precious blood of Christ Jesus.

And the second Peter wants us to know is this, verse 20, he, Christ Jesus, was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in last times for the sake of you 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.

[29 : 09] In other words, because of what God did in Christ, his death, resurrection, and glory, now that your faith and hope is in God.

That means that your faith and hope is a living hope. Because of what Jesus has done, your faith and hope is fully secured.

What Peter is saying here is at the end of this is, look, that you have been ransomed by the precious blood of Christ and because of God's work in Christ Jesus, your faith and hope is not in material things and works and salvation and whatever there is.

Look at the last sentence, your faith and hope is in God and is secured and is guaranteed in Him. Isn't that wonderful? You know, first, in verse 14, he tells us, hey, it's God who judges, live with fear. One day he will judge, but at the end he tells us, but because your faith is in Christ Jesus, your faith and hope is completely secured. Lord. So, if you are here for the first time or if you're exploring Christian faith, here's an invitation for you to come to this holy God who, when you put your life in His hand, He will ransom you into His family, securing not only your future, but also giving you life right now, calling you to be His sons and daughters.

[30 : 55] And if you do call yourself a Christian this morning, let these words abide in your hearts. To live, therefore, to live in light of what God has done in Christ Jesus and how we've been ransomed, to pursue holiness in all parts of our life with reverent fear, having our eyes fixed on the future when Christ will return, will come, and when there shall be no more sin, no more suffering, and all the things that is wrong will be put right, when we will be finally arriving in our true home.

And I know we all came with a very different state of heart. I know that some of us are going through pain and struggles and sufferings and health problems, while some of us are maybe just struggling with sin.

Or maybe we're just thinking, my Christian life has been stagnant and it just feels I'm going nowhere. Or maybe some of us are doubting our faith. Or maybe some of us are just very far away thinking, I think Christ has already rejected me.

Well, this passage calls all of us come to Him, the Holy God, with whom you don't pursue holiness, you don't be good to be saved, but you be good, you pursue Him because He has pursued us first. He has ransomed you with the precious blood of Christ while we were still sinners. What hand do we have in our salvation? What do we offer in our salvation, in our saving of our souls?

[32 : 41] nothing is Christ Jesus who puts down His life. And we come with open arms in faith and in hope. And our faith and hope is not vain because now it's placed in God, the one who has been faithful throughout history.

He has been faithful with this covenant. He has been faithful in Christ Jesus and He will forever be faithful. He is our rock. He is our cornerstone. He is the unchanging one.

He is the Alpha, He is the Omega. this is our hope. Our hope is not in vain. It's in living God. So church, let us keep our eyes fixed that one day Christ will come and we will be home.

So Watermark Church, friends, brothers and sisters, verse 13, therefore, in light of all that truths, preparing your minds for actions and being so reminded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Christ Jesus.

Let us pray. Father, we, as we think of all of this, we can't help but be lost of word.

[33 : 57] God, when you just even think of while we were still sinners, you died for us. God, Psalms really captured what are we, what are men that you care so much about us and yet, God, you have sent your son, Jesus Christ, to die so that we can live, that he took upon our sins and we take upon his righteousness, his life.

God, what a beautiful exchange that we can do this. God, in light of all of that, may our life not just be a life that is passionless and passive.

Help our hearts to pursue you, to pursue holiness with reverent awe of who you are and what you have done. God, knowing that you are faithful, you have been faithful and you will always be faithful, fixing our eyes to that day when you, Christ, will come again and all our sufferings and all our health challenges and every suffering in the world and all evils will be put right.

God, help us to live a life of holiness because you, God, you are holy. So, Father, come, have your way in our lives and we glorify you. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen.