

1 Peter 1:14-16 – Part GG

1Pe 1:13 (NKJV) **Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."**

We have completed our study of [1 Peter 1:13](#) and now are ready to look at what I consider to be the real thrust and weighty part of this sentence – which is v15. In this verse Peter talks about the word “**holy**”, and without overstating the issues involved with the idea of holiness, this is certainly one of the most important attributes of the Christian life for someone to understand. In fact, what he says in v15 he repeats in v16. One very important area that we want to address is simply the fact that God being holy and our being holy are two very different things. The holiness of God is something that He is. It is just what He is by the very nature of being God. He is holy, has always been holy, and will always be holy. It is a foundational part of His character and His person and it is something that no one else ever will be in the same dimension that He is “**holy**”. The second thing that we want to see is that we as believers are to “**be holy**”, with the key action word being the word “**be**” which carries the idea of to “**become**”. So, for God, His holiness is what He is, but for us as believers it is something that we do – and those are two very different things.

Now, I want to repeat and reemphasize something that I mentioned several weeks ago and it has to do with the tense of the word “**be**”. It is an aorist imperative which is really a contradiction of terms. It is a command to do something in the past (which obviously cannot happen), so the grammatical nature of a verb in this tense is important to understand. What we saw previously was that the aorist imperative carries a stronger sense, a more compelling sense than a normal imperative tense verb, but one of the primary emphases of the verb is that it calls for a specific focus on a change of behavior that has a sense of urgency to it, and it is viewed as the strongest verb in the sentence. All of the other verbs simply complement and reinforce this particular verb. Therefore, the strongest verb in this sentence is the word “**be**” or “**become**”. Everything that Peter is saying is bound up in this one word “**be**” – “**be holy in all your conduct**”, and we simply cannot miss this emphasis in our study of this verse.

Peter’s encouragement continues in v14 when he says “**not conforming yourselves to the former lusts**”. The word for “**conforming**” is the word “*syschematizo*” and it means simply to fashion to the same pattern or to be shaped by something.¹ The only other place that this particular verb is used in the New Testament is in [Romans 12:2](#) which says,

Ro 12:2 (NKJV) **And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

The idea in that verse is that the believer’s life is not to be molded by all of the fleeting lusts and fantasies of the world, but rather that the believer’s life should constantly be undergoing a much deeper internal transformation by the qualitative renewing of their mind.² Just think for a moment of all of the various kinds of cravings and desires that characterized our lives before we were saved. We were constantly hindered by sinful desires, impulses, and thoughts. There were spiritual forces that were always planting ungodly ideas and thoughts into our minds through television, movies, music, magazines, ungodly friends, worldly philosophies, and ever changing cultural values. It was never ending and was always

designed to move the unbeliever even further away from God. Very often we had uncontrolled appetites and sensual impulses that would always lead to ungodly activities and results in our lives. There were times when I am sure that we had demonic urges and compulsions that were trying to invade and capture our mind and thought life. The battlefield is always the mind because if the enemy can just get a person to think wrong, then he knows that they will live wrong. That is all he wants – for us to think wrong. I have said it often and will continue to do so, but the battlefield is always the mind – both for the unbeliever and the believer as well. If the enemy can get us to just think wrong, he will win. The enemy is constantly planting false ideas, meaningless speculations, and ungodly impulses into our mind. All he wants us to do is nibble a little every once in a while until he can really set his hook. Listen to another Scripture where Paul provides “how” we overcome these mental impulses in our life. [Colossians 3:1-10](#) says,

Col 3:1 (NKJV) **If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ **For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.** ⁴ **When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.** ⁵ **Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.** ⁶ **Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,** ⁷ **in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.** ⁸ **But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.** ⁹ **Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,** ¹⁰ **and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,****

Having our mind molded by the world and its ungodly values is really not a very difficult thing to happen in a believer’s life. It generally happens by simply ignoring how God wants our mind to be transformed. God wants our mind to be transformed by His Word. Most Christians live such busy lives that they simply feel that they do not have enough time to invest in studying God’s Word – so they just do not. It becomes a very secondary discipline, if a discipline at all. I may be overstating the issue, but I would be willing to bet that average church attending believers would be embarrassed if everyone knew how little time they actually spent in their Bible studying and meditating on God’s truth. As a believer, I must always be renewing my mind to God’s truth because if that does not happen, the default position for how I think will be my “**former lusts**” (v14), or my old, natural and sinful way of thinking. Learning to think as God thinks is not easy and requires a great deal of personal discipline.

Now, what we want to do is to simply look at the technical definition of the word “**holy**”. It is the Greek word “*hagios*” and means to be separated from sin.³ That is a very simple, yet profound definition of the word “**holy**”, but what is critical is that we have to appreciate the distinction between how the word “**holy**” is used of God and how the word “**holy**” is used of believers. In the case of God, “holy” refers specifically to the fact that God is, has been, and always will be separated from sin in every aspect and dimension of His existence. He has never committed a sinful act. He has never even had a sinful thought. There has never been one aspect of something sinful that has ever touched or intruded His being or His character – not one single thing. In fact, the Bible is clear that by His very nature, it is utterly impossible for God to ever be influenced or impacted by sin in any way. He is eternally and forever separated from, disconnected from, and detached and alienated from sin in any way or in any form. He is as removed

from sin as the east is from the west. Sin cannot touch God, influence God, or affect God in any way. He is completely and eternally separated from sin.

However, when we talk about the word “**holy**” as it applies to us as believers, it is difficult to measure the incredible impact that sin can have and does have on us personally. No one is exempt from the influence, the impact, or the delusions that sin creates in a person’s life. Every one of us knows from personal experience that our spiritual battles are always related to sin in some form or fashion. It may be our personal unwillingness to let go of some particular sin. It may be the impact of someone else’s sinful behavior or decisions on our personal lives. Every day of our life we are struggling and fighting against the impact of sin that is both in us and around us. It never ends. We do ugly things, we have sinful thoughts, and too often we deliberately and knowingly refuse to believe and to obey God’s Word. We are often impacted and influenced by sinful people and sinful decisions. In the kind of sinful culture in which we live, sin is so prevalent and widespread that often times it is very difficult to appreciate how much the culture in which we live actually impacts and infects our personal behavior. When the word “**holy**” or “**holiness**” is applied to believers, it is something that is always going to deal with what Peter calls in v15 as “**all your conduct**”. When the word “**holy**” is used in reference to believers, it is always referring to cleansing themselves from every form of physical, mental, moral, and spiritual defilement, and then forsaking anything that they know that would not be a reflection of God’s holiness. Listen to how Peter talks about some of this in [2 Peter 3:10-11](#) when he says,

2Pe 3:10 (NKJV) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness...

So, what we have to do is to try and determine what it means for God to be “**holy**” simply because what God is is what we are to emulate and the very thing after which we are to pattern our life. Now, trying to define the “**holiness**” of God is not an easy task simply because we have never seen or known anyone who was holy in the sense that God is holy. Obviously, Christ was holy, but we have never seen Christ personally. No matter how hard we try, at best we can only see the holiness of God through our earthly spiritual lens and we will never be able to fully understand it. So, what does it mean for God to be “**holy**” and how does His holiness impact our life?

Well, there are two distinct attributes relative to God’s holiness. The first aspect is the fact that God is utterly unique and separate from all of His creation.⁴ We discussed this earlier. Whatever God is, we are not. Whatever He is, we must become. I.e., if God is holy, we are unholy. If God is sinless, we are sinful. If God is patient, we are impatient. If God is long-suffering, we are short-suffering. Whatever God is must be what we are striving to practically become and display in our life. Listen to how Moses described God in [Exodus, 15:11](#),

Ex 15:11 (NKJV) "Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

The second aspect of God’s holiness is that God is utterly pure. He is completely untouched and unstained by any and all forms of evil that may exist.⁵ I am convinced that the closer that someone draws to Christ and to God, the more they will despair of their own personal impurity and sin. It is inevitable.

Do you remember what Isaiah said when he was brought into the very presence of God and what he immediately cried out? Listen to [Isaiah 6:5](#) as it describes his reaction,

Isa 6:5 (NKJV) So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

Whenever we measure our life, or any part of it, against God and His holiness, it becomes more than evident what a complete moral and spiritual reformation needs to always be taking place in our life. I look at God and His holiness and I look at me and my spiritual depravity and I immediately know how far removed I really am from God's holiness. The way to really see sin in our life is not by personal introspection and self-examination. That may be very good and important, but the primary way to personally see and recognize sin in our life is by spending time in the very presence of God. I am convinced that the church as a whole does not spend enough time with the doctrine of God, and that is why the church's conception of sin is so utterly inadequate. If I am only willing to look at my life personally, I will never see sin the way that God sees it in me. I will always excuse those things that God would never excuse. I will compare myself to someone else so that I look better. I will always be unwilling to examine myself honestly, but will be prone to see the sin in someone else as being much worse than my sin. We are all grateful for God's amazing forgiveness. It is real and eternal and it is what makes even living out the Christian life possible and fulfilling. However, that does not change the simple fact that so very often our lives are much too far out of alignment with God's holiness and God's righteousness, and when they are, the tendency of us all is to diminish and ignore its impact on our life and on our relationship to Christ. It invariably creates in us a measure of unkindness and indifference to other people that generally is undeserved.

I appreciate and understand that God has made us positionally holy and positionally righteous when He justified us at salvation. That is great. That is amazing and something for which we all are deeply grateful. However, our positional holiness before God does not change the need for practical holiness to be worked into and manifested in our personal lives. It is because God sees the believer as actually being holy and blameless before Him that He can exhort and command us to "**become**" as holy and as morally pure as is possible in our daily lives.⁶ This is exactly what Peter is addressing in [1 Peter 1:15](#) when he says "**you also be holy in all your conduct**". Whenever I realize that there is an area of my life that is falling far short of God's standards and expectations, it is critical that I take the time and make the spiritual effort to cleanse myself of that which God sees as defiling my life and ultimately restricting His work through me. I am personally convinced that when each of us stands before God and gives an account of our life to Him that each of us will be ashamed of what we knew to do, but never did. We will be ashamed that we knew what was right and what God really wanted from our life, but we simply refused to be obedient or to be compliant with what we knew He truly desired. God's standard has not and will not change. His standard is for us to "**be holy in all of our conduct**", in every area of our life. His standard is always impacting our relationship to Him and our relationship to other people. We will all fail, and at times miserably, but in those times we cannot lose sight of what God is truly doing and developing in our life. God is always developing Christlikeness in the believer. That is always happening. Every event, every struggle, every conflict, every hurt, every difficult person, every unkind word – God is using all of them to work into our personal lives a deeper measure of His holiness and His

grace. This is how God works, this is what God is doing. If what we are looking for is an “Easy Button”, it simply does not exist. If what I demand others to give me is an easy life without conflicts, then I have never really understood how God creates character and integrity in a person’s life. If I have to have all of my creature comforts satisfied, if I have to have all of my needs met, then I have never really understood the life of Christ. Any life that is going to ultimately reflect the holiness of God will be tested, and often times it will be a very severe testing that leaves the believer spiritually exhausted and mentally and emotionally depleted.

Let must close by just making a very simple statement regarding what it means to “**be holy**”. Obviously, there are many factors which impact how a person actually lives. Every life is different, every life has been conditioned and molded by all kinds of circumstances – some good, some bad. As a general rule, we just need to remain patient with people and practice a high level of kindness and forgiveness towards them. I do not believe that we will ever be disappointed for erring on the side of kindness and forgiveness. However, the primary and most compelling reason for a believer to live a holy life is simply because of their relationship to God.⁷ That is why we are to separate ourselves from that which is unclean, immoral, and ungodly. It is because of our relationship to a holy God. God is always our reference point and always that which should anchor our life. He is the reason that we exist, the reason that we have been saved, and the reason why we will spend eternity in an incredible place called heaven. He is the sole reason that we should live a holy life – so that we can always be reflecting how great He truly is.

ENDNOTES

¹ MacArthur, 66.

² Zodhiates, 1350.

³ Vine, *hagios*, 556.

⁴ Erickson, 311.

⁵ Erickson, 311.

⁶ Campbell, 163.

⁷ MacArthur, 67.

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