

I PETER

Be Holy As God Is Holy - Part 3

October 14, 2012

- I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior As God Is Holy In All His
 - A. **I Peter 1:13-16** . . . 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."
 - B. **I Peter 1:13-16** builds on **I Peter 1:1-12**, and its purpose is to give us a clear picture of what God expects from us as a result of what He has done for us in graciously giving us His marvelous gift of salvation.
 1. Simply said, God expects us to respond to His gracious gift of salvation by pursuing holiness in all our behavior like unto the holiness in His nature. And in order to fulfill His expectation of us, God lays out several steps or methods for us to follow – which if we do them – will lead us to a life of holiness like unto His holiness.
 2. Two Sunday's ago, we looked at God's first step or method of arriving at holiness in all our behavior, which is to clear the junk out of our mind and use it often for deep, introspective, honest, realistic, and humble thinking. And as I said then, we will not gain much in the way of holiness without this kind of deep thinking.
 3. Last Sunday we looked at the need for sober-mindedness and the need to fix our hope (i.e., anchor our expectations) completely on all that God wants us to have when Christ returns.
 4. Today, we are going to look at God's exhortation about what not to conform ourselves to and what to conform ourselves to in order to be holy in all our behavior just like God is holy.
 - C. Pray
- II. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance – the fourth step toward holiness
 - A. Lets look at several points that stand out immediately and are needful for applying this exhortation from God.
 1. **First**, this is a classic example of the double-sided action required for growing in godliness. And what is stated here, "Do not be conformed to the former lusts," is the first half of the Christian's put

- off/put on activities. The second half follows in **verses 15-16** which tell us to put on holiness in all our behavior like unto God's holiness.
2. **Second**, this is not a stand alone exhortation – as if it is to be done apart from God's first three exhortations, which are: (1) keep your mind cleared of obstructing clutter and do a lot of deep, frequent, and honest thinking, (2) be sober-minded, and (3) set your sights on that which is beyond this world so that you do not get bogged down or distracted with the things of this world in your pursuit of holiness.
 - a. Now I want to remind you that the process of being conformed to new, godly ways of thinking and behaving requires time, and often lots of time. The reason being, we can change only a couple of major areas of unbelief and sin at a time. And of course, it isn't just time that is needed to conform ourselves to the likeness of Christ, it also requires a diligent, purposeful, persistent, equal to the task, and day-be-day effort.
 - b. This is why God's first three exhortations are vital to giving due attention to His caution about the possibility of going backwards.
 3. **Third**, by nature, many things have opposites. The opposite of light is darkness. The opposite of up is down. The opposite of good is bad. And the opposite of conforming ourselves to a holiness like unto God's holiness is conforming ourselves to the desires of our flesh, the things of this world, and the wily deceptions of the devil.
 - a. The important point here is that God made us in such a way that as long as we are alive, we can change from what we are. No one is fixed or unchangeable in this life. All are able to learn new things and gain new abilities and change from bad to good, or from good to bad.
 - b. For example, we can live many years as zealous sinners, repent and be converted, and begin to live as zealous Christians. But in that same way, we can live many years as zealous Christians, lose zeal and vigilance, and slowly begin to allow old sinful ways back into our thinking, desires, feelings, speaking, choices, and behavior.
 - c. This is why God exhorts us in **Hebrews 3:12-14** . . . to take care that there not be in any one of us an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. [13] But rather, we are to encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of us will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. [14] For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.

- d. And yet, even if we creep back into sin – be it ever so small, or large enough to re-enslave us to some ungodly habit, we are not stuck there. We can confess our sin, repent of our foolishness, and draw on the gracious empowerment and assistance of God to return to pursuing and living a godly life.
 - e. So let me say this once again, for this is both a marvelous, hope-filled truth and a terrifying reality.
 - (1) Whether an avowed unbeliever or a zealous Christian, we are not fixed or stuck in any form of life style or behavior. We can change.
 - (2) We can go forward to better and more godly ways of living or we can go backward to less godly and worse ways of living.
 - f. Now the reality is, few, if any of us are in a 100% going forward mode or a 100% going backward mode. What is most likely is that we take several steps forward and then one or two backwards. This kind of lurching progress is especially common when we are first fighting to put off some sin or habit and replace it with Christ-likeness.
 - (1) But I urge you not to despair at this kind of lurching. Use it to strengthen your commitment to resist temptation and keep growth in godliness going forward.
 - (2) If you persevere, the day will come when you keep forward progress going to the degree that any backward steps are small, infrequent, and caught early enough that very little damage is done to your spiritual health and ongoing growth.
4. **Fourth**, because we can conform ourselves in either direction, then no matter how much progress toward Christ-likeness we make, there is always the need for both sober-minded and constant vigilance against the tempters attacks, the resurgence of our flesh, the influence of whatever impurities still reside in our heart, the uprising of ungodly feelings and emotions, peer pressure, worldly attractions and other such things as these.
- a. Believe me when I say that just as spiritual growth toward being holy in all your behavior takes diligence and daily, purposeful effort, so too it takes daily diligence and vigilance to keep from returning to old selfish and sinful ways. And bear in mind that hardly anyone returns to old ways quickly and fully. Most of us drift or slowly creep back into them over a period of time.
 - b. Therefore, this slow, gradual moving back into sin is hard to catch in its earliest stages unless you set your mind and heart to spot

any and every thought or desire or gaze or choice or speaking or action that calls you back to old, sinful ways.

- B. Returning to **verse 14**, we see that it begins with, “As obedient children.” These words describe our nature or our prevailing attitude or our persistent practice as Christians, not our position as God’s children. In other words, they describe what the normal Christian is in heart, mind, and behavior, not who we belong to or what our position is in Christ.
1. For example, Paul uses this same type of phrase to describe our nature or our prevailing attitude or our persistent practice while we were unbelievers. We read in **Ephesians 2:1-2** . . . And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, [2] in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the **sons of disobedience**.
 2. It is important for us to note that this phrase “as obedient children” is not what God wishes us to be, it is what God says the normal Christian is.
 - a. And why would God say a normal child of His is an obedient child?
 - b. Because obedience is not an optional add on to the indispensable necessity of being born again to receive eternal life. Obedience is one of God’s intended and expected results of His redeeming grace. And obedience is the day-by-day practical proof that our saving faith is genuine.
 3. Now you may be thinking that the idea that the normal Christian is an obedient Christian is unique to Peter. It’s not. And here are just two examples taken from Paul’s letter to the Roman Christians:
 - a. In **Romans 1:5** and **16:26**, Paul speaks of converting unbelievers to the “obedience of faith.”
 - b. In **Romans 6:16-18**, Paul explains that the justification by faith that brings about eternal salvation also brings about a change of who we obey. Listen carefully as I read these words to you: “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? [17] But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, [18] and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”
 4. My point is that obedience to God is the normal Christian response to God after repenting and coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

C. **Verse 14** goes on to say: “Do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance.”

1. Some translations have, “Do not conform yourselves to . . .” I like that better than what the NASB has for this reason:
2. It fits with the next words in **verse 15**, “but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy yourselves** also in all your behavior. In other words, God is saying we are responsible to do what is necessary to pursue holiness in all our behavior. Therefore, if becoming holy in all our behavior by conforming ourselves to God’s holiness is our responsibility, than refusing to conform ourselves to old, sinful ways of living is also our responsibility.
3. Now again, let me remind you that this does not negate God’s part in our becoming new creations in Christ Jesus, nor does it mean we can change for the better on our own – as if we do not need God’s assistance. It simply means that even with God’s part, we still are responsible to choose what we will be conformed to.

D. **Verse 14** goes on to say that as unbelievers, we conformed ourselves to the strong desires of our flesh and to the pleasures and thinking of the world because **we were in a state or condition of ignorance**.

1. In other words, when we were unbelievers, we lived according to our passions, emotions, feelings, fleshly lusts, selfishness, fears, and the ungodly influences of the world around us – all of which blinded us to a proper and helpful understanding of God, His word, and His will. This is why God says our condition was one of ignorance.
2. However, as born again ones, we now live according to knowledge, as understood and made practical by our intellect – an intellect that is being transformed, and is under the influence of God’s Holy Spirit, God’s written word, the example of Christ’s life, and the teaching and encouragement of godly people in the Church. Therefore, instead of being in a condition of ignorance, we are now in a condition of knowledge – with the responsibility to live up to what we know.
3. And it is at this point that we begin to see why **verses 15-16** are so important in relation to living up to what we know.

III. Having abandoned our former life of ignorance and having embraced godly knowledge, and having seen the need to clear our mind of clutter so we can use our mind for serious, honest, and realistic thinking, and having realized our need to be sober-minded and to fix our hope on that which will come to us in the next life, and having been warned against returning to old ways,

God now says to us, “**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.”**”

- A. There are three points I want to make right at the beginning of looking at these two verses.
1. **First**, God set His own holiness as the standard of holiness we are to pursue and become of as His children.
 2. **Second**, God says our pursuit of holiness is to extend to “**ALL**” areas of our life.
 3. **Third**, to reinforce the importance of this exhortation, God gives us two reasons why we are to pursue holiness in this way.
 - a. **First**, because He is holy (*but like the Holy One who called you*). Since we were created by God and in His image, and since we have been born again by God and now belong to Him, He wants us to be like Him in holiness – for that is what we must be if we are to join Him eternally in a world without the evil of selfishness and sin.
 - b. **Second**, because He commands it (*it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy*). After all, He holds the position of God, King of Kings, Master, Ruler, Father – all positions that speak of authority over us, which means it is our duty to respond to Him accordingly.
- B. In an effort to encourage you to seriously and zealously pursue this high and holy calling to be holy in all your behavior with a holiness like unto God’s holiness, I want to reinforce the reality that such a pursuit requires the hard work of daily diligence and the hard work of perseverance over many years. In other words, this noble pursuit will take time. And if we are humble enough and see God clearly enough, we will realize that this pursuit will end only when we die.
1. Now what I want us to see is that the time required is not a bad thing, but rather reality – assuming we are making a good-faith effort.
 2. If you need an example of what I am talking about, look carefully at Israel’s challenging and prolonged process of ridding the Promised Land of the evil that God said had to be driven out or annihilated.
- C. There are many things that we shape ourselves to, and in conforming to any of these things, we transform ourselves according to what it is we are conforming ourselves to. The following list is not intended to be

exhaustive, but rather to encourage us to think about what we are conforming ourselves to in the daily activities of life.

1. We conform ourselves to what we value or treasure or love
2. We conform ourselves to what we believe to be true or dependable
3. We conform ourselves to what fills our mind when we are free to think about anything we want (the thoughts we brood over, ponder, review)
4. We conform ourselves to what we read, watch, and listen to – including the songs we sing and the music we listen to
5. We conform ourselves to the pleasures and entertainment we indulge in
6. We conform ourselves to the ambitions we have – to what we would like to be
7. We conform ourselves to the places we go and the people we associate with
8. We conform ourselves to the words we speak and the behaviors we repeat

IV. Conclusion

- A. As may already be apparent to you, or as it may be becoming clear to you, conforming ourselves to God's kind of holiness and being careful not to step back into old ways of thinking and living requires due diligence in a variety of areas such as: a well prepared and spiritually focused mind each day; honest and deep thinking on a regular basis; sober-mindedness; a heavenly focus; lots of prayer; studying and memorizing God's Word; a broken heart over sins committed; being willing to stand alone when those around you are conforming themselves to that which pulls you away from God and godliness; a strong perseverance; an intense vigilance; and a commitment to get back up and continue on regardless of how often or how horrible your failure on any given day.
- B. **I Peter 1:13-16** . . . 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."