

I PETER

- 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. What God has done **for us**, through His great and gracious gift of salvation – a salvation that begins in this life and extends throughout eternity – includes an expectation **of us**. Here in **I Peter 1:13-16**, God makes it clear that He expects those who receive His gift of grace to pursue holy living in all their behavior.
 1. Now I want to make it clear that even though daily dependence on God for His indispensable empowerment, His gracious assistance, His Holy Spirit, and His living word are not mentioned in these four verses, they are necessary for any worthy pursuit of holiness in even one area of life, let alone all areas of life.
 2. Last Sunday we looked God's call to clear our mind of all the junk that gets in the way of serious, deep, realistic thinking, and then use our cleared out mind to think frequently about what we need to think about in order to be holy as God is holy. Indeed, there will be no holiness in all our behavior, like unto God's holiness, without a lot of worthy thinking.
 3. Today, we are going to talk about the next two essential steps or methods in God's list for growing in holiness, which are (1) the need to be sober-minded, and (2) the need to fix our hope completely on the grace of God that awaits us at Christ's return.
- II. Keep sober *in spirit* – The second step toward holiness
 - A. The NASB has "be sober *in spirit*." The "in spirit" is in italics because the Greek text has only a single word, which when translated to English means "be sober." It is our modern translations which translate it as "be sober *in spirit*" or "be sober *mind*ed," or "be serious" or "be self-controlled" – depending on which translation you have. The reason they do this is because they want to ensure that the reader does not think the words

“be sober” are an exhortation to sobriety in relation to alcohol or drugs, but rather, an exhortation to serious mindedness.

1. And yet, even though this exhortation has nothing to do with excessive drinking or losing ourselves in mind altering drugs, we can get a sense of what God is saying to us by considering the condition of those who drink too much.
2. As is commonly known, when we drink too much, we lose, or at least severely impair our ability to reason rationally and to exercise proper self-control. In other words, alcohol severely weakens our inhibitions so that we begin thinking, speaking and behaving according to how we feel at the moment, or where our emotions are taking us, or what our impulses are prompting us to do.
 - a. The point here is that too much alcohol leads us to ignore our inhibitions and discard our moral compass so that we lose sight of whatever God-fearing sense of right and wrong we may otherwise have. When this happens, our will and our decision making powers become ruled by those parts of our being that were never made to handle such important responsibilities.
 - b. In fact, when we give our feelings, emotions, and impulses the responsibility of ruling over our will and our decision making, it is almost certain that we will go in a direction that pleases our flesh rather than seeks holiness, like unto God’s holiness.
 - c. Therefore, though the word “sober” may not sound like fun, it is nevertheless essential to our spiritual and moral well-being.
3. So what does it mean to be sober? To be sober is to be serious. To be serious is to be sincerely thoughtful, solemn, sedate, earnest, self-restrained and self-controlled, reserved or subdued, dignified, level-headed, and well-grounded.
 - a. When we are sober, calm reason and rational thinking are in control. When we step away from soberness, our feelings, emotions, impulses, fleshly desires, peer pressure, and the allurements of the world begin to lead us where they will.
 - b. In other words, it is through sober-mindedness that we maintain our spiritual concentration, our day-long recall and wise use of scripture, our sense of urgency and passion in prayer, our alertness and watchfulness against temptation, and our vigilance against anything within or without that seeks to turn us away from God and a whole-hearted pursuit of godliness.
 - c. God affirms the value of sober-mindedness in **I Peter 5:8-9** . . . Be [of] sober [spirit], be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil,

prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
[9] But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

d. And again God says: “The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober [spirit] for the purpose of prayer”
(I Peter 4:7).

4. The point God is making here is that soberness is an essential part of becoming and remaining holy, just as God is holy, in all our behavior.

B. In relation to spiritual matters, most of us can be sober-minded for short periods of time. But when we try to be sober-minded for an extended period of time or on a repeated basis throughout the day, we find ourselves easily distracted, or we grow tired of having to work so hard at serious thinking.

1. As for distractions – they are not only all around us, they are within us as well. In fact, there are many attractive distractions which woo us away from sober-mindedness to forms of thinking that are more pleasing to the senses and easier on the mind.

2. And who hasn't felt a sense of mental fatigue after a lengthy period of hard thinking or focused vigilance?

3. Therefore, if you want to be sober-minded, you will have to train yourself to avoid careless, foolish thinking and stay focused on what truly matters. And though this kind of training is very hard work, at least at first, it is possible, by God's grace, to become sober-minded to the degree necessary to gain holiness like unto God's holiness in all your behavior.

C. I want to say a couple more things about the problem of distractions. It is my observation that many of us lose our sober-mindedness when we deliberately, or carelessly, or even unwittingly engage in activities that stifle or prohibit godly thinking and spiritual alertness, or when we get involved in things that numb our mind to reality or promote mental laziness.

1. But let me be clear about this, not every thing that distracts us from sober-mindedness is bad. In fact, much of it is good and even needful. The problem we face is that if we are not cautious, these good things can use up the mental energy needed for the kind of sober-mindedness required to gain holiness of life.

2. Some examples of good things that end up distracting us are our (1) immediate and extended family, (2) caring for our possessions – such as home, yard, and vehicles, (3) our job, (4) the pursuit of a career, (5) advanced schooling, (6) holding a position of authority, (7) exercise, (8) recreation, (9) hobbies, (10) friendships, or even (11) serving in some capacity in the church or in a para-church organization.
 3. My point here is that even though good things are truly good and often needful, if we are not careful, we can get involved in doing them at a level or to an extent that they rob us of needed time for spiritually focused sober-mindedness.
 4. On the other hand, we can lose our soberness and neglect our vigilance by getting involved in blatantly non-essential things like (1) foolish conversations, (2) silly jesting, (3) gossip, (4) mindless TV shows and spiritually unhealthy movies, (5) mind-numbing activities such as day-dreaming, cruising the internet, checking and rechecking our social networking sites, and playing video games, (6) self-soothing activities such as excessive eating, mindless reading, and excessive shopping, and (7) every form of immorality. Of course, a thorough list of non-essential things would be much longer, and would include such things as bickering, arguing, unrighteous anger, feeling sorry for ourselves, bitterness, and anything else that gets in the way of challenging and transforming that part of us that keeps us from being holy in all our behavior, as God is holy.
- D. Here are two questions that may help you stay focused in relation to this exhortation by God to sober-mindedness.
1. **How holy do I want to be?** God's exhortation is to pursue a level of holiness that touches every area of your life and rises to the standard of His holiness. Do you want this? Or do you want something less demanding or less self-denying than holiness like God's holiness in every area of your life?
 2. **Does what I am thinking or doing right now strengthen or weaken me in relation to killing off my fleshly and selfish desires, resisting temptation, putting on more Christ-likeness, and drawing ever nearer to God?**
- E. Just as deep, serious thinking is essential to growth in holiness and godly living, so sober-mindedness is also essential.

F. Now you may be thinking that being a sober Christian isn't all that appealing because it is the opposite of being a joyful Christian. After all, who wants to be a religious sour-puss who appears to be unhappy and who has no fun in life? And what about Paul's exhortation to rejoice in the Lord always? (**Philippians 4:4**)

1. There is no question that sober-mindedness can be seen as the enemy of joy. But Christians who see it that way, see it that way because they have lost the way to joy. They have come to believe that the world's idea of happiness and the world's way to happiness produces a form of happiness that is the same, if not better than the Christian joy that has been experienced by sober-minded Christians down through the ages.
 - a. But think with me for a moment about this. God's Word makes it clear that the way to an abundant Christian life now and eternal life here-after is down the narrow path of denying self, mortifying your flesh, turning your back on the allurements of the world, resisting the devil's temptations, and pursuing a life of holiness like unto God's holiness.
 - b. My point is, if that is the only path to an abundant life now and eternal life here-after, then surely the way to Christian joy must follow the same narrow path rather than the wide path of worldly happiness.
2. The only way to Christian joy – a joy that is not as outwardly exuberant as the world's forms of happiness – is down the path of personal holiness. I say down the path because we have to get far enough down the path of removing ungodliness and putting godliness in its place to discover what true joy is. But once we find it, it remains regardless of the circumstances, and it brings with it a deep inner peace and contentment.

G. The point I am trying to make is that sober-mindedness is not a depressing curse or the enemy of happiness, but a marvelous blessing and a dear friend in that it is part of what God says leads to true holiness of life in all our behavior, which in turn leads to experiencing the abundant life which God has for all those who live holy lives like He is holy. And with the abundant life comes Christian joy, inner peace coupled with contentment, and a companionship with God that far exceeds anything we can imagine.

III. Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ – The third step toward holiness.

A. Before providing an explanation of what God is speaking of here, I want to explain several words used by God in this exhortation.

1. The word **fix** means to fasten or anchor something to something. In this case, we are to anchor our hope to all that will be given us by God when Christ returns to bring an end to this age and establish God's eternal Kingdom.

2. The word **hope** describes a confident expectation based on a sufficient reason or set of reasons for that confidence. In other words, we are to maintain a confident expectation that we will receive all that God is going to give us and do for us when Christ returns.

B. So what is God wanting us to understand with this exhortation, and why is it important?

1. Let me give you an example to explain God's reason for saying this.

a. Not too long ago, if you wanted a reasonable guarantee of getting a job with a good income, good benefits, and a good retirement package, you would plan on getting good grades throughout High School, plan on graduating from college with a degree that would lead to a good job, and maybe even get a Masters Degree.

b. In other words, anchoring (*fixing*) your reasonably dependable expectation (*hope*) of getting a job that provides financial security for the rest of your life will determine how hard you work to get good grades in HS and college, so as to gain the good job you seek.

2. Now the reason this exhortation is so important is because we will rise as high and do as much as is required by that upon which we fix our hope.

a. If you fix your hope on something low and less important, you will only rise that high by doing what is required to gain that much.

b. If you fix your hope on something high and of great importance, you will rise that high (or at least get very close to it) by doing what it takes to gain what you hope to receive when you get there.

C. Now you may be wondering how this fits into becoming holy like unto God's holiness? Simply stated, since what we hope to gain in the next life is significantly affected by how holy we live in this life, then the lower our hope, the less holy our Christian life. The higher our hope, the more holy our Christian life.

1. If what we hope to gain is simply eternal life over eternal damnation, than just going to heaven when we die will be our highest hope.
 - a. And if that is our highest hope, and if God's grace, tempered by the teachings of eternal security is the anchor for our hope, we will live accordingly in this life.
 - b. In other words, we will rise to the level of living up to what it takes to get into heaven, rather than living up to what it takes to receive all that God has for those who belong to Him.
 2. Those who set their hope on receiving as much as possible of the **ALL GOD HAS FOR THEM** at the return of Christ, understand that how they live their life here has a profound effect on what they will receive and the life they will live in eternity.
 - a. In other words, getting into heaven is not their goal. They want all that God has for them and longs to give them at Christ's return.
 - b. And they want their loving Father and their Savior and Lord to be as pleased as possible with them throughout eternity.
 - c. And they want to be as close to God and as intimate with God as anyone can be. Therefore, knowing that the pure in heart see God, they pursue the kind of holiness in this life that will bring them as close to God in the next as possible.
 - d. These are the ones who have fixed their hope on the highest things, and who prove it by rising to the standard of holiness in this life that will put them in good stead to receive all that they hope for in the next life.
- D. The point of all this is this: to pursue and gain a holiness like God's holiness in all our behavior, we must set your hope high enough. And God says a good height is wanting **ALL** that He has for us in the next life.
1. What is your hope set on? If it is set on anything earthly, then you have anchored yourself to something so low that it will be impossible for you to arrive at, or even make commendable progress toward being holy in **all** your behavior in this life.
 2. If your hope is set on the life to come and all God has for you in that life, then you will push yourself to rise to that level of living required to gain what you hope for – which is to be holy in **all** your behavior in this life.
 3. As Jesus said: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (**Matthew 6:21**).

IV. Conclusion