

# *Called to be Holy*

*1 Peter 1:3-5, 13-16*

*3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time ...*

*13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written, “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

# *Called to be Holy*

Holiness is the keynote of the Kingdom of God. In fact, God cannot be known apart from His holiness. He **is** holy! It is impossible to separate God from His holiness or to conceive of Him in any other way – not if our concept of God is accurate.

Anyone who has ever been confronted with the living God, anyone who has truly perceived Him, has come away with a sense of the awesome holiness of God. It happened to the prophet Isaiah. He was given a vision of the Lord seated on His throne, high and exalted, surrounded by heavenly creatures who called out to one another:

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

Isaiah, in his astonishment, could only cry, “*Woe is me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty*” (6:5).

Ezekiel experienced the heavens being opened, and he saw visions of God. And as he beheld the glory of the Lord, Ezekiel fell facedown.

What about Elijah? In 1 Kings 19 we read the account of Elijah’s journey to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. He spent the night in a cave, and then was told to go and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord. We read that when Elijah heard the voice of the Lord, who was about to pass by, “*he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave*” (19:13).

The Apostle John, while imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos, saw a stunning vision of the resurrected Lord. He wrote about this in Revelation 1:17-18:

*“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!’”*

God’s holiness is simply awesome, stunning, arresting. It stops us in our tracks. But the Lord never intended that his holiness should slay us or dismay us. That’s why our friend, Peter, brings the message that we have before us in 1 Peter 1. It is a message of *hope* – living hope through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus from the dead – and it is also a message about an *imperishable inheritance* that can never spoil or fade, for it is kept for us by the power of God Himself. Think about the profound implications of this: **Life with Christ is an endless hope, but without him, it is a hopeless end!**

God has given us real hope, and our hope is built on only one foundation, the sure foundation of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. That’s the foundation upon which your life and my life is built and upon which the church is built. Upon this foundation God is building up His living temple composed of all believers everywhere. Now God has a plan for what *kind* of living temple He is building. Charles Haddon Spurgeon tells us what that plan is: “**Holiness is the architectural plan upon which God is building up His living temple .”**

In other words, God is calling us to a life of authentic holiness. There is a great need today for men and women, young people and children to live holy lives. Peter outlines three steps which we are to follow in order to live up to our calling.

**1. Prepare Your Minds for Action** (v. 13). Holiness begins with proper preparation of our minds. Peter uses an old Middle Eastern phrase, “Gird up the loins of your mind.” Nobody talks this way today. What did he mean? Well, he was thinking of the custom of the day whereby men would often wear long, flowing robes. When they were preparing to run or do physical work, they usually lifted their robes and secured them with a belt or girdle around their waist. This allowed them the necessary freedom of movement.

Well Peter says that we are to “gird up the loins of our mind.” If he were saying this in today’s vernacular, he would probably say, “**Roll up the sleeves of your mind.**” In other words, we are to start working on developing and preparing our minds for a life of holiness.

The Bible places great value in the thought life. Proverbs 23:7 says, “*As a man thinks within himself, so he is.*” Jesus indicated that sinfulness begins in the mind, in the inner world of thoughts and ideas, not just in one’s outward actions. Murder, for example, is a great sin that springs to life in the mind before it expresses itself in action (Matt. 5:21-22). It begins with the harboring of anger in the heart, soon finds expression as evil speech on the lips, deepens into character assassination, and can ultimately escalate into outright murder. Such is also the case with adultery (Matt. 5:27-28). First the mind fantasizes, then, the deed is done! The mind is the spawning ground where ideas are birthed and incubated, and the longer we nurse them the more certain it is that we will clothe them in outward action.

Let us all make sure that we understand this principle: we can never rise higher than our thought life. So our minds must be holy if our behavior is to be holy. That’s why the apostle Paul writes: “*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Rom. 12:2).

Ravi Zacharias laments that, “One of the tragic casualties of our age has been that of the contemplative life – a life that thinks, thinks things through, and more particularly, thinks God’s thoughts after Him.” In Isaiah 55:8 the Lord shows us our problem. He puts his divine finger on what is at the root of human misbehavior. He says, “*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.*” In the same passage our Father says, “*Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.*” The life of holiness begins when we turn to the Lord and say, “Here, Lord, here is my mind. I consecrate it to You. I ask that by the power of the Holy Spirit my thoughts be aligned with Your thoughts.”

And then we back up that prayer of consecration with action by immersing our minds in the Word of God. At the same time, we determine to reject ungodly thinking by refusing to harbor it in our minds. Now let’s be clear: there is no sin in foolish and ungodly thoughts passing through our minds. That’s how Satan tempts us. The sin is in harboring them. As the ancient proverb says, “*We cannot prevent the birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from building nests in our hair.*” How much more must we guard our minds!

**2. Be Obedient** (v. 13b-14). Having begun to prepare our minds, we are next to “*set our hope fully on the grace to be given us when Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.*” Here, Peter’s thinking lines up perfectly with that of the Apostle John. In 1 John 3:2-3 John writes, “*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he [Christ] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*”

The idea is stunningly simple. If we want to be citizens of the Kingdom of God, then we must develop characteristics like those of the King. His character must become our character; His values our values; His ways our ways; His desires our desires. As Peter puts it, “*Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.*” The kind of conformance Peter is thinking of is rather like that of the fashion world, superficial and transient. It is like the fashions of both men’s and women’s clothing that are constantly changing from one season to another. But Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). His character is unchanging and when he is enthroned in our lives we will not be conforming to our former lusts and our former appetites. We will not be blown back and forth by every worldly wind of fashion, vogue, and vulgarity. Obedience will set our lives on the sure foundation of Godly character.

**3. Be Holy** (v. 15-16). With this preparation of the mind, followed by obedience, Peter can now say in verses 15-16, “*But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’*”

You know, it seems to me that Peter’s logic is no different than the kind of thinking we apply to everyday life. Think about how an astute young man or woman approaches life. First, they prepare their mind by going to school and then perhaps on to university. They study in the hope of earning a degree. Their goal may be to become a lawyer or a surgeon. They may have to article or undertake an internship. Finally, the day comes when they are admitted to the bar and recognized as a lawyer, or they finish their internship and are recognized as a surgeon. Legally, they are as professional as they ever will be. Their credentials are in place. But that isn’t the end of it; rather it is just the beginning. Their whole practice is ahead of them. The lawyer must now strive to apply the law as well as deal with legal precedent and courtroom procedure - must move from the classroom to the courtroom!

The surgeon must move from the classroom to the operating room, where a single stroke of the scalpel could mean the difference between life and death. Neither the lawyer’s nor the doctor’s license to practice means very much unless they become experientially what the piece of paper says they are.

It’s the same with our Christianity. There came a day when you and I put our faith and trust in Christ. We turned to him in repentance. On that very day, we were acquitted of all charges against us. We laid our lives on God’s holy altar and we were forgiven and given a brand new status. You might say that we received our heavenly citizenship papers. Legally we were as Christian as we will ever be. Legally! But God says, “Now become experientially what you already are legally. You’ve set yourself apart for Me. You’ve received the title “Christian.” Now I want you to actually live it! So come and begin your apprenticeship with Me.”

We have the perfect foundation for a life of holiness. That foundation is Christ! Paul wrote, “No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Peter says that, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness” (2 Pe. 1:3). He goes on to say that through the glory and goodness and promises of Christ, we may “participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (v. 4). The question is what kind of life are you and I building on such a great foundation?

Howard Hendricks wisely observed, "It is foolish to build a chicken coop on the foundation of a skyscraper." The professing Christian who fails to live a holy life is failing to utilize the foundation for his life that Christ has provided. It behooves each of us to pause right now and ask, "Am I living up to the hope and the inheritance, the promises and the power available to me in Christ? Is my life like a chicken coop or a skyscraper?"

## Points to Ponder

*Life with Christ is an endless hope,  
but without him, it is a hopeless end!*

God is building up His living temple composed of all believers everywhere. Now God has a plan for what *kind* of living temple He is building. Charles Haddon Spurgeon tells us what that plan is: "**Holiness is the architectural plan upon which God is building up His living temple.**"

The Lord is calling us to a life of authentic holiness, and Peter outlines three steps in the process:

1. **Prepare Your Minds for Action** (v. 13). In other words, roll up the sleeves of your mind! Read the Word of God; read mature Christian literature that will stretch your mind.
2. **Be Obedient** (v. 13b-14). Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. The simple truth is that if one wants to be a citizen of the Kingdom, then one must learn to live like the King. His character must become our character; His values our values; His ways our ways; His desires our desires.
3. **Be Holy** (v. 15-16). We have the perfect foundation for a life of holiness. That foundation is Christ! (1 Cor. 3:11; 2 Peter 1:3) The question is, what kind of life are we building on such a great foundation?

*"It is foolish to build a chicken coop on  
the foundation of a skyscraper."*

- Howard Hendricks