

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

1 PET. 1:14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear.

NOTES

Holy Conduct

Lesson Text: 1 Peter 1:14-17

Related Scriptures: Leviticus 20:7-8, 26; Philippians 2:12-15;
1 John 3:1-10; 1 Peter 2:9-12; Romans 2:6-11

TIME: between A.D. 62 and 63 PLACE: from Babylon (possibly from Rome)

GOLDEN TEXT—"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance" (1 Peter 1:14).

Lesson Exposition

WHAT NOT TO DO—1 Pet. 1:14

Although our text begins with 1 Peter 1:14, notice briefly how verse 13 begins: "Wherefore." Because of what Peter said in verses 3-12, we are called to prepare for action. We are not to live according to our former lusts. Rather, we are to be obedient children of God. Prior to knowing God, we were ignorant, but now God has given us His wisdom. We are called to live differently than previously.

As obedient children. Jesus lived the life we should have lived and died the death that we deserved. He rose again and thereby "hath begotten us again" into new life (1 Pet. 1:3). He did not merely take our punishment away to help us attain a neutral status with God. God adopts us as His children and brings us into His family. We might take being God's child for granted, but not everyone is God's child. Only those who receive Jesus are given that right (John 1:11-13). The apostle John marveled at the love God showed us in making us part of His family (1 John 3:1). It is a tremendous, unearned privilege.

Avoid sin. We were once ignorant and blind (2 Cor. 4:4). In our ignorance, we followed our lusts and disobeyed God's

commands. But when God saved us, He took away our ignorance and gave us spiritual sight. Now that we are God's children, we should act like it. We should no longer give in to wicked desires. When we were saved, we were immediately transformed but not perfected. We are called to continual transformation through the renewal of our minds (Rom. 12:2). As we put off the old self, we are to put on Christ (Eph. 4:20-24).

Growth in the Christian life involves putting off sin and putting on holiness. If we focus only on getting rid of specific sins, we may trade one set of sins for a new one. We must put on habits of holiness and imitate Christ.

WHAT TO DO—1 Pet. 1:15

God is holy. The call to holiness is not arbitrary. Rather, God calls us to be holy because He is holy. We are called to resemble God, and His commands reveal His character. We are to be truthful because God is truthful. We are called to be faithful to our spouse because God is faithful to His people (Hos. 2:16-23; Isa. 62:4-5). We are called to imitate God. His commands are holy and teach us about who He is.

Be holy. The Lord is holy, holy, holy (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8). It is a key characteristic of who He is. This means that knowing God will lead us to become more holy, and without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). Right thinking helps lead to right behavior, and behavior impacts the way we think. If we are living in sin, we will be blinded. We are called to holiness in thought and deed, and growth in one leads to growth in the other.

God is perfectly holy in all His ways, and we are called to imitate Him. We should not consider some “small” sins to be acceptable. Not all sins are equally heinous (cf. Matt. 23:23-24), but they are all equally wrong (cf. 5:21-22). God calls some sins “greater” than others (Ezek. 8:6, 13, 15), but any sin is enough to condemn a person. We must fight sin in all areas of our lives. This is something that takes hard work (cf. Heb. 12:14). Cutting corners, breaking traffic laws, gossiping, or any other sins are not little matters. Different people struggle with different sins to different degrees. Whatever sins you are particularly tempted to make peace with, you should fight and put to death (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5).

We will not achieve sinless perfection in this life (1 John 1:8). But we are called to increase in holiness and grow in resemblance to the Heavenly Father.

OUR MOTIVATION—1 Pet. 1:16

Peter quoted the Leviticus 19 passage we studied last week. God calls us to be holy because He is holy. God is both our motivation and our model. As His children, we are called to resemble Him. Leviticus 19 first stated this principle and then got specific with commands the Israelites were to follow. The actions we take should be guided by this overarching principle: we are to seek to be holy as God is holy.

OUR ATTITUDE—1 Pet. 1:17

The Father. Verse 17 continues the flow of thought. When Peter wrote “if” you call on God as Father, he was not in doubt as to whether the Christians he was writing to did this. Jesus taught His disciples to pray to our Father (Matt. 6:9), and that rightly became common Christian practice. Peter was using this phrase to speak to his entire Christian audience. But why not use a phrase such as “if you have believed in Him” or something else that also applies to all Christians? The answer may be that Peter was once again connecting his exhortation to our identity as God’s children. What we do should reflect who we are.

The impartial Judge. God judges impartially according to every person’s deeds. That does not imply we are saved by our good deeds—after all, Peter said only a few verses above that God caused us to be born again (1 Pet. 1:3) and would gloriously proclaim in the next chapter that Jesus bore our sins (2:24). Yet the New Testament affirms that everyone will be judged and that Christ Himself will act as Judge (Matt. 16:27; Acts 10:42). We are not saved by our works, but those acts will reveal the sincerity of our faith (Matt. 7:23; 25:31-46). Unbelievers are judged and condemned for their sinful deeds. Believers are forgiven because of what Christ has done. Even the thief on the cross, who seems to have converted only hours before his death, will rejoice forever (cf. Luke 23:42-43). At the same time, however, our heavenly rewards will be proportionate to our faithfulness (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15). We will receive degrees of reward, comparable to how unbelievers receive varying degrees of punishment for their varying sins (Matt. 10:15; Luke 12:47-48). Our deeds do not save us, but they do matter.

The conduct of believers. Peter commanded his audience to live in fear and reverence. What does it mean

to fear God? Didn't John say that perfect love casts out fear of punishment (1 John 4:18)? We should not have a cringing fear of God's punishment since Jesus took the punishment for our sins on the cross. However, we are to have a holy reverence of Him.

Imagine going on a tropical vacation. You go on a glass-bottom boat, then get out to swim. After you swim a short distance, you see a shark swimming toward you. Your heart pounds violently as you swim back to the boat. You were gripped with a terrified fear. Soon after you get into the boat, you see the shark swim directly beneath the boat. Your breath is taken away as you peer through the glass and realize that it is larger than any shark you have ever seen. Although you are no longer in danger, you have a sense of awe and fear at this mighty creature.

This is a partial analogy of what our fear of God is like. We no longer need to fear His wrath, but we marvel at His unmatched strength and recognize what could happen if we were to metaphorically "get out of the boat." God will one day shake all of creation, and He is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:26-29). We are safe in Christ, but there is no safety apart from Him. A right perspective humbles us, leads us to holy fear, and is the basis of wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 15:33).

Proper fear of God recognizes both His powerful judgment and His merciful forgiveness (cf. Ps. 130:4; Jer. 33:8-9). When we fear God, we will trust and obey Him (cf. Ps. 115:11; Deut. 6:1-2). This obedience is not an attempt to earn forgiveness and escape His wrath; it is a response to who He is and what He has done.

The time of exile. Our identity as sojourners on this earth means that this world is not our home. We should not expect to fit in with the world.

After all, Satan is sometimes called the ruler of this world or the god of this age (John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4). We should not expect to live peacefully in a world so influenced by him. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and He defeated Satan through His death on the cross (1 John 3:8; cf. Col. 2:15). However, until Christ comes again, His victory will not be fully realized. The world does not know us, because it did not know Him, and we should expect to be hated by the world and treated the way He was (John 15:18-20; 1 John 3:1). We should set our hope on Christ's return, for our citizenship is in heaven.

—Tom Greene

QUESTIONS

1. What is the immediate context surrounding our passage in 1 Peter?
2. What did Jesus accomplish beyond taking away our punishment for sin?
3. What are God's children called to do?
4. Why does God call us to be holy?
5. What is the implication of God being perfectly holy in all His ways?
6. What Old Testament passage did Peter quote?
7. Who was Peter writing to when he wrote, "if ye call on the Father," and why might he have used that language?
8. How will God judge us based on our works?
9. What does it mean to fear God?
10. What does it mean to be a sojourner in this world?

—Tom Greene

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. When we become God's children, our lifestyle should noticeably change (1 Pet. 1:14).
2. As God's children, we are no longer ignorant. Our way of thinking must change.
3. We must imitate God and seek holiness in all areas of life (vss. 15-16).
4. Calling on the Father is a defining mark of a true Christian (vs. 17).
5. God will judge our works, so we should live appropriately.
6. We must have a reverent fear of God.

—Tom Greene

Golden Text Illuminated

“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance” (1 Peter 1:14).

In his letter, Peter imparts a message of transformation and obedience. First Peter 1:14 specifically calls believers to a life of obedience, urging them not to conform to their former ignorance and evil desires.

Peter's letter was written to a diverse and scattered group of believers facing persecution and societal pressure. They needed encouragement and guidance as they navigated their new-found faith in a hostile environment.

Peter's teaching in this verse is carried by three key words. The first word is “obedient.” This entails a willingness to submit, yielding to the authority of God in all aspects of life. Obedience is not mere conformity but a conscious decision to align thoughts, desires, and actions with the truth of God's Word and His will for our lives.

The second word is “fashioning” and refers to assuming a shape that fits with a particular mold or form. In this verse, it emphasizes the danger of conforming to the world's values, attitudes, and behavior. The call challenges believers to resist the pressures and influences that oppose Christ's teachings and the kingdom of God.

The third group of words is “former lusts” and encompasses intense, uncontrolled desires that lead to sin. Peter contrasts the former life of ignorance and the transformed life in Christ. Believers are called to reject evil desires, for they hinder obedience and draw one away from God's truth.

—Page Brooks

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What are immediate results of becoming a child of God? What implications take longer to work out?
2. When people become Christians, what happens to their “former lusts” (1 Pet. 1:14)?
3. What were God's children formerly ignorant of?
4. Are there areas of life where it is particularly easy to forget about God's call to holiness?
5. How do God's commands teach us about who He is? Is the same true of Old Testament laws?
6. What practical implications does God's holiness have for our daily pursuit of holiness?
7. Should Christians pray *only* to the Father (cf. Acts 7:59)? Should we pray *primarily* to the Father? Why or why not?

—Tom Greene