

THE FOUNDATION FOR A HOLY LIFE

KEY VERSE:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Ephesians 1:4).

1 Peter 1:13. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15. But as he who 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: 18. For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20. Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, 21. Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. 22. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: 23. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 24. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Background Scriptures

Genesis 1:26, 27; 17:1; Leviticus 11:44, 45; 19:2
Luke 1:73-75; II Peter 1:2-8

Devotional Reading

Psalm 24:1-6

Central Truth:

The Bible clearly teaches that God requires His children to be HOLY.

THE LESSON EXPOSITION

BACKGROUND

Holiness is a subject often avoided by too many Christian people. For some reason, it's uncomfortable for some people to talk about being *holy*. We seem to have little trouble in ascribing holiness to God as we sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." Yet when we make the transition to speaking about the holiness of our lives, we sometimes visualize the caricature of what none of us wants to be – a person who is "holier-than-thou." Jesus definitely refuted that kind of lifestyle as it was demonstrated in the lives of the scribes and the Pharisees.

Instead, God calls us to a life of authentic holiness. Charles Spurgeon said that "holiness is the architectural plan upon which god buildeth up His living temple." That is a graphic summation of the teaching of Peter on this important subject of holiness. There's a great need within our society for men and women, young people and children to live *holy* lives.

I. SUPPORTED IN THE NATURE OF GOD (1 Peter 1:13-16)

1 Peter 1:13. **Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind.** Authentic *holiness* begins with proper preparation of our minds. We are to take the initiative in preparing our minds, which must be holy if our behaviour is to be holy. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). Paul's instructions also to thing on the things which are true and noble, just and pure, lovely and of good report (Phil. 4:8). The word translated sober is often rendered "steady." It's important that our minds be under the steady control of the Holy Spirit. And hope to the end. A part of the preparations for holy living is to live the life of hope. Many Christians fail at this point by tending to be negative, pessimistic, judgmental and even fatalistic. It should not be so! Through faith in Him, we have a living hope. Victory is assured! Life with Christ is an endless hope, without Him a hopeless end.

14. **As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts.** Obedience is at the very foundation of Christian lifestyle. If we're to be disciples of Jesus, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him (Mark 8:34). Jesus said that the person who authentically loves Him is the one who obeys Him (John 14:21). When we obey Jesus Christ, we will not be conforming to our former lusts. These "natural appetites" promise fulfilment and purpose but ultimately bring only disillusionment and death. Since these lusts are of the flesh and are opposed to the life of the Spirit, they are of the worldly system which is diametrically opposed to God's design for us and for all of creation.

15. **But as he who hath called you is *holy*, so be ye *holy*.** There's only one who is fully holy. God is holy. He, said Peter, is the one who has called us. He's the true source of holiness. If we're to be holy, we must know Him, love Him and obey Him. We must walk in fellowship with Him. The essence of true holiness consists in conformity to the nature and will of God.

16. **Because it is written, be ye holy.** Here's a direct quotation from Leviticus 11:44. The Old Testament understanding of holiness was to be separated from sin, pure, or hallowed. The Greek word which Peter used here

for holy also means to be without sin, blameless or separated from all uncleanness. The call here is clear. We're to be holy in all that we do. We're to become more and more like our Lord and we're to live as He lives. God longs to donate a pure heart to us just as certainly as a physical heart may be donated in transplant surgery. D.L. Moody said, "It's a great deal better to live a holy life than to talk about it. Lighthouses don't ring bells and fire cannons to call attention to their shining – they just shine." The silent beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world, next to the might of the Spirit of God.



II. SECURED IN THE REDEEMPTIVE PROGRAM (1 Peter 1:17-21)

17. **Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.** Peter reminded us that we should live as those sojourning here or as strangers. Our highest calling is to give our primary allegiance to the King of kings. This earth is our temporary dwelling place, but we have a citizenship in the kingdom of God which is eternal. Three times in this Epistle, Peter reminded us that God judges without respect of persons. With this in mind we should conduct ourselves in reverent fear. This is the kind of fear described in **Acts 2:43**: "And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles." The emphasis is that we should live in constant recognition of who God is and who we are.

18. **Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things.** We have not been redeemed by the futile conduct received by the tradition from our fathers. One generation can only pass down the temporary things of life to another. We come into this world with nothing and we leave this world with nothing. Peter suggested that even gold and silver are ultimately perishable. At best, these things are ultimately vain. They provide a false sense of security. We have been redeemed from the futile conduct which focuses merely on life. Our salvation has not been bought with the temporary.

19. **But with the precious blood of Christ.** We have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, given by the Lamb of God who was without blemish and without spot. He's the fulfilment of the Passover lamb which was to be without spot or blemish, the very best of the flock. John the Baptist came introducing Jesus in the following manner: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (**John 1:29**). Indeed, our salvation and holiness has been bought with the eternal and with that which is so precious that all the gold and silver in the world could not purchase it – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

20. **Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world.** Jesus didn't shed His blood on the cross by accident nor by a terrible mistake wrought by hateful, sinful persons. His death and the shedding of His blood were the plan of God from the beginning of the world. Paul confirmed this marvellous truth concerning our redemption by declaring that "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (**Eph. 1:4**). While Jesus was chosen before the foundation of the world to be our redeemer, He has been revealed, or manifested, as the Saviour only in these last times. The prophets searched for this Redeemer, but within God's perfect plan, He was revealed centuries later in Jesus Christ. He wasn't manifested or revealed within a vacuum. Peter contended that He was manifested for us who would believe in God through Him. This Redeemer is the source of our salvation and holiness.

21. **Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory.** Through Jesus Christ we have come to believe in God. The gospel message of **John 3:16** have been fulfilled in our lives as we have believed in Jesus. This God is the one who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. The teaching of the resurrection of Christ is central in the proclamation of Peter. It was pre-eminent in his first sermon at Pentecost after being filled with the Holy Spirit even as Jesus had promised. He was able to minister in the power of the resurrected Christ. The God who raised Jesus from the dead is the same God in whom we believe. His power is available to us day by day as we trust in Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to live in us and through us. And God has given glory to Christ. The word glory can be translated as "worship." Frankly, that's how we're to live – to honour, praise, and worship and glorify Christ.



III. DISCOVERED IN SALVATION'S PLAN (1 Peter 1:22-25)

22. **Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth** ... unto unfeigned love of the brethren. Love is at the very centre of the Christian lifestyle and it's the very essence and character of God (**1 John 4:8**). Our love is to be an unfeigned or sincere love, that is, without hypocrisy. To love sincerely is to love authentically – like God himself. In order to have a sincere love, we must love from a pure heart fervently. Peter was referring to the cleansing that we can experience through the precious blood of the Lamb without blemish.

If we are to love sincerely, we must be cleansed from our sins by Jesus Christ. We must be dead to self and alive to God. We must receive this unconditional love from God in order to express it to others.

23. **Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.** Peter stated that the quality of loving God sincerely, fervently, and with a pure heart flows from that marvellous and necessary experience of having first been born again. Earlier in **chapter 1**, Peter wrote about our inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled. And all of that is based upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ (**vs. 3, 4**).

24, 25. **For all flesh is as grass.** To illustrate his point, Peter quoted **Isaiah 40:6-8**, saying that all flesh is as grass ... The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. In contrast, The word of the Lord endureth forever, or as previously stated, "the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (**v. 23**). And this, said Peter, is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. The Word of God will endure forever; so will love and holiness. We should not be surprised. For if God is love, eternal, and holy, so must love and holiness be eternal. Love never comes to an end (**1 Cor. 13:8**). It is love from a perfect heart, established in holiness that will abide forever.



"KEY" COMMENTS

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Eph. 1:4).

Our omniscient God experiences no surprises. Before man fell into sin, God had already conceived and completed the plan for his salvation. It had only to be implemented when the time became ripe. Just as the architect translates his concept of a building onto paper in the form of a blueprint portraying the dimensions, angles, and other details before the structure itself exists, so God fully planned every detail of the human creature He would create, including His perfect redemptive plan. Before the foundation of the world was laid, He had arranged for His only begotten Son to become the sacrifice, the perfect atonement for man's sin. Redemption is not just a hasty afterthought with which God is endeavouring to salvage a sudden bad development that caught Him off guard. It's the perfect master plan of the all wise and omnipotent God.

He hath chosen us. "The election or choice of God is not arbitrary, so that some are destined to salvation and others to perdition, without regard to the disposition of the individual man. The extension of salvation is to all men, as the Bible abundantly declares (John 3:16; Rom. 10:13). The elect are constituted, not by absolute decree, but by acceptance of the conditions of God's call" (Beacon Bible Comm.). Even as Noah applied for and found grace (favour) in the eyes of the Lord, so may you and I. Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). And Peter penned these precious words: "The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

Holy and without blame. "Holiness and perfection are the ends aimed at in God's electing love ... God could not elect any soul to a salvation without holiness ... The election is unto holiness. So long as a soul loves sin and hates holiness, he has no warrant to affirm any election .
... God saves no man except in the process He makes him holy" (Pulpit Comm.).

Holy. This is the same word rendered as "saints" in verse 1 of the chapter. Indeed, it appears many times in the Scriptures where it is expressed as "holy" or "saints." Again, right here in this verse God's call to holiness is clarion clear.

Without blame. The word here translated "without blame" is also given as "without blemish" (Eph. 5:27; 1 Peter 1:19), "unblameable" (Col. 1:22), "without spot" (Heb. 9:14), "faultless" (Jude 24), "without fault" (Rev. 14:5). Such perfection as here required would certainly overwhelm mortal man, except for the merits of the shed blood of Christ.

Through that sacrifice we are privileged to partake of the amazing grace of God. Christ made the choice for us of holiness and heaven. Are you concurring with His choice for you?



EXPLORATION

DOCTRINAL DISCUSSION

Just as the foundation is one of the most important components of a material building, so is the foundation of our spiritual building. The former can't be build on the sand, or it will fall. Nor can the latter be built on any other foundation than God through the provisions of the God-man, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The blueprint for our holiness is drawn from the nature of God himself and Jesus is the connecting link that enables fallen man to be restored to "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). The Holy Spirit is the effective builder and the safe interpreter of the blueprint (the Bible) since He is very God as well!
(1 John 4:8),

Just as the New Testament states that, "God is love" the Old Testament states that God is holy (Lev. 11:45).

What then is holiness in the Old Testament? It's the unchangeable nature of God in which there is ultimate presentation of the sum total of His characteristics as well as the perfection of each characteristic. Holiness, in God, is the state in which we find no moral imperfection in the entire nature of God. Love is holiness in activity. Even in these actions there is total moral perfection and total objectivity in this great love. It surely follows that such a divine being could create and restore mankind to the state of derived holiness that we have because of our relationship to God.

"The very history of the word holiness in the Old Testament displays the gradual transcendence of the idea of separation by that of sanctity. It traverses a path in which the quantitative idea of tabu changes to the qualitative idea of active and absolute purity. The religious grows ethical, that it may become not only more religious, but the one religion for the conscience and for the world. The one God can only be the Holy God" (Exploring Christian Holiness, Vol. 1).

Since the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed, we would expect to find a clearer picture of the foundation of holiness in the New Testament. That is exactly what we find!

We have to go no further than **Matthew 3:11** to find an experience that goes farther than the baptism of John the Baptist. His baptism was the same that the disciples experienced before the Day of Pentecost. Jesus himself stated that their names were written in heaven (**Luke 10:20**). That experience forms the basis of initial holiness that is further clarified by the statement of a future baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire. No person should minimize the first work of grace to promote another. But, clearly, the foundation for a second work of grace is based on a first work that is working!

In the great Sermon on the Mount, a further foundation was laid for holiness when Jesus said in **Matthew 5:8**, *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."* There doesn't seem to be a way to escape the simple present tense which indicated that these people must possess this purity now! Nor is the result in doubt! We believe the impact of, "they shall see God" is not altogether future, but is an assurance of fellowshiping and seeing Him now.

So we find the foundation for holiness well established throughout the New Testament.

Acts 2 gives the historical beginning of the filling with the Holy Spirit and throughout that book there were recorded the experiences of those who found the promise of Joel the prophet fulfilled in their lives.

It is my firm opinion that **Romans 6** clearly shows that holiness is in the plan of God for our experience now. **Romans 12:1, 2** clearly shows that there's a foundation for belief in a present experience that is attainable now for people who are already brethren.

The "more excellent way" given in **I Corinthians 13** is a journey into a life of pure love that the Corinthians had not experienced before. Anyone possessing those characteristics is certainly experiencing the life that is filled with the Spirit.

One has a hard time doing away with the foundations for a second work of grace or holiness when he considers the many words that are used to point out what happens to people in the experience of holiness. Here are a few of them and their generally accepted meanings. **Romans 6:6** use a Greek word that means the body of sin should be destroyed. In **II Corinthians 7:1** we find people being exhorted to cleanse (purify) themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. This same word is used in **Acts 15:9** in describing what happened to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. **Hebrews 12; 14** describes the life of holiness. It seems to go without saying that one must have the experience before he can live the life.

It seems to me that the Book of Ephesians is a very clear exposition for two works of grace. In chapter **1** Paul greeted them as saints. In **chapter 2** he indicated that they had been quickened (made alive) in spiritual things. In **3:14-19**, Paul prayed for them to have an experience that would fill them with all the fullness of God. Such a prayer could not be prayed for those who had already been filled.

It seems to me that **I Thessalonians 5** gives a very clear movement of a person toward an experience. It culminates in **verses 23 and 24** which read, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly (through and through); and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

Perhaps this is enough foundational material for us to consider, but rest assured that there is much more if we had space to print it.



FOCUS WORKING WITH THE WORD!

In **1 Peter 1:13** Peter used the Middle Eastern phrase, Gird up the loins of your mind. This refers to the custom of men who were wearing long, flowing robes. When they were preparing to run or to do physical work, they usually lifted their robes and secured them with a belt or girdle around their waist. This allowed freedom of movement. This phrase lends itself to the importance of preparing our minds for the life of holiness.

In addition, we should be sober (**v. 13**). The word translated as "sober" is often rendered "self-controlled" or "steady." It often denotes abstinence from wine or strong drink. The point made here is that our minds need to be under the control of the Holy Spirit, not something else. We are truly self-controlled when we are God-controlled.

Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts (**v. 14**). Peter warned us not to conform to our former desires as we once did when we lived in ignorance of sin. The word "fashioning" is more properly translated "conform" and denotes a fashioning that is superficial and transient. It might be compared to the fashions in both men and women's clothing that are constantly changing from one season to another.

Be ye holy in all manner of conversation (**v. 15**). In the Old Testament, God declared, *"For I the LORD your God am holy"* (**Lev. 19:2**). In **1 Peter 1:16** we find a direct quotation from **Leviticus 11:44** in which the Lord not only declares that He is holy, but He instructs the Children of Israel to be holy as He is holy. Peter emphasized that same instruction for the Christian believer. We are to be holy.

The Hebrew word used in **Leviticus 19:2** is gadosh, which denotes apartness, holiness, sacredness, or hallowedness. To be holy is to be separated from sin, pure, or hallowed. The Greek word which Peter used, hagios, also means to be without sin, blameless, or separated from uncleanness. It is clear that a spiritual transformation needs to take place which displaces our character of sin by His character of holiness.

Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear (**v. 17**). Peter reminded us to live as those sojourning here or as strangers. The word for sojourning is paroikia, which is translated as "stranger" in **Acts 13:17**. We are merely pilgrims or strangers here on earth. This is our temporary dwelling place. But we have a citizenship in the kingdom of God which is eternal.

We should conduct ourselves in reverent fear (v. 17). The word for fear is phobos from which we get our English word "phobia." However, the kind of fear which Peter suggested is not caused by emotional illness. It is a healthy kind of fear.

This is the kind of fear described in Acts 2:43, "**And fear came upon every soul.**" Another English translation for this word would be "awe." We should be in awe or reverent fear in the presence of God. We need to live in constant recognition of who God is and who we are.

We have not been redeemed by the futile conduct received by the tradition from our fathers (v. 18). The word translated as vain is the Greek word mataios, which means "futile" or "empty." It's the word which Paul used to describe the wisdom of this world as opposed to godly wisdom (1 Cor. 3:20).

See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently (v. 22). Love is at the very centre of the Christian lifestyle. Peter taught us that we should not only love one another sincerely or unfeignedly, but we should also love fervently. This word fervently means to love deeply or intensely. To love fervently is to love with all your strength.

This love comes from a pure heart. Men speak romantically about loving from the heart, but God speaks realistically about loving from a pure heart. Just as our love must come from God, so must a pure heart come from God.

The quality of loving God sincerely, fervently and with a pure heart, flows from that marvellous and necessary experience of sanctification. It is for us all today!

- Terry Pollard

DICTIONARY

gird up the loins – verse 13 – Get ready to do something difficult.

unfeigned – verse 22 – Genuine; real; sincere.



POINTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

It Works

Earl G. Lee tells of a young Vietnam veteran who made an appointment to see him. Sitting across from Pastor Lee's desk, the young veteran poured out his heart – burdens of home and family adjustments.

"Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit?" asked Pastor Lee.

The young man was silent for a few moments. He had been reared in the church. He had learned discipline in the army, but spiritually speaking, he found himself extremely undisciplined.

"No, Pastor, I don't believe I have ever asked the Holy Spirit to take over the centre of my life. I have been the centre," he said quite candidly.

Together, he and Pastor Lee prayed a prayer of surrender to the Holy Spirit, he confessing his need. Soon assurance came.

A few days later, after the close of a service, the young veteran exclaimed, "Pastor, it works!"

- C.D. Hansen in Sermon Builder



Holiness is Necessary

The Bible is a holy Book which reveals a holy God who created a sinless man, who forfeited his holiness by sinning. The Bible also reveals a holy Christ, who came to save man from all sin, restoring the moral image of God to many by the application of the merits of Christ's atonement by the Holy Spirit. The Bible also tells of a holy heaven into which no uncleanness shall enter. It promises that holy men and women may dwell forever with a holy God, holy angels and holy saints. It's commands to holiness are plentiful and plain. Dr. Wilber T. Dayton said that holiness is necessary because (1) "it is a basic need of the Christian life;" (2) it is a "personal yearning" for God's bounty to satisfy man's deepest need; that is, the expulsion of "the traitor within," as a safeguard against backsliding; and (3) "it is reasonable that one should enjoy the experience of holiness ... because of a positive obligation. We have a debt of gratitude that can never be fully paid ... We owe Him our service to the point of a fully developed sacrifice ... We owe Christ a perfect love. Certainly 'wisdom crieth out' in God's call to holiness."

- Roy S. Nicholson in God's Revivalist



FURTHER THOUGHT

- Holiness – the goal of the soul, man’s dear dream of reality, his high hope of heaven, his sweet sanctification of the spirit, his clear contact with Christ.
- Holiness – God’s impartation of His high virtue, His bequest of His own deep resources, his image borne to full fruition in human nature.
- Holiness – seen in conviction, begun in regeneration, perfected in entire sanctification, developed by constant consecration and crowned in the kingdom of glory.
- Holiness – enemy of the devils, friend of the saints, companion of the angels, gift of heaven and condemnation of hell.
- Holiness – source of Christ’s love, seed of His birth, superiority of His life, strength of His obedience, satisfaction of His death, spirit of His resurrection, splendour of His ascension, surety of His return.
- Holiness – fountainhead of faith, halo of hope, robe of righteousness, path of purity, tree of truth and light of love.
- Holiness – echoed in eternity, recorded in history, wrapped in divine mystery and given in an instant of time.

- Edward L. Dowd in Herald of Holiness