

# A CALL TO HOLINESS

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1 Peter 1:14-2:3

## Introduction

Read 1 John 3:2-3 - Back to 1 Peter 1 – the subject of hope. Hope is a recurring theme of 1 Peter. Review 1:13 – *“Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded (or self-controlled), set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

Set your hope on grace – hope for what – focus on the hope of the Christian – compare it to 1 John 3:2 – when he comes we shall be like Him. Go on to the next thought – He who has this hope in him, purifies himself, just as He is pure.

That is exactly the direction that Peter takes in his letter. Look for a moment at vv. 14-16. Discuss holiness – it is something which is viewed by most people today as being undesirable. To be called holy by a peer is something akin to being called a nerd. Yet that is primarily because many people misunderstand the meaning of the term.

To be holy is the opposite of being "common" or "profane." God is holy in that He is utterly different and distinct from His creation. His people must also be distinct, separate from the heathen attitudes and actions which characterized them as unbelievers. Compare v. 14 – the common or profane desires that you had before you were saved.

That is the call – to not be common or profane, to not be like we once were, but to be different, to be holy, to be set apart from that which is common, for something sacred.

The logical reasoning is given in vv. 15-16 – Because He who called you is holy, you too are to be holy.

But within this concept of holiness there are a couple of thoughts that Peter brings up in the next few sentences. First there is the idea of living with the fear of God, and secondly, there is the matter of obedience to God's enduring Word. That is what we need to look at today.

## Fearing our Heavenly Father

One of the truly difficult concepts in Scripture to understand and explain is the idea of the fear as it is referred to in v. 17 – *“...conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.”* The NIV says, *“...live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.”*

Over the years many people, including my own children, have asked me about the idea of fearing God. They say, “How can you be afraid of God?” Yet the Bible talks clearly and often about the importance of the fear of God, or the fear of the Lord. So, what is meant by that?

I think we need to understand that a certain amount of healthy fear is a good thing. Eg. – Power tools – I like to work with wood, and that involves using saws and sanders, and routers. One time when I was doing something with the router – fed it in wrong, the router grabbed the wood out of my hand and shot it against the far wall. I understand the speed at which those tools operate, and the power they have. Because of that, I have a healthy respect and even a certain level of fear when it comes to my power tools, which is a healthy thing.

The same sort of thing applies to our Heavenly Father. In this passage, Peter mentions three things which ought to get our attention, and induce in us a certain healthy level of fear. That is not to say that we are to be afraid of Him but, that we have a great deal of respect for His awesome power and holiness. So, what are these things?

1. We live in fear, in light of His judgment – consider for a moment the impartiality of His judgment. He does not show any favoritism. I'm amazed at the number of people who seem to think that, for whatever reason, God will go easy on them. After all He is a loving God. And as a result, there is no fear of God, because they don't understand the certainty of his coming judgment.
2. We live in fear of Him, in view of our redemption. Now this may seem difficult to see, on the surface. But consider the price of your redemption. Go through vv. 18-19 – point out the cost of our redemption. Apply...
3. We live our lives in reverent fear, in consideration of God's foreknowledge and choosing in our salvation. – *read and discuss vv. 20-21.*

Fear of God does not mean being afraid of Him. It does mean having a healthy respect and awe for His awesome power and holiness. Understanding His holiness, and the reality of His judgment, and the awesome price at which He purchased us for Himself, ought to make us fearful to do anything that would offend Him.

## Obeying His Enduring Word 1:22-2:3

If our holiness is a response to the holiness and judgment of our heavenly Father, it is also the result of obedience to His mighty, powerful and enduring Word. In these verses, Peter again gives us a lot of food for thought. But I want to focus on two specific ideas which are crucial to our obeying the Word of God.

1. We need to recognize that our new birth is the result of an imperishable seed, which is the enduring, or lasting Word of God. Go through vv. 23-25. A couple of weeks ago, Darrel did a masterful job of exploring the significance of what we find in vv. 24-25 – *read them*. Everything we know in this world fades away, wears out and deteriorates, but, in contrast to that, God's Word stands forever.

→ Illust. - THE BOOK THAT ENDURES

In 1874 the Scriptures were under severe attack by critics, and John W. Haley published a defense entitled *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*. In the preface he wrote, "Finally, let it be remembered that the Bible is neither dependent upon nor affected by the success or failure of my book. Whatever may become of the latter, whatever may be the verdict passed upon it by an intelligent public, the Bible will stand. In the ages yet to be, when its present assailants and defenders are moldering in the dust, and when our very names are forgotten, God's Word will be, as it has been during the centuries past, the guide and solace of millions."

When we understand that, we have found something we can hold on to and something which will forever change our lives.

2. There is another important truth in the opening verses of chapter 2 that really follows with the theme of obeying God's eternal Word. Obedience to God's Word requires that we have a desire for His Word and that we adjust our lives accordingly. Look at these verses. *Read 2:1-3* – Having been born again by the imperishable Word of God, we now need to grow up in it. In order to do so there may be

some things that we need to get rid of in our lives.

Again, you have the contrast between the old life and the new. Put away those thoughts and actions, the attitudes of the old, unregenerate life – v. 1. Instead, seek out the truths and the nourishment that comes from the pure, eternal Word of God—pure spiritual milk – v. 2.

## Conclusion

Peter was concerned for these believers scattered throughout the regions of Asia Minor. They were facing persecution and incredible suffering. But he knew that to endure under the weight of their circumstances, they needed to be following their Lord in the way that they lived. They needed to be living holy lives. So do we...

Holiness – *review the meaning of holiness*. We will only really be able to follow the path of holiness when we begin to fear our Heavenly Father and obey His eternal Word.

→ Illust. - 348: LITTLE, BUT IMPORTANT

The saintly Horatius Bonar, realized that the little things can either make or break the Christian. He wrote, "A holy life is made up of a multitude of small things. It is the little things of the hour and not the great things of the age that fill up a life like that of the apostles Paul or John, or David Brainerd, or Henry Martyn. Little words, not eloquent speeches or sermons; little deeds, not miracles or battles, or one great heroic effort or martyrdom, make up the true Christian life. It's the little constant sunbeam, not the lightning, the waters of Siloam that go softly in their meek mission of refreshment, not 'the waters of the rivers great and many' rushing down in torrent, noise, and force, that are the true symbols of a holy life." Bonar then warned against the "little evils, little sins, little inconsistencies, little weaknesses, little foibles, little indulgences of self and of the flesh, little acts of indolence or indecision, or slovenliness or cowardice, little equivocations or aberrations from high integrity, little bits of little indifference to the feelings or wishes of others, little outbreaks of temper, or crossness, or selfishness or vanity."