

## 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. Pray
  
- II. Additional thoughts on **I Peter 1:1-16**.
  - A. It is clear that Peter, under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, wrote this letter with a specific purpose in mind. And he laid out his letter according to his purpose.
    1. Peter begins with a foundational truth which is found in verses 2-16 of chapter 1. In these verses, he reminds us of how great our salvation is – and while doing this he makes us aware of some of the marvelous and even intriguing aspects of our salvation.
    2. He then uses the word “Therefore” at the beginning of verse 13 to unite holy living with salvation. In other words, God, speaking through Peter, makes it plain that salvation naturally leads to a serious pursuit of holy living – just as being born into this world naturally leads to a serious pursuit of growing into adulthood and living a life worthy of adulthood.
    3. After making it clear that the earthly outcome of salvation is a serious pursuit of holiness – in all our behavior – like unto God’s holiness, Peter spends the rest of his letter giving example after example of the various ways we are to rise to the level of a holiness like God’s, and what that level of holiness looks like in our varied circumstances and various relationships.
  
  - B. I know that we have already spent three Sundays examining what God is saying to us in **I Peter 1:13-16**. However, before moving on to the rest of **I Peter**, I want to use today to encourage you in your pursuit of holiness by laying out before you a realistic picture of what awaits you as you make worthy progress in this direction. And I assure you that what awaits you is a treasure that is far beyond anything you can imagine or dream of.

1. What I want to show you today about what awaits you is not something you arrive at quickly or by means of a casual or part-time effort. And without question, it cannot happen without God's gracious empowerment and assistance. However, if you are willing to do your part – over a prolonged period of time – in facing up to the sin and selfishness that resides within you, and put it out – sinful habit by selfish practice, and put godliness in its place so that you progressively become like Christ, then you will get to the spiritual condition where you will be able to enter into the enjoyment of this treasure that is far beyond anything you can imagine or dream of.
2. And what is this precious, invaluable treasure? In a few words, it is a spiritually mature holiness, a sensitive awareness of the presence of God, and an intimate communion and wonderfully satisfying companionship with God.
3. If you have already experienced what I will be talking about today, then pray for the rest of us that God will put a hunger in our hearts for such a deeply meaningful and satisfying knowing of Him.

III. Eight parts or elements of the outcome of purposefully, diligently, and persistently pursuing holiness in all your behavior.

- A. (1) When you diligently, vigilantly, and persistently pursue holiness like unto God's holiness, over a lengthy period of time,
1. You will go from thinking of God as your Savior and relating to Him as the One to whom you pray for help **TO** thinking of Him as your most precious treasure and relating to Him as the One you long to be with – in the same kind of way you long to be with your dearest friend or your spouse – should you love your spouse like that.
  2. You will go from thinking of God as being with you sometimes and distant or even absent other times **TO** confidently knowing and even sensing that God is present and attentive all the time.
  3. You will go from wondering why God doesn't answer all your prayers, and wondering why He allows certain bad things to happen to you, and wondering why He doesn't act quicker in dealing with matters that are important to you **TO** being grateful and inwardly peaceful with all that God does or allows, because you are convinced that everything God gives or allows is well within the boundaries of His perfect will and love for you, as-well-as being extremely beneficial to your spiritual growth.

4. You will go from wanting God for all the good He can do for you or even through you **TO** wanting God for himself, regardless of any more good He may or may not do for you or through you.
    - a. Now when I speak of wanting God for himself, I am speaking of treasuring God, himself, above all else, and then treasuring fellowship and intimacy with Him so much that you want an actively intimate relationship with Him more than anything else He can do for you, or do through you, or give you.
    - b. And one of the unexpected benefits of wanting God for himself in this way, is coming to the realization that it is through holiness that you have been able to come to know God in this personal and intimate way – which then becomes a powerful motivation to vigilantly protect whatever holiness you have attained.
    - c. You may foolishly sin for a moment, but because you treasure God, himself, above all else, your longing not to lose any intimacy with God will drive you to quickly repent and return to pleasing God so that you can walk with Him unhindered by any sin or evil.
  5. You will go from wanting God to please you and to make your life happier or easier or better in some way **TO** having a strong and settled longing to please God each day, all day, with your thoughts, with your desires, in your choices, with your words, and with your deeds – regardless of what He does or doesn't do for you.
- B. (2) The outcome of pursuing holiness like unto God's holiness, for an extended period of time, is a life that is free of serious, and repeated or practiced sins. This will be especially true in relation to the sins of the flesh, the sins of the mind, and the sins of the mouth (*for examples, see **I Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-5***). In addition, this pursuit will prompt you to put an end to many of what are commonly thought to be the lesser defects in your life: such as talking too much, eating too much, insensitivity toward others, a lack of manners, tardiness, carelessness, laziness, procrastination, the self-pleasing quest for approval and acceptance, an unwillingness to resolve conflict in a way that seeks the good of both parties, failure to keep your word, borrowing and not returning, borrowing and not returning what you borrowed in the same or in better shape than when you borrowed it, etc.
1. When I say you will reach a place of being free of all serious and practiced sin, I mean that you will have put off your known – known to you, that is – sins of the flesh and mind and mouth so that you no longer repeatedly participate in any of those sins.

2. However, reaching this reasonably mature level of holiness does not mean you will not be sorely tempted, for you will be tempted until you pass from this life to the next. And reaching this level of holiness does not mean you cannot slide backwards into old ways – be it ever so slowly or rather quickly, for you will always be able to return to old ways while in your present body.
  3. But my point is still true. If you pursue holiness as God intends us to pursue it, you will come to the day when your old, sinful and selfish and even foolish ways will be pretty much done away with. And should you sin, it will most likely be a momentary lapse or a moment of carelessness from which you will quickly recover because you will be vigilantly guarding against such failure, and upon recognizing your wrong-doing, you will confess your sin, repent, and amend your way so that you can quickly return to holy living and the fellowship with God that the holy living brings.
- C. (3) The pursuit of holiness in this way results in a humble realization that you have been, and still have the potential to be, the worst sinner in any group. If we are currently the worst sinner in the group, then we have not yet attained the level of holiness I am speaking of today.
1. God says our heart is more deceitful than anything else, and it is desperately sick. Then God asks the question: “Who can understand it, that is, who can understand how deceitful and sick their heart is?” (**Jeremiah 17:9**)
    - a. It is probable that in this life we may never realize the extent of wickedness and impurity and selfishness that resides in our heart.
    - b. And yet, the further down the road you go toward holiness, the more you will realize how sinful you have been, and still can be if you are not careful. You will realize how sinister and evil your mind has been, and if left unguarded, can still be. And you will realize how sick and impure your heart has been, and still is.
  2. Realizing the evil that has and can still rise up within us is not a new idea of mine, it comes from God’s word. Let me give you two examples that show how natural this realization is to those who are godly.
    - a. When Isaiah came into the presence of God, he immediately recognized the extent of his own sinfulness, and in response to what he saw about himself, he said: “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips” (**Isaiah 6:5**).



think unholy thoughts, or when you are getting involved in some activity that you know will pull you away from God and do at least some damage to the openness and preciousness of your fellowship with God.

- F. (6) When you diligently, vigilantly, and persistently pursue holiness like unto God's holiness over a lengthy period of time, you will gain a heart-felt and overwhelming appreciation for all that God has done for you and continues to do. I call it an overwhelming appreciation for God's many blessings and mercies because at this point in your Christian life you will have a humbling recognition that God has done and continues to do far more for you than you could ever deserve. In fact, you will have moments when you wonder why God has been and continues to be so good to you, because you will know that you are undeserving.
- G. (7) The outcome of diligently, vigilantly, and persistently pursuing holiness like unto God's holiness is an unimaginable awe and profound fear of God. And yet, when you come this far, your awe and fear will be bound together with an assuring sense of security in God's love and grace – a security that gives you an unquestioning confidence that you are safe in God's hands – in this life and in the life to come.
  - 1. I want to be clear here that the awe and the fear, the assuring sense of security in God's love and grace, and the unquestioning confidence that you are safe in God's hands will not be mere claims of how you ought to feel. Nor will they be the result of strong feelings stirred during times inspiration or worship.
  - 2. Rather, the awe and fear, and the confident sense of security will be realities that you confidently possess in the depths of your heart.
- H. (8) After you have pursued holiness in this way over an extended period of time, you will come to know such joy and fulfillment, such sweet fellowship and companionship in your mysteriously intimate relationship with God that all other attractions and relationships will seem noticeably less satisfying by comparison. In fact, you will find that during your waking hours, your attention will turn to God, frequently, eagerly, and naturally because of how much you want to be with Him.
  - 1. Should you foolishly put some other interest or sinful activity in God's place – even momentarily – you will feel a troubling emptiness and a dismaying loss because of the distance your foolishness has put between God and you.

2. And should you slip away from such deliberate, focused intimacy with God by allowing any practice of sin to re-enter your life, you will soon know that you have foolishly pushed away a precious treasure, and you will discover how hard it is to get back to where you were with God.

#### IV. Conclusion

- A. No one has the time or the energy or the means to enjoy all the good things that are available to us in this life. Therefore, we are forced to choose some things over other things. God has offered us the heights of holiness, and He will graciously and lovingly reward our sincere efforts with the privilege of enjoying close, intimate fellowship with Him.
- B. This gift of intimate fellowship with God does not come easily or quickly, but if you pursue it seriously, thoughtfully, soberly, prayerfully, persistently, and if you make full use of God's empowerment and assistance, you will obtain it.
- C. Now I realize that what I have told you today is like explaining the overpowering feelings and driving forces of love to someone who has never been in love. They hear the words and understand the meaning of the words, but they cannot really know what I am talking about until they experience it for themselves. The same is true with the outcome of pursuing holiness.
- D. And yet, because I am certain that you will never regret putting in the effort and time to lay hold of holiness in all your behavior – like unto God's holiness, and because the outcome of such a pursuit is immeasurably satisfying fellowship with God – which in itself is a foretaste of heaven – I believe it is worth telling you these things today with the hope that what you have heard will feed your desire and motivation to press on.