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MINISTRIES

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Life in Exile: Be Holy (1 Peter 1:13-25)

Welcome back to our verse-by-verse study through 1 Peter. Today, we’re going to finish chapter 1 and examine Peter’s exhortation for Christians to “be holy.” We’ll explore what Peter meant by holiness and how we today, can live holy lives.

But before we get started, here’s a quick summary of what we discussed last time.

1. We talked about what Peter means when he says believers have been “born again.” According to Peter, we experienced a type of new birth when we received the Messiah. We were “born” into God’s family. We became God’s children.
2. As God’s children, we have an inheritance: eternal life in the Messiah’s kingdom. Peter speaks about this promised inheritance being the basis for our hope as believers. Because of the Messiah’s work, we will be saved at the end of the age. A glorious future awaits us.
3. This hope we have for the future prompts us to rejoice. We rejoice despite suffering and persecution. In fact, paradoxically, the trials we endure are for our good. God uses them to refine our character.

After reflecting on the benefits that followers of Yeshua have received—a new identity, a living hope, the assurance of salvation, and so forth—Peter goes on to speak about our calling to live differently than we did before we were saved. Peter begins this section with “therefore.” So, everything Peter said previously about who we are and what we’ve received in the Messiah is the basis for the instructions that he’s about to give. The hope we have in the Messiah is the reason that we should act the way that Peter is about to describe. Let’s take a look:

1 Peter 1:13

[Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ \[Messiah Yeshua\].](#)

As we can see, Peter's instructions start with an emphasis on the "mind." We are to "prepare our minds" and to be "sober-minded." Getting our mind in the right place is necessary to set our hope entirely on our future inheritance—that is, "[the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua.](#)"

The phrase "[prepare your minds for action](#)" is literally "gird up the loins of your minds." The metaphor relates to the ancient custom of tucking up long garments under one's belt before engaging in physical activity (cf. 1 Kings 18:46; Jeremiah 1:17). We might compare this to our modern expression to "roll up your sleeves." Yeshua used this same expression when discussing how believers need to be prepared for the Second Coming (Luke 12:35). He said, "[Stay dressed for action](#)"—literally, "Let your loins stay girded."

Peter applies this metaphor to the mind. He says to get your mind ready. Prepare your mind for the work that God gave you to do. The second exhortation is related to the first: be "[sober-minded](#)." That is, maintain mental self-control. Don't allow worldly distractions to throw your mind off balance. Don't let your mind wander from your calling and what you should be focused on as a disciple of Yeshua.

Why does Peter begin his instructions to believers this way? Why does he emphasize getting your mind in the right place? Because our mind—our thoughts and intentions—needs to govern our emotions and desires. Our decision to sin starts with the feeling or desire to sin. That's where the enemy often attacks us—he attacks us in the realm of our emotions and desires. That's why Peter warns us in chapter 5, verses 8-9:

1 Peter 5:8-9

[Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.](#)

When we're feeling hurt or exhausted or angry, when we're suffering or being persecuted, we want to react. Peter says not to be led *by* your emotions but instead *lead* your emotions. Prepare your mind; be sober-minded. Resist the enemy. Recognize your weaknesses and be on guard, especially when dealing with powerful emotions and desires.

Practically speaking, this might mean establishing boundaries around areas where you know you are weak. As one example, if your weakness is sexual immorality, you might intentionally decide to avoid using the Internet at certain times when you are feeling lonely, depressed, or stressed out. That is where the enemy can attack you and tempt you into trying to find relief through things like pornography. Establishing boundaries would be one way of exercising mental self-control.

Don't give the enemy room to prey on your weaknesses. Don't lose your focus. And what are we supposed to be focused on? Peter says, "[set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua.](#)"

In other words, keep your eye on the finish line. Don't turn to the right or left, but keep pushing forward, running the race to win (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27). The inheritance waiting for us is better than anything this world has to offer.

Peter continues instructing us on how we are to live as we await the coming kingdom. Let's keep going here:

1 Peter 1:14-16

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Our salvation experience through Yeshua’s work leads to a life of holiness. That is the biblical pattern: God grants salvation and then calls his people into faithful service for his glory. It was the same pattern with Israel: God saved them out of Egypt and then gave them the Torah—his law—so they could serve him and be an example to the nations (Deuteronomy 4:5-8). God’s gift of salvation comes with the responsibility on our part to love God and serve him, to be holy.

As we talked about in the introduction to this series on 1 Peter, the way Peter describes his readers’ former life suggests that he is addressing Gentile believers. He describes their former life as one of “ignorance,” and a few verses later, he says that they were ransomed from “the futile ways inherited from [their] forefathers” (1 Peter 1:18). This language doesn’t seem to describe religious Jews who grew up in the synagogue learning Torah their whole lives. Peter seems to be speaking to Gentiles who didn’t know the God of Israel previously, but now they’ve come to know him through the Messiah. Nevertheless, remarkably, Peter calls them “obedient children.” These Gentile believers have been “born again” into God’s family. They are fully accepted as members of God’s covenant people. There is no second-class citizenship in the kingdom—all who have received the Messiah are God’s children.

Since Peter’s readers are part of God’s family, since they now have hope and salvation through the Messiah, they must not conform to the passions of their former ignorance. They are not to go back to their old lives but rather live as obedient children. That means living holy lives.

Peter says, “but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.” To “be holy” here means to be separate from the secular and dedicated to the sacred. We see this concept throughout the Scriptures. Right after creation, God made the seventh day of the week—the Sabbath—“holy.” He separated it from the other days of the week and dedicated it for a sacred purpose. God called Israel out of the nations—he separated them from the other nations and dedicated them to himself. They became a “holy nation” (Exodus 19:6; cf. 1 Peter 2:9). We see this concept even with the priests and Levites within Israel—they were separated from the rest of Israel and dedicated to the service of the tabernacle (2 Chronicles 23:6). And so on and so forth.

Peter says that believers are to be holy in *all* our conduct. Our lives are characterized by holiness—again, being separate from the secular and dedicated to the sacred. Notice the two facets to holiness. It’s not enough just to be separate from the world; we also must be dedicated to God. You can avoid all the bad and immoral things in the world, but that doesn’t necessarily mean you are living a holy life. You must also actively devote your life to serving God, loving him, worshiping him, bringing him glory, and testifying of his goodness.

Why are we called to be holy? Because, as Peter says, he who called us is holy. God is utterly holy and expects his children to reflect his nature. That is our purpose—to bear God’s image, to reflect his character, including his holiness.

But this raises a question: what exactly does holiness look like? How do we “be holy” in all our conduct? Well, Peter tells us where to look to find out. He appeals to the Scriptures as the basis for his exhortation. He says: “since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

He says, “it is written.” So, if we want to know what Peter meant when he called us to be holy, we have to look at where it is written! This command to “be holy” occurs a few times in the book of Leviticus (Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:7, 26). The context concerns various laws regarding how God’s people are to live. For instance, Leviticus 19:2 says, “**You shall be holy, for I YHWH your God am holy.**” Then the rest of the chapter describes holy conduct. It says to honor your parents (Leviticus 19:3). It says to not engage in idolatry (Leviticus 19:4). It says to care for the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10). Holiness also involves being honest—that is, not lying or stealing or defrauding your neighbor (Leviticus 19:11-14). You are to uphold justice in court (Leviticus 19:15). You are not to hate your brother or seek vengeance or slander, but you are to love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:16-18).

Again, those are just a few of the commandments from Leviticus that define holy conduct. Generally, Christians agree with these commandments. Of course we should honor our parents, care for the poor, and be honest! But none of these things are controversial. Even though we sometimes fail to live up to these holy standards, most Christians still agree that we should strive toward keeping these laws.

However, there are other things that Leviticus defines as holy conduct that not all Christians agree with. For instance, in Leviticus 19, the command to keep God’s Sabbaths is mentioned in the verse immediately following the command to be holy (Leviticus 19:3). Many Christians think that God’s command to rest on the seventh day—Saturday—is either irrelevant or has been replaced by Sunday observance. But if we go with Scripture’s definition, keeping God’s Sabbaths is part of what holiness looks like.

Here is another place the command to be holy appears in Leviticus:

Leviticus 11:45-47

For I am the LORD [YHWH] who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. **You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.** This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground, to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.

This passage follows a list of qualifications that an animal must have to be permitted as food. Animals that meet the criteria are considered “clean” and can be eaten, but animals that don’t are considered “unclean” and must not be eaten. We see something similar in Leviticus 20:

Leviticus 20:25-26

You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. **You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD [YHWH] am holy** and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.

So being holy in all our conduct includes being holy even in what we eat. Once again, Peter was quoting from these passages in Leviticus where holy conduct is defined. Thus, Peter’s definition was based on the definition given in the Scriptures he quoted.

And if Peter’s original readers were predominately Gentile believers, as we’ve suggested, these instructions have significant implications. Once again, these Gentile believers have been fully accepted into God’s covenant people. As we’ve talked about before, that means they share in Israel’s blessings

and hope for the future. But they also share in the responsibility. In the days of Moses, any foreigner who wanted to join Israel and worship the God of Israel had to follow the same laws as the native Israelites (Exodus 12:19; 20:10; Leviticus 16:29; Numbers 9:14; 15:15-16; Deuteronomy 16:14). The same is true for us today. Yeshua doesn't have one standard for his Jewish followers, and another for his Gentile followers. All followers of Yeshua are called to be holy.

What does this mean for us today as Christians? It means that if we're serious about following Peter's instruction to be holy in all our conduct, then we should follow the commandments in Leviticus that define holy conduct. This includes things like honoring our parents, taking care of the poor, and so forth. But it also includes things like the Sabbath and dietary laws. We should be resting on the seventh day. We should not be eating what the Bible calls unclean. Once again, if we go with Scripture's definition, doing all those things is what it means to be holy.

Let's continue:

1 Peter 1:17-21

And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Peter continues explaining why believers ought to live as obedient children. Put simply, if we call on the God of Israel as Father—if we've genuinely committed to our new identity in Messiah—then we better conduct ourselves with fear. Why? Because God will judge the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:5), and his judgment begins with the household of God (1 Peter 4:17). The fact that God will judge our deeds ought to compel us to live in reverent fear of him. He is perfectly holy and he expects holiness from us.

Another reason Peter gives for living as obedient children is that the Messiah's blood has ransomed us from the futility of our previous way of life before we knew God. Like a sacrificial offering, Yeshua gave his life to atone for us and deliver us from sin and death. Peter compares Yeshua to a lamb without blemish or spot, emphasizing Yeshua's sinless life (cf. Hebrews 4:15). We've all sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23), and we deserve death. But Yeshua was without sin—he was innocent and yet died in our place so that we could be spared from the death we deserve. Therefore, with grateful hearts, we love and serve the Lord.

Peter says Yeshua “[was foreknown before the foundation of the world](#)”—that is, God's plan of salvation through the death and resurrection of Messiah was not some afterthought. Before the foundations of the world, God had already planned the whole story of redemption. Now, at the appointed time, Messiah has been made manifest in human history to bring the plan of salvation to fruition.

Let's continue:

1 Peter 1:22-25

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for “All flesh is like grass and all its

glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

Peter ends this section by admonishing his readers to love one another. Once again, Peter bases his instruction on the fact that God has given us new life. In Messiah, we are “born again.” We are not the same people we were before we knew the Messiah. Now we are a new people: God’s obedient children.

Peter quotes Isaiah 40, which compares the temporal nature of human life with the eternal word of God. This eternal word has been planted in believers like a seed, growing and giving us eternal life. This seed, this eternal word of God, is the “good news”—the Gospel—that was preached to Peter’s readers and to us.

Called to be different

Let’s revisit this command to “be holy.” We are called to be holy as followers of Yeshua. Being holy will make us different from the world by definition. Our priorities and values are not going to match the world’s priorities and values. We have a living hope, and something better to strive for than what this world offers. This will create some conflict.

Think about what the world values. As one example, in our modern culture, there seems to be oversensitivity to the extreme. People in our culture are profoundly insecure and easily offended by everything. If someone makes the “wrong” joke or supports the “wrong” political candidate or whatever, some people will throw a fit. The world will “cancel” the offender and spend all day on social media harassing them and hounding them for a public apology. And then, the world won’t even forgive the offender even if they do apologize! Why? Part of the reason is that it’s trendy to be offended. Our modern secular culture values victimhood, so everyone wants to be perceived as a victim.

But we, as followers of Yeshua, are to be different. We don’t play along in the world’s games. Our identity is in the Messiah. Once again, our calling transcends this world’s priorities.

Proverbs 19:11 says, “[Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.](#)” Believers are not to be ruled by their feelings. We don’t dwell on offenses. We get over it. We forgive and move on. We focus on the finish line—the “[grace that will be brought to \[us\] at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua](#)” (1 Peter 1:13). We focus on what we can do right now to exalt the Messiah, not ourselves.

Another thing that characterizes our modern secular culture is ingratitude. People feel like life and society owe them. This ingratitude breeds anger, resentment, and constant complaining.

Followers of Yeshua, on the other hand, we are commanded to “[give thanks in all circumstances](#)” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). In other words, our lives ought to be characterized by gratitude. Instead of complaining because we think we deserve more or better than what we have, we must remember that what we actually *do* deserve is eternal condemnation. But because God loves us, he *doesn’t* give us what we deserve.

Ephesians 2:8

[For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.](#)

Again, you don't deserve anything good that you have. Every good thing you've been given is a gift from God (James 1:17). Your salvation is a gift, as we just read; you didn't earn it. The fact that you are alive and breathing right now is a gift. What do you say when someone gives you a gift? You're supposed to say "thank you." Gratitude.

No matter what our circumstances might be, we as believers, have a reason for gratitude. As Charles Spurgeon once said:

Here is a standing reason for thanksgiving. Although we may not always be healthy, nor always prosperous, yet God is always good, and, therefore, there is always a sufficient argument for giving thanks unto Jehovah. That he is a good God essentially, that he cannot be otherwise than good, should be a fountain out of which the richest praises should perpetually flow.

-Charles H. Spurgeon

One other thing that characterizes our modern secular culture is self-centeredness. Followers of Messiah, on the other hand, focus on serving others.

Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

How often do you look to others' interests instead of just your own? How often are you willing to sacrifice your time or finances to serve someone else who may be in need?

The world tries to find happiness and meaning in self-centered pursuits. The focus is always on self: "If I had more money, a bigger house, a better job, more subscribers to my YouTube channel, more Instagram followers, more people telling *me* how wonderful *I am*, I can finally be happy!" Scripture says the key to happiness and fulfillment in this life is to pour yourself out for others:

Isaiah 58:10

If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.

If you are a follower of Yeshua, the world will see that you're different. Once again, your values and your priorities will not match the world's values and priorities. Many people will hate you because of your beliefs and lifestyle. As Paul says, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Messiah Yeshua will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). But others, they will be drawn to the Lord and will glorify him because they see your good works. As Yeshua said, "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

During our time of exile, as we await the coming kingdom, we are to focus on how we can bring glory to our Father in heaven. That's our purpose—to glorify God. And since holy conduct brings glory to God, and causes others to give glory to God when they see our good works, we as believers must be holy.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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