

**The More Things Change, The More Jesus Stays the Same  
Responsibility: Be Holy as He is Holy  
1 Peter 1:13-25**

**Grace Connection Weekender – January 25-26 SIGN UP  
Baptism February 9 – See me**

**Australian Fires (Matthew evacuating Mt. Bright, Victoria)  
Alison**

**How do you see yourself, believer and follower of Jesus? Are you a sinner saved by grace, a saint who has victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, or are you somewhere in between? I am sure somewhere in the middle. Here's a question – do you consider yourself to be holy? I doubt you would check that box! And, yet, God *commands* his people to be holy, both in the OT and in the NT. “Jerusalem, we have a problem.” Fortunately, today's text, 1 Peter 1:13-2:3 explains a bit of how it all works.**

**To begin the new decade, we are in a four-week series here at Grace titled *The More Things Change, The More Jesus Stays the Same*. Last week we thought about our identity in Christ from the first portion of 1 Peter 1. It will not surprise you that today's text, the latter part of 1 Peter 1 and the first few verse of chapter 2, still have much to say about our identity in Christ while telling us what our responsibility is in a world of change and suffering. Next week's message is on Formation and we will conclude in two weeks with our understanding of the Mission God has given his followers, although Mission is not always what you may think it is.**

**There is a great deal to cover today, so we will get straight to the reading of the word, which will only be a short section of the entire text. Then, we will glean truth from the text as we work our way through, and last, there will be three points of application before we**

**come to the Lord's Table, where we will participate in the first Lord's Supper of the new decade. Today's text is 1 Peter 1:13-2:3, but I will only read verses 13 through 16 from chapter 1. Would you please stand for the reading of Scripture? I will read from the ESV.**

**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. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."**

**If you were here last week, you recall the indicative/imperative pattern that Peter and most of the NT writers follow. You may not understand it, but you will likely recall it! Simply put, the NT writers first tell us about all God has done for us and our position in Christ before moving to the commands to live holy lives. In verse 13 of 1 Peter 1, we get to the first command in the letter. "Set your hope" is the primary command while preparing your minds and being sober-minded are participles that support the primary command. One way to explain this, though far from complete, is to realize the big deal that Jesus' return is.**

**Verse 13 is an interesting beginning to the main idea of today's full text, which is God's command for his people to be holy because he is holy. Notice that what we are looking for is the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, or, at his Second Advent when Jesus returns to gather his people to himself. But, haven't we already been given grace? Yes, but the grace on that day will encompass the fullness of his grace, from which point we will never sin again! We will never be as aware of the beauty of God's grace to us as when we see Jesus. This life is grace from beginning to end for believers. Interesting that God's grace and goodness bookend our text in 1:13 and 2:3.**

**We prepare for Jesus' return by preparing our minds for action. This is not the last time I will say this today, but the KJV is the best translation here – a more literal translation of the Greek: gird up the loins of your mind. The newer translations are aware that you are not familiar with first century culture, but some of the punch is lost in the new translations. Peter was referring to the practice of tying a belt around a flowing robe and then tucking the bottom of your robe into the belt when you are ready to run or perform strenuous work. To what work is he calling us? We are called to be urgent and intentional about looking for Jesus' return. And, we are to be sober minded, not distracted. This is serious business.**

**Verse 14 reminds us that we are called to put aside passions that we indulged before we knew better. Far too many of us depend on God's grace to forgive our failures when we should be looking to God's grace to enable us to say no to sin and – verse 15 – to be holy in all our conduct. Why? Verse 16 – because he is holy.**

**This may be the most daunting command in all Scripture – be holy, even as God is holy. We understand that we are incapable of holiness in the transcendent way that God is, but this is not a case of Peter getting carried away and overstating his case. This is God's word to us. Think of it in context. The readers are elect exiles in an ungodly world. They are related to God through Jesus. He has called all believers to be holy, both those who first heard this letter read to them and we who hear it today. When we urgently and intentionally refuse the sins of our past, or, the sins of our imaginations, and when we represent him in a godless world, we are in the direction of the holy lives to which he has called us.**

**Here is the good news. All through today's text, we are reminded that we are not called to live this life in our own strength. In verse 17, we are told to call on the Lord as Father. When I am speaking to**

**children who are to be baptized, I tell them that we are now brother and sister. I would love to know what goes through their minds when I say that! When we adults refuse sin because of our accountability to the Lord, we are still children, obeying our heavenly Father – who is holy.**

**We should not be careless children, though. We must recognize that our Father does not play favorites and his standards are high. We are to conduct ourselves with fear. Do you think the fear expected of God's children is more reverence or dread? It is probably somewhere in the middle. God's children should not cower in fear before him, but if respect is meant, here, it is a very high and healthy respect, difficult as it is in such a casual day. Be more afraid of God than you are of his opponents who hate you because they hate Jesus. In fact, love them and ask God to be merciful to them.**

**God is worthy of our respect and our obedience because he redeemed us with the precious blood of Christ. In the first century, slaves that were captured in war could be redeemed and set free – with silver and gold. The consequences for offending a holy God are much more severe than being captured by the Roman Army, and so the price of our redemption – Jesus' blood – cannot be calculated. How much value are silver and gold when you lie on your deathbed and doctors can do no more for you? The blood of Christ, though, will be revealed as the treasure it is to God's people at death or at Jesus' return, and even now we have a sliver of understanding. Because he died for us, the sting of death is removed and all who believe the gospel will pass from death to life and will live forever, whether at our own death or at Jesus' return. Come, Lord Jesus!**

**Verses 20-21 are quite interesting and remind us once again that this life that seems so impossible to live has been made possible by God, even as he has given us faith and hope. Jesus was foreknown – the same word used in verse 2. Before the foundation of the world was**

**laid, God’s plan of redemption was set. Jesus did not come into the world to “experience life as a human,” but, rather, to redeem those who were lost. Why did Jesus come? For our sake! When did Jesus come? At the exact right moment, Galatians 4:4. And, now, we live in the last times. We have lived in the last days since the birth, life, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. We look for his return just as eagerly as Peter did! Or do we?**

**Verses 22 reminds us that holiness, or a lack thereof, is not only a matter of how we behave in this world, but it is also revealed by how we treat one another. Love flows naturally from conversion. Everything in the Christian life is pointing toward love. Obedience to the truth signifies belief in, and, submission to, the gospel. In fact, the gospel is about to take center stage in verses 24-25, but verse 23 sets up the truth of the next few verses. We have been born again – a beautiful description of one who has been saved. God saved us when the imperishable seed of the living and abiding word of God took root in our hearts and began to grow. Seed, new birth – get it? God intends for you to get it. Grace at the beginning, grace in the middle, and more grace than we can possibly imagine at the end!**

**In verses 24-25, Peter quotes from Isaiah 40, reminding us that the glories of this world are temporal, but God’s word is eternal. What is so important to you that you have no time for God or his people, who you are called to love? Even in Isaiah 40, God was sharing good news with his people, and now at the end of verse 25, we are told that the word that took root in our hearts and gives eternal life is the gospel that was preached to us.**

**I have thought about this a lot, lately, although I have a long way to go before it is fully developed, and I am hoping that David Calvert and I can process this together, as we have already a little. I am certain I have already mentioned this before. I have long thought about the benefit of gospel readings in liturgical churches that years**

ago abandoned a belief in the authority of Scripture. But then it struck me several months ago – I have never heard a single testimony of one who said, “You know, I went to a liberal church where they did not believe any of the miracles of the Bible, but the gospel was read and I believed.” Maybe you know someone like that, but I do not. On the other hand, I have heard testimony after testimony of those who were saved at a Billy Graham Crusade where the gospel was clearly preached. I heard one such testimony Friday night from one who will join our church next week. It is the preaching of the gospel – 1 Peter 1, Romans 10, Galatians 3 – that is the sowing of the seed in the hearts of those who will receive it. That preaching is not just what occurs on Sunday morning, but is the privilege of all believers. The preaching of the gospel happens whenever we share the gospel of Jesus with others, but Scripture also puts a premium on the preached word within the church.

In the first three verses of the second chapter, we are told how we should live and how we can live in the manner we are called to live. As so much of NT instruction in other places, we are called, here, to love others by being careful not to do harm.

Malice. Do you have malice toward those who disagree with your political or social inclinations? Deceitfulness is a killer of both holiness and unity. Envy? We know what that does to us. Slander? Really? Putting down our brothers and sisters in Christ, whether we are telling the truth or not? Love sees the good in others and builds rather than destroys.

Verses 2-3: 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Once again, the KJV gives the sense of what Peter is saying by encouraging us to desire the sincere milk – *of the word*. That is

**almost certainly what verse 2 means. It is not the milk of immaturity that is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3 and Hebrews 5, but, rather, the nourishing word that causes us to grow in grace, which is what Peter has been saying all along and affirms in verse 3, alluding to Psalm 34, which is a Psalm about rejoicing in suffering at the hands of others, a huge theme in 1 Peter! “If you have tasted that the Lord is good.” Yes, we have! He is good, and we who have tasted his goodness are excited to assume and fulfill our responsibility to be holy as he is holy.**

**Before we come to the Table, three quick applications, beginning with:**

- 1. Live with urgent and intentional anticipation of Christ’s return**

**If our hope is not eschatological, it is misplaced and useless. In other words, if your hope is this world getting better rather than in eternal life, then sooner or later, it will not be enough. Do not play at this life – it is too difficult and too costly if you do not believe that Jesus will return. You have heard, “Some people are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good.” The reverse is far more likely – we become so earthly minded that we lose sight of our hope in Jesus. That is why we are disappointed when life does not go our way.**

**We are to set our hope on heaven by girding up the loins of our minds and preparing for action. This is another way of saying, as Jesus did, that we are to love the Lord our God with our minds as well as our hearts. It is impossible to have your hope in heaven if your entire focus is in the here and now. All day on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram will surely turn your heart and mind away from heaven. It was understandable that we lived with passive ignorance before we knew Christ, but there is no excuse, now. Live with urgent and intentional anticipation of Christ’s return. Second:**

- 2. You are called to holiness – but you obey according to God’s design and by his power**

**What comes first – God calling us into his family or his command for us to be holy? As Thomas Schreiner reminds us, *calling precedes holiness just as grace precedes demand*. (Repeat) We can never attain the holiness of the transcendent one, but we are commanded to reflect his holiness in our lives. Do not soften what is in the text – “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” Remember, though, God has called us into the realm of the holy – it is not something we achieve. So, is it God’s doings or our obedience? Yes! It was impossible for Israel to be a blessing to the nations without holiness, and it is impossible for us to be a blessing to the people among whom we live as elect exiles without holiness. Last:**

- 3. Pursue the Lord with disciplines of grace, which lead to holiness**

**If our life originates with the seed of the word, and grace is the source of the disciple’s life from beginning to end, then it would behoove us to develop a hunger for God’s word. That is like the author of Hebrews saying that we should strive to enter God’s rest. How can we do that? Through discipline. Surely there are many spiritual disciplines that would help us to grow in Christ, such as prayer, fellowship, partaking of the Supper as we will do in a few minutes, fasting, and many more, but let’s focus for just a moment on the discipline of being in the word, because that is where our text puts its focus.**

**If you have been here for any length of time, you know that every year I encourage you to read through the Bible. Let me say it this way, I want to encourage you to read through the Bible – *every year*.**

**What is the benefit of reading when you have little understanding of what you are reading most of the time? I will try to explain this way.**

**As I may have said last week, I have just completed reading through *Lord of the Rings* for the third or fourth time – I am not sure which. My goal is to read the series every other year, starting two years ago. I couldn't wait to get through the books so that I could watch the movie. Alison is watching them with me, and I am explaining as we go. The other night she said, "Wow – you know all the places and all the characters in this complex story!" That's why I married her, you understand! I wish it were true, but I will have to say I understand the trilogy far more now than I ever have before. Why? Repetition. That alone. There is so much more to know, but I am far from where I was only three or four years ago.**

**What is true in a small way with *Lord of the Rings* is true in a huge way in Scripture – reading the Bible year after year after year. I know that many of you do and I am so happy that you do. I would love for some of you to give testimony to the congregation about the benefits of reading through Scripture every year. Although reading is a great place to start, take time to study and go deep, and never get too far from Jesus in the four Gospels. And, always when you read, do so with gospel glasses on. Over and over in the NT, Scripture points to the gospel, as it does so clearly in our text.**

**What is the gospel? It is what will be proclaimed as we come to the Table for the Lord's Supper. We were, as sinful human beings, face to face with a holy God who cannot allow sin to go unpunished. Loving us the way we have read about in our text, God sent his Son to live the perfect life we were incapable of living and then to die the death that we deserved, with the full wrath of God that should have gone toward us falling on Jesus. When we confess our sins and put our trust in Jesus' sacrifice for our sins, we are saved. That is what we will remember this morning. Let's pray.**