



A BETTER RESISTANCE | BE HOLY (4)

February 7, 2021

1 Peter 1:13-21

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.” ¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was fore-known before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ 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.

BACKGROUND

“If we are wise, we regularly take a car to be serviced, so that anything which is starting to go wrong can be put right. In the same way, we need to remind ourselves frequently, seriously and thoroughly who we really are. Unless we do that, the insidious messages we get from the world around (that we are who we are because who our parents were, where we live or how much we earn) will eat away at us like rust into a car.” (from NT Wright on 1 Peter 1:1-2:3)

Peter calls his readers to think, to reflect and to understand who they are as those who belong to God. He reminds them of the calling and the identity they have received by the grace that comes through Jesus Christ. He reminds them that their former identity as defined by the world around them is no longer true. But in Jesus, God has given them a new hope (a new confidence about the future), so that they can live with the purpose and the power of God in the world. And so, Christians live a strange “double life” because they have dual citizenship on earth and in heaven. Therefore, Peter calls them to live in a way that more fully reflects the reality of who they are in Jesus Christ—namely, that they belong to God who has redeemed them through the precious blood of Christ.

PURPOSE

To understand how the hope of Jesus transforms the way that Christians live in the world

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In verse 13, Peter writes: “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.” According to this passage, how can thinking about one’s hope in Jesus Christ impact and change the way you live? What part does our mind have in a life of faith and obedience?
2. What does it mean to “be holy” as Peter writes in verse 16? How does the pursuit of holiness affect the way Christians engage the world around them?
3. Since you put faith in Christ, how have your hopes changed?

LEADER'S NOTES

Question 1: The purpose of this question is to encourage members of the group to think about the importance of the mind and of intellectual engagement in a Christian's faith. Our minds tell us what is true. If Christians do not think deeply about their hope in Jesus, they will cling to the hope and the reality of the world around them (often, without even realizing it). A person's view of the world is constantly being formed. Therefore, Christians need to constantly reevaluate their deepest commitments through the lens of faith in Jesus.

Jesus himself gives a good example of this in his "Sermon on the Mount." He says, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (Matthew 6:24). The life of faith in Jesus and the life of hope in this world goes in opposite directions. Peter calls his readers to think differently than the people around them who do not hope in Jesus.

In verse 14-15, Peter exhorts his readers to fight the desires of sin (v.14) and to live in the reality that they are set apart for God who himself is holy. And because they belong to God, their lives should serve as "signposts" that point to this reality. Moreover, verse 17 reminds them that the judgment that has already fallen on Jesus Christ for the sins of his people should lead them to a reverence and awe that deeply shapes their life. The more Christians think about this judgment, the more it should compel them to live in a way that honors God for all that he has done for them through Jesus. Verse 18 tells that the costly sacrifice of Jesus means that they are delivered from a life of futility and meaninglessness because of their sin and disobedience to God (v.18a), to a life of great significance because this world is not all that there is, but the best things are yet to come (when Christ returns in power and glory to make all things new).

Question 2: The purpose of this question is to reflect on what it means to live a holy life. To be holy means both to be set apart for God's purpose in this world and to experience the transformation that comes with faith in Jesus. Christians can sometimes think of holiness in moral terms, which is too limited. Furthermore, holiness that is not motivated by grace often leads to harsh condemnation and self-righteousness. This is not what Peter is referring to. Rather, in this passage, Peter tells them that the future inheritance they receive is the incentive to live a holy life. They are so precious to God that he has redeemed them from their brokenness and sin at the cost of his own Son (vv. 17-21) and God has given them a new purpose and a new power to live as new people.

To be holy means that Christians should neither assimilate to the world around them and lose their distinctiveness, nor should they withdraw from the world in selfishness or fear. Rather, they are called to "faithful presence" in the world as those who represent Jesus and his Kingdom through their courage, kindness and love.

In his book, "To Change the World" by James Davison Hunter (Oxford University Press, 2010), he writes "To be Christian is to be obliged to engage the world, pursuing God's restorative purposes over all of life." This is what it means to be holy. It means to be used by God for his purposes in the world as Christians set their hope fully on the grace that will be brought to [them] at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Question 3: The purpose of this question is to reflect on the ways that direction of your life has been changed by your faith in Jesus. Another way of thinking about this question is to ask “What are some of the ways that your faith in Jesus made a tangible difference in your life?” You can think of this question especially in terms of the categories of power, sex and money because the values of the Kingdom of God are completely “upside down” in regards to these things compared to the values of New York City. Remember to give people time to reflect on this challenging question. As the facilitator, you can share your answer to this question.