

# Change from the Inside Out

Sunday February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

1 Peter 1:14-16 (NLT) So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. <sup>15</sup> But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. <sup>16</sup> For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."

**Introduction:** We live in a world where the concept of holiness is alien. To many, it is an attribute attributed solely to God and a state unattainable by man.

The concept of holiness is a central theme throughout the Bible, but unfortunately, much of today's best-selling Christian materials focus on how to make one healthy and happy rather than holy and honorable.

In the next few weeks we are going to look at certain passages, like the one we opened with, that challenge us as believers to live a life of holiness.

Most Christ followers rejoice and celebrate the fact that God has changed our hearts through saving grace. The bible, on the other hand, states that true change begins on the inside and manifests on the outside. A change from the inside out.

This message has three main points. One, living holy begins with a heart change; two, living holy is not easy; and three, living holy is not automatic.

Now consider the context of our passage, which exhorts us to live holy as God is holy.

In this passage, Peter is addressing believers who have been dispersed throughout the region due to persecution. Many of them have been through a lot and are now learning how to adjust to new places and cultures as foreigners.

1 Peter 1:2 (NKJV) To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:

Peter reminds them that God chose them to be different from those who did not believe in Christ. This was made possible by the Holy Spirit sanctifying or changing them on the inside, giving them a new nature and the ability to live in obedience to God.

Living Holy begins with a change of heart.

1 Peter 1:3 (NKJV) Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

(NLT) All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Peter as well as Paul understood the truth that their new desires to honor Christ, even to point of laying down their life for the cause of the gospel, was the result of a heart change initiated by God.

1 Timothy 1:12-17 (NLT) I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him, <sup>13</sup> even though I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. <sup>14</sup> Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" and I am the worst of them all. <sup>16</sup> But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. <sup>17</sup> All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen.

Change begins on the inside. When we respond to the gospel God does a supernatural work in us. He changes our heart and this new nature is bent towards wanting to live in a way that bring glory and honor to God.

Living holy does not cause God to change our hearts; rather, God changing our hearts causes us to live holy.

### **Living Holy isn't easy**

1 Peter 1 :6-9 (NLT) So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. <sup>7</sup> These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. <sup>8</sup> You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. <sup>9</sup> The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

These believers were suffering as a result of their decision to follow God. The pressures that surrounded them were designed by the enemy to derail them and destroy their faith in Christ.

It was difficult to deal with the pressures of those who despised them for what they stood for. It wasn't easy for them to live holy, different from those around them who lived in ways that contradicted what the scriptures taught.

Peter understood that the pressure would only serve to bring what was on the inside out for those who had truly been changed. As gold being refined with fire becomes purer, so would their faith be seen for the purity of what it was.

So, he exhorts them to persevere in the face of adversity, remaining true to Christ by living out their faith through holy living.

May friends, It's difficult to stand out in a world where good is called evil and evil is called good. Where up is down and down is up. Where truth is abstracted, sin is celebrated, and God is viewed as a threat to individual liberty. But we are called to be true to our faith in Christ no matter what.

We should be more afraid of being canceled by God than of being canceled by man.

As Jesus said, what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and in the end lose his soul. (Matthew 16:26)

What good is it to receive everything the world has to offer, money, fame, pleasure, power, esteem, and so on, only to die without a right relationship with Christ and spend eternity in hell?

### **Living Holy isn't automatic**

1 Peter 1:14-16 (NLT) So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. <sup>15</sup> But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. <sup>16</sup> For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."

Every day, as God's children, we are called to make decisions. Yes, our hearts have been changed, and we have a new desire to live a holy life, but this does not imply that we have become robots with a new program that makes decisions for us.

The Holy Spirit dwells within us and leads and guides us, but we must respond and obey.

Life's pressures and the enemy's temptations are designed to entice us to return to our old ways of life. We didn't know any better before Christ because we were ruled by our fallen nature. But now we know better because we have a new nature and the presence of the Holy Spirit within us.

1 Peter 2:1-3 (NLT) So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, <sup>3</sup> now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness.

1 Peter 2:11-12 Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. <sup>12</sup> Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

1 Peter 3:8-12 (NLT) Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. <sup>9</sup> Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing. <sup>10</sup> For the Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. <sup>11</sup> Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it. <sup>12</sup> The eyes of the LORD watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the LORD turns his face against those who do evil."

The Holy Spirit is leading us through a sanctification process. The sanctification process is not a one-time event. It is something that happens throughout the rest of our Christian lives.

Living holy entails collaborating with the Holy Spirit and being open to His guidance. Only when we learn to respond to and cooperate with the Holy Spirit on a regular basis will we be able to live in a way that truly honors God.

The Holy Spirit begins the process of sanctification with a changed heart at the new birth and continues to change us as we yield.

We are called to live from the inside out.