

HOPE AND HOLINESS, 1PETER 1:13-2:3

A New Hope #3

♦**Intro:** When I say the following word, what images come to mind? Holy... I'm sure a few in the room think immediately of Batman, or more specifically his side-kick Robin [show slide] who in the early days of television had a penchant for declarative statements of surprise that included "holy".

♦Holy Cobwebs Batman, this place has been deserted for years.

♦Holy hotdogs Batman, the Joker musta robbed Oscar Meyer!

♦Some of you might think of a religious Saint you've heard was especially devout. Or a sacred object like the tomb of Jesus, or a pancake that looks just like a white Westerner's idea of Jesus. Or a Puritan life-style of overly careful behavior, and a definitively great lack of anything really "fun", (because we all think lousy, illegal, dangerous, and immoral things are the really fun things. Holiness is for dull mountain recluses who do nothing but hum and chant. Not for sky-diving Mt. Dew drinkers!)

♦To be holy means to be especially clean, free from flaw, set apart, special. Who of us wouldn't want to be this? Yet strangely, for many the term holy is far from inviting. If I asked if you'd like to be holy you might respond "No way!" Because you've been lead to believe that the cleanest, "best-est", most special way of life just couldn't actually be any fun. It's a strange idea, isn't it? We often conclude that holiness is not to be desired, mostly because we know we are not and don't see anyway our

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holiness is ever going to happen. We don't want to go into a holy church building because it makes us remember how unholy we are. We don't want to hang out with morally upright folk if we are in the habit of notably unholy activity. We feel bad by comparison. And yet there's a part of us that would really like to be good, fulfilled, and joyous.

♦If you're like me, there have been times that you've chosen something your conscience told you you shouldn't and been disappointed with the results of your choice. Have you ever wondered if maybe, just maybe, the cleaner/holier choice might be better in the long run?

♦**1. It's easy for me to assume the worst of holiness, because evil is easy and holiness is hard.** We both know that getting dirty is easier than getting clean, right? You do have to wash your car. You don't have to dirty it. It gets that way all on its own. No one has to teach a child to be selfish. There are no classes on learning to sin. No father has to coach his toddler to grab the blocks from his brother and throw them at his face. But every parent has to train a child to use the bathroom instead of their pants. Why do we not carry the lesson over into moral choices? Well, because it's hard.

♦**A.** You see, holiness is always a denial of the self, just as love is a denial of self and a concern for the other. Peter is encouraging his readers (us included) to what? Verse 22:

♦*show sincere love... love each other deeply*

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♦It stands to reason that love will lead to holiness. Evil is an affirmer of the self. To heck with everyone else. I'm about what I want!

♦1 Peter 2:1 (NLT) So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech.

♦Let's ponder each of those.

♦**Deceit:** Why do we lie? So we will get some perceived benefit, right? We lie when we think the truth will hurt us in some way. I won't get as much money if I'm honest. Or someone will think poorly of me. Or friends will dislike me. So I'll shade the truth.

♦**Hypocrisy:** Why do we fake it or pretend? Because we are afraid what we really are, isn't enough. We are afraid that we don't measure up. That people won't be impressed with us. So we wear a mask, and pretend.

♦**Jealousy:** Why are we jealous? Isn't it because we feel less than the other person? We doubt our current value. We worry that we won't be happy without this, or that. We assume everyone else is in fact happier, and probably because of what they have.

♦See, sin is always a lie about what will make us happy, that disagrees with God. Sin is the opposite of real love. But since it's far easier than discipline of holiness, we pick it freely.

♦**B.** An additional warning: when we hurt, or are frustrated, or angry... disagreeing with God is even easier, which is one reason

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for Peter's encouragement to the suffering Christians in the north Mediterranean. Pay attention to your suffering because pain can make you lose sight of hope and holiness. For example, one 3rd Century Bishop of the Christian Church recorded his shock to see some Christian martyrs devoting their final hours in prison to drunkenness, revelry, and open sexual promiscuity! They reasoned that "I'm going to die tomorrow anyway, and then enter perfection, what will a last few hours of sin matter?" I know, it seems incongruent, doesn't it?

♦If on the one hand they desire the perfection of God, a life lacking evil, sin, selfishness, abuse, etc., why on the other hand would they chose more of it just before death? Isn't that like quickly eating one more mouthful of dirty popcorn before entering a 5-star restaurant for a 4 course meal? The only person who would do that is someone who has no idea how good the food is inside.

♦And yet this is do often us. You're helping your son with a craft for Scouts and you smash your finger in a vice. In an instant all kindness can evaporate like mist as your pain comes out in anger. Maybe you break something, or push your son -all because you hurt. Let's say you're planning your husbands favorite dish, Parmesan Liver, but he walks in and snaps at you for parking too close to the basketball hoop. The smile in your heart drops and you fry that liver until it's like shoe leather. That's called revenge. We do it because we assume if I think of me first, I will be most

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happy. You see what we're doing, we are looking for something good, in a distorted way.

♦**2. But holiness is always my best option.** Peter has some reasons for us to pursue holiness as the better option. In holiness we are also chasing something good, but in a godly way.

♦**A. Living in holiness is only my response to love, not the requirement for it.** Verse 13 starts out "Therefore". That refers to v1-12. What did we learn there?

- ♦That God's kids don't belong here. There is a better place coming for them.

- ♦That God has been working out his loving plan for us before he put the moon in orbit around the Earth.

- ♦That while gold doesn't last, faith in God lasts into eternity.

- ♦That God planned salvation, he gives salvation, and more salvation is always on the way for his followers.

- ♦That with God, suffering is only temporary. Life is guaranteed even after death.

♦"Therefore", he says, (v14) be obedient to God. Don't obey evil desires. Choose holiness at every option.(15) Love people sincerely because that's not perishable. Now please notice, the "therefore" only comes after the celebration of what God has already done. We don't fight our evil desires or pursue holiness so that God will be kind to us. God has already been kind to us. He was kind to us before we were an "us" at all. No. Our keeping of God's ways are only response. If they were the

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criteria for God's goodness in our lives, they would be a burden we would soon give up on. And that's how most folks think of holiness; something I gotta do so that God will do something good for me. No. Pursuit of holiness is our response to the gift of salvation we already have, that Christ already earned for us.

Don't ever try to be good to get God's attention. You will end up frustrated and then disappointed in God when you never had to be. Rather, know you have God's attention and chose to do right as a thankfulness. It's your return hug. That kind of holiness doesn't tire you out.

♦David Brainerd, missionary who spent his brief life ministering to American Indians, wrote in his journal: "I never got away from Jesus and him crucified. When my people were gripped by this great evangelical doctrine of Christs and him crucified, I had no need to give them instructions about morality. I found that one followed as the sure and inevitable fruit of the other."

♦B. Living in holiness has lasting value. Peter argues that grace that is still on the way, ought not be a license for liberty, but a battle cry for the better way.

♦v23 all sin will perish. Why buy what's going out of style, so to speak. On the other hand, everything God says will last forever. (v25). But here's the thing. We say, "But I don't mind a little sin. I actually rather think I like it." but you see, you're not looking ahead, are you? (v13 *set your*

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mind on what's coming.) Every moment we spend doing or thinking what God punishes, is time wasted in not doing, or living what God intends to rewards. Every choice we make in line with God's holiness, Jesus said stores of riches in heaven. That's why Peter says

♦1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

♦v7 your faith can result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

♦God continuously urges us saying "be holy like me." v15-16. Why do you think he says that? So you don't have any fun? No so that you have the most fulfilling life! He stands there like a missionary with a syringe of penicillin that can save our life, but we are the aboriginal native who cannot comprehend that it could possibly be good for our disease, and we beat our drum and call for the spirits of the trees instead. Every time we take revenge on that idiot who dissed us, we are beating our drum. Every time we break God's commands about sex, we are beating our drum and howling to the trees. Every time we lie, we are beating our drum instead of accepting healing medicine of holiness. It feels good to us in the moment. We're used to it. But we're gonna die in a minute or two.

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♦C. Living in holiness always works better. God doesn't say things just to give us hoops to jump through. The things he's says as instruction manuals making life work. Verse 2:3 loosely refers to Psalm 34:8, *taste and see that God is good*. Psalm 34 repeatedly emphasizes the truth that God's way delivers. Listen:

♦*Psalms 34:8-16 Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him... those who seek the LORD lack no good thing... Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous ... the face of the LORD is against those who do evil...*" (sounds a lot like Peter's letter, huh?)

♦ Economics professor Ken Elzinga tells of a young man who complained to him of not being able to find a lasting relationship with a woman. Ken asked, "Do you sleep with these women?" "Yes". Elzinga gave him Walter Trobisch's book *To Love a Woman*, through which this young man learned that Jesus' teaching on sex actually works. That led him to converting to following Jesus. Living in God's type of holiness just plain works better.

♦**3. Now for some kinda bad news: I can never reach holiness on my own.**

♦*Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

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♦There is only one person who is actually holy in and of his own essence, and that is the one true God, Jesus Christ. So why does the prophet say "make every effort to ... be holy."? Because he's talking to people who belong to Jesus. When you give your heart to Jesus, holiness becomes a possibility, where it wasn't a possibility earlier!

♦*Hebrews 2:11 Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.*

♦Perhaps it has occurred to you during this mediation that some holy choices might be worth trying out here and there. The last thing I want to do is discourage that idea, but I must tell you, you will not really be able to do the holy thing without God working it in you. And to have God working in you, you need to be on right terms with God. And to be on right terms with God, you need your sin forgiven. And to have your sin forgiven, you must begin by admitting them, and accepting Jesus as your substitute, his death as payment for yours.

♦**Conclusion:** So what will you think of when you next hear the word "holy"? Holiness builds up our hope. Sinfulness inevitably discourages us. Do you want to live hopefully even if you are suffering? Obey God. Hope comes in the process of obedience. Hope does not depend of circumstance, results, etc. It is the state of being on the right way. The devil lies to us that holiness is a burden because he knows that if we did obey God's

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commands we would be living our best life. CS Lewis: "How little people know who think that holiness is dull. When one meets the real thing...it is irresistible. If even 10% of the world's population had it, would not the whole world be converted and happy before a years end?"