

THE BEAUTY OF NONCONFORMITY / Sunday School- November 1, 2009

Unifying Topic: A HOLY PEOPLE

Lesson Text

- I. The Holy Life (1Peter 1:13-16)
- II. Precious Blood (1Peter 1:17-22)
- III. The Eternal Word (1Peter 1:23-25)

The Main Thought: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1Peter 1:15-16, KJV).

Unifying Principle: The world is a sordid place where people try to step on and over others in order to get ahead. Why, then would we want to become holy people? First Peter says that God's people should be holy because God is holy, and in Acts, we see how the Holy Spirit empowers people to become holy.

Lesson Aim: To help students strengthen their Christian minds and live holy lives.

Life aim: To teach how Christians are to strive for spiritual growth and maturity with a view toward living holy each day as we acquire new virtues and discard old vices thought God's Word.

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- 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
 - 1:14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance;
 - 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;
 - 1:16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.
 - 1:17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:
 - 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;
 - 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:
 - 1:20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,
 - 1:21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.
 - 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:
 - 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.
 - 1:24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:
 - 1:25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

HISTORY:

Simon Peter is the author and names himself an apostle of Jesus Christ, meaning he is sent by the Lord with a mission. He is writing his first letters to the strangers scattered (Christians) throughout five Roman provinces (regions located in Asia Minor), where most of the believers had apparently tried to hide and find safety because they faced persecution from three sources: the Romans, the Jews, and their own families. They had been forced to flee for their lives. **First Chapter of 1Peter**, may have been written for new Christians and for those planning to be baptized and needed Peter's encouraging words to help them face the trials. Persecution didn't quench the gospel, instead it introduced it to the whole empire. Thus the churches of Asia Minor to which Peter wrote probably included Gentile Christians as well. These letters challenged and strengthened believers to stand against persecution.

In his address as apostle, Peter calls them "elect", chosen of God v1-2. At one time, only the nation of Israel could claim to be God's chosen people, but through Christ, all believers (Jews, former Jews, and Gentiles) belong to God. He gives a crystal clear reflection of who they are from God's vantage point. The elected, chosen are those who obey God, and are those who experience grace and peace. They are elected, chosen by the foreknowledge of God the Father, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (*Sanctification*), and covered by the blood of Jesus (*Justification*). Notice the reference to the work of the Trinity working as one to bring about our Salvation.

- 1. God the Father chose us before we chose Him (Ephesians 1:4).
- 2. The Son died for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:6-10).
- 3. The Holy Spirit works in our lives to bring Salvation and to set us apart for God's pleasure.

NOTE:

The only way a person can turn and be acceptable to God is by the Holy Spirit. The person must respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit draws and convicts them: he must be sanctified, set apart unto God to live a holy, righteous, and pure life (*the process of Sanctification*).

Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for us. He has stepped forth and offered His life as a substitute and sacrifice for us. He has borne the judgment and condemnation of our transgression because He is the Son of God and He lived a perfect and sinless life when He was upon earth. His blood shed was the perfect and ideal sacrifice for transgressions. The blood symbolizes cleansing from sin, obedience to God, and the setting apart of the believer unto God (*Justification*).

Verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." he first brings their remembrance to the great hope they have of eternal life because they have been born again, born into a different family. The *inheritance of the hope*, Eternal Life, is incorruptible, undefiled, does not fade away, and is reserved in heaven. The *assurance of the hope*, Eternal Life, is kept by God's power (the Holy Spirit) and guarded by our faith (assurance) in the Lord Jesus Christ which is continuous and constant. It is clear that everything for our salvation has been done by God and that we are the beneficiaries. While our full and final salvation has already been prepared for us by God, it will not be revealed until "*the last time*" v 5. How, then, do we get from point A to point B? How do we make it from past experience of new birth to future possession of full inheritance? Is it all up to God? Or does it all depend on us? Or is it a cooperative effort between God and us? Peter answers this question at the beginning of v 5, declaring that it is "*by the power of God [that we are] being kept through faith unto salvation.*"

The principle *in v 6-9*, God watches over us very carefully, like a divine goldsmith; allowing the fires of suffering to refine us until He can see the character of Jesus Christ more and more clearly reflected in our lives. Just as gold goes through when it is subjected to the flame, the impurities and dross in the gold come to the top. The result is far purer gold than that which was present before. *Job 23:10 ". . . when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."* Although the trial and temptations had occurred for a season, for a little while, there is still the fact of the inheritance of hope to rejoice about. The key to persevering in the present is learning to intently focus on the future. When we stand before the Lord in Heaven, and we are rewarded for our walk with Him and for the sufferings we endured below, it will be worth it all then - *2 Cor. 4:17*. He's telling them to know the purpose for their trials and temptations. Know why you're ridiculed, know why you're criticized, suffer persecution –to test and prove your faith; to bring praise, honor, and glory to both Christ and the believer.

Nearly all of the actions of God appear in the past tense, indicating that they have been accomplished and are firmly established, except for the final fulfillment of salvation at the end of time, which is ready to be revealed. The term "*salvation*" used within 1 Peter 1, encompasses a far greater range than simply getting to heaven. We haven't seen the Lord, but the Holy Spirit has made Him real to our hearts. The knowledge of this causes rejoicing, even when there is sorrow and suffering along the way, which proves that our faith in God is genuine. There is no crown before the cross, no resurrection before crucifixion, and no glory before shame.

Peter refers to the Old Testament Prophets to show that Salvation required special men, special prophets to share the message. They knew a great deal about the coming Salvation and the coming Savior. These things were supernaturally revealed to them and some aspects they did not understand all that God was telling them to proclaim.

- They suffered greatly due to their calling, and provided us with an example of perseverance in persecution. Peter seems to be reminding us that we must also suffer like the prophets for the sake of Christ and His kingdom.
- They were inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ.
- They were speaking (prophesying) of a future day.
- They prophesied of the Grace (favor of God) that should come to people that would ignore Him, rebel against Him, reject Him, fail to love Him, and more.
- These prophecies have now been openly proclaimed and fulfilled to the church in the preaching of the apostles with the power of the Holy Spirit. Even the angels desired to know.

1Peter 1:13-16: THE HOLY LIFE

Remember: the believers were suffering terrible persecution because of their living for Christ and proclaiming the salvation and hope of eternal life in Him. In their proclaiming, people were willing to hear about salvation, hope, and eternal life in Christ, but they didn't want to hear about repentance, <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

righteousness, and godliness. So they had been forced to flee for their lives, carrying only what they could in their hands for they had lost their homes, property, money, possessions, and friends. Up until now Peter had proclaimed the wonder and greatness of salvation. Now something else was needed. When we are facing the trials and temptations of life, it is not enough to keep our eyes upon salvation, we must also act; we must do some things.

So, because of this understanding of the glory of salvation, Peter says, focus, "set your hope perfectly, unchangeably, without doubt and despondency" on the hope of the coming grace. Peter is exhorting us also to make our hope one that is complete, strong, and unwavering. To accomplish this V13 can be broken down into three commands: 1.Gird up the loins of your mind 2. Keep sober 3. Fix your hope.

A. HOLY CONDUCT (v13-16)

1. Gird up the loins of your mind
 - a. Be sober
 - b. Rest your hope fully upon the grace to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ
2. Be holy in all your conduct
 - a. As obedient children
 - b. Not conforming to former lusts done in ignorance
 - c. As He who called you is holy, just as it is written

GIRD UP YOUR LOINS OF YOUR MIND:

"Gird up" is an oriental expression. Peter used an image that was common in his day. At that time men wore long, sleeveless robes that hung down to their ankles. In times of leisure, they would allow their robes to hang freely around their legs. But in times of exertion, the long robes could entangle their feet, and hinder movement. So when men needed to move freely and swiftly, they would lift the bottom of their robes and bind it around their waist with a belt or a girdle. This was called "girding one's loins." With the use of this metaphor, Peter is saying, we must put out of the mind all things that would impede the free action of the mind in connection with developing our hope. We must put out of the mind such things like worry, fear, or obsession with material possessions. I.e., remove anything and everything that is not conducive to having a strong hope in the coming of our Lord.

- Such as carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life – Lk. 21:34-35
- Such things as these "choke" us and hinder our ability to bear fruit (such as the fruit of a strong hope) – Lk 8:14

Peter did not want them to be entangled with the pollutions of the world. That is why he wrote in v. 13, "Gird the loins of your mind." Peter knew how powerful desires can be. "When desire (lust) has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown (finished), brings forth death" Jam. 1:15. If these Christians allowed their old desires* to dominate their mind, then they would become entangled in sin. And for this reason Peter exhorted them to gird the loins of their mind.

NOTE:

*The Christians were being persecuted for their faith. They were losing their social standing in society, their place of honor among friends. They were losing their jobs. Their material possessions were being confiscated, and they were left destitute, penniless. They were driven from their homes and made to wander in the hills and live in caves. Some of them, even young children, were sold as slaves and transported to distant lands. Others were sentenced to die in the arenas. They were giving up every tangible possession for a promised inheritance that they had never seen. When the doubts came, it would surely entangle them and make them fall. For if these desires for earthly treasures were left to flow freely, they would entangle these Christians and make it extremely difficult for them to sacrifice all things for Christ's sake. He exhorted them to exercise tight control over the thoughts and desires of their mind, lest they become entangled by what is earthly or evil.

BE SOBER

The word "sober" means "to be calm and collected in spirit, to be temperate, dispassionate, and circumspect." It is that state of mind in which the individual is self-controlled, able to see things without the distortion caused by worry or fear. I.e., to fortify the focus of our hope requires a CALM and SERIOUS attention to the task at hand – ("Watch therefore, and pray always..." Lk.21:36). They should be free of every form of mental or emotional excess that would confuse them, make them irrational and unbalanced. He exhorted them to be clear-headed, of sound judgment. Don't drink too much worry,

too much fear, too much sorrow and grief. Rather, drink more of the emotions that arise from God's promises. Instead of fear about the evil that might befall you, drink the peace of knowing that both you and your inheritance are securely guarded. Instead of sorrow and grief over all that you have lost, drink in the joy and happiness of what you will gain in the life to come. In order to have our minds prepared, we have to keep sober. When Job's children were off having parties, he was afraid that their minds were no longer girded, that they might get tripped up. When they were done, Job would consecrate them and offer sacrifices for them, because Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts" Job 1:5. And so we need to maintain an attitude of sobriety (clear-headedness).

HOPE TO THE END FOR THE GRACE

Peter spoke about hope. Hope is the confident expectation of what God has promised. Hope is the sister of faith and trust and confidence. Peter said, "Rest your hope fully upon the grace that is being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Don't build your hope on retaining your material possessions. Don't build your hope on escaping suffering and death. For these are not sure and solid foundations. If you build your hope on such things, you will surely be disappointed. No, set your hope fully upon God's promised grace.

POINT:

Now our focus will be on the fact that Jesus Christ is coming back at any moment. You see, when we are focused on His return, we can't help but be ready. Focusing in on His appearing, fixing our hope on the grace that will be brought to us on that day, will keep us from being caught unawares. It will keep us confident and alert.

OBEDIENCE

As Christians we are to conduct ourselves as "obedient children" - 1Pt. 1:14. We are not to conform to former lusts. The word "conform" ("fashion" in the KJV) means "to make or shape (i.e. one's mind and character) to another's pattern." The "former lusts" refer to the evil desires and behavior in which we once engaged, and in which the world continues to engage. In essence, then, Peter is saying:

- "Don't act like you once did, or like those still in the world."
- "Do not adopt their sinful habits, mannerisms, dress, and speech, which you did before you became Christians."

The only way to escape temptation is through obedience that comes by continually seeking God's guidance and truth in what is right and wrong. God's truth can convict us, nurture us, and inspire us just as a parent does with a child. God will lead us away from temptation if we will yield to Him. A mind that is under control, results in a life of holiness, not lustfulness - referring to passions of all kinds. When these passions become your masters or your idols, when they expose you to sin - or take you away from the Lord - they become blatantly sinful. Then, having them in your life is destructive, and far from the holiness in which God commands us to live. What passions in your life are the "**have to**" kind of things? "I have to smoke a cigarette. I have to see that movie. I have to have that drink. I have to watch the Super Bowl." As soon as you "have to" act on that passion, you can be assured that it's become sin. It's a lust which shouldn't be present in your life any longer.

BE YE HOLY:

He has already made us holy because holiness starts in one's relationship with the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. It is closely related to the words "sanctify" and "sanctification." While sanctification unto holiness begins at the same moment as justification, it is a progressive, creative, time-consuming work of God within us. All of which stress the idea of being "set apart." To be "holy", then, means that we are "set apart" or dedicated to God. By our godly conduct, a witness is made that God dwells in us. Where there is no holiness, there is no witness to glorify God. It is now up to us to apply holiness to our lives. We are to be holy in all our conduct. If we fill our minds with junk all day long, we'll end up thinking junk. If we fill our minds with scripture, and with prayer, with uplifting music, and with edifying conversation, our lives will reflect the difference. We are to be **holy for two reasons**:

1. The first reason: "For I (God) am holy." The God who has called us through His gospel is a Holy God. He Himself is "set apart" from sin and wickedness. His very nature demands a similar holiness on

our part – Heb. 12:14.

2. It is also Jesus' desire that we be holy (He died for this very purpose!) – Eph. 5:25-27.

Paul came to the conclusion that 1Cor. 6:12, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything." Instead of passion mastering our minds, our minds should be masters of our passions. Rom. 6:12 "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts."

1 Peter 1:17-22: Precious Blood

A.CALL ON THE FATHER (v17-21)

- a. Who judges each one without partiality
 - b. Conduct yourselves with true reverence
 - c. During your stay in fear
- B. Knowing you are redeemed
1. Not with corruptible things like silver and gold
 2. From your aimless vain conduct received by tradition from your fathers
 3. With the precious blood of Christ
 - a. As of a lamb without blemish and without spot
 - b. Foreordained before the foundation of the world
 - c. Manifest in these last times for you
 - d. Through whom you believe in God
 4. Who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory
 5. So that your faith and hope are in God

Peter has just told us that we need to be holy (1Pet. 1:15). Holiness is only perfected in the fear of God .If you're not living a holy life today, it is because of one thing: you don't have a fear of God. It is interesting that so many people call God, "Father," and yet don't view Him as a Father and don't have that fear. Your strongest defense against the flesh, against evil, against sin, is to fear the Lord. The Father loves us completely, yet disciplines us justly. Peter gives **two reasons for fear**:

- 1.The first reason: In view of the judgment by our Father - 1Pt. 1:17
- 2.In view of the high cost of redemption - 1Pt. 1:18-21

God will not be partial. He will be personal - "judging according to each one's work." We will not receive special favors, and no one will escape His discerning eye! We are to fear the God who is both our Father and our judge. As sons of God, we may call upon Him for help to bring justice to the earth and even to punish the wicked, but He also judges us. His standard for us is holiness, and thus we must conduct ourselves with an awareness of our own weakness and vulnerability to sin. The Lord knew that no man could save himself because all people were corrupt. Sinners need redemption. Why?

1. They are slaves to sin – Rom. 3:23; Rom. 3:10; Eph. 2:1-3; Jh.8:44.
2. They are lost and separated from God – Is. 59:2
3. They are Hell bound and hopeless apart from Jesus – Ps. 9:17.

What does the blood of Christ do for us? First, it brings to us God's atoning* grace. That is, man cannot be saved by his self-righteousness; he cannot keep the law. But in God's grace, we have forgiveness and enter into the presence of our Lord. It is in the blood of Jesus that our sins are washed away; we are redeemed not with corruptible things (gold and silver) v18. Nothing but the shed blood of Christ can meet such a requirement, purchasing total and eternal redemption (Romans 3:24; Hebrews 9:12). What the Blood does in us is a forever work! (III. Incurruptible seed).The blood also brings us into fellowship with the Father – Rev. 5:9; and changes our eternal destiny – Rom. 5:9. With the precious blood of Christ, it took a lamb without blemish and without spot v19, foreordained before the foundation of the world, to be manifest in these last times for us v20, and through whom we would believe in God v21. The blood is Precious because of:

- its redeeming and atoning effectiveness;
- its cleansing power;
- its sanctifying influence;

- its overcoming power... "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb."

Christian reverence (admiration) rests upon our Redemption in 4 ways:

- 1 On its Cost! – the death of Christ.
- 2 On its transcendent Origin! – before the world's foundation.
- 3 On its Certification! – in Christ's resurrection.
- 4 On its Fruit! – the church's faith & hope.

With Jesus' eternal precious blood, it keeps on paying the price, and never stops paying the price throughout all the generations

NOTE:

*Under the Mosaic system, a temporary atonement (i.e., "covering") could be obtained for forgiveness of sins by offering the blood of an unblemished and unspotted lamb (Exodus 12:5; Numbers 28:3). But this merely served as a type of the future offering of the blood of Christ, without contamination by either inherent sin or practiced sin.

It was foreordained, or predetermined, that Jesus should be the great atoning Sacrifice for sin. From eternity; before man was formed; before the earth was made; before any of the material universe was brought into being, was the precious blood of Christ. At the same time, however, Peter reminds us, that it was not a new or a sudden thing as to God that Christ appeared as Savior. Besides, Peter addressed the Jews, who had already heard that He had been long ago promised; and though they understood nothing true or clear or certain respecting Peter's power and office, yet there remained among them a persuasion, that a Redeemer had been promised by God to the fathers. The Jews had known Christ long before, but the Gentiles had every thing to learn when the first preachers of the Gospel arrived amongst them. Peter wanted them to know that their faith should be in the fulfillment of all His promises and their hope be of the eternal glory in God.

POINT:

As Adam did not fall before the creation of the world, how was it that Christ had been appointed the Redeemer? For a remedy is posterior to the disease. My reply is that this is to be referred to God's foreknowledge; before He created man, foresaw that man would not stand long in his integrity. Hence He ordained, according to his wonderful wisdom and goodness, that Christ should be the Redeemer, to deliver the lost race of man from ruin. For herein shines forth more fully the unspeakable goodness of God, that He anticipated our disease by the remedy of His grace, and provided a restoration to life before the first man had fallen into death.

Redeem means to "ransom" or "buy back" (especially the redemption of a bondservant by a kinsman Lev. 25:49).

The resurrection of Christ, considered as an act of power, is common to all the three persons of the Godhead, but as an act of judgment it is peculiar to the Father, who as a Judge released Christ, raised Him from the grave, and gave Him glory, proclaimed Him to all the world to be His Son by his resurrection from the dead, advanced Him to heaven, crowned Him with glory and honor, invested Him with all power in heaven and earth, and glorified Him with that glory which He had with God before the world was.

B. FERVENT AND PURE LOVE (v22)

1. Since you have purified your souls
 - a. In obeying the truth through the Spirit
 - b. In sincere love of the brethren

The soul must be purified, before it can give up its own desires and indulgences. Peter does not declare to them what they had done, but reminds them of what they ought to do. He indicates that the gospel had already had such an effect upon them as to purify their souls while they obeyed it through the Spirit, and that it had produced at least an unfeigned love of the brethren; and thence he argues with them to proceed to a higher degree of affection, to love one another with a pure heart fervently. Unfeigned means genuine, sincere, without pretension, hypocrisy, or play-acting. Fervent is the same word used in <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

reference to prayer in Acts 12:5 - translated "constant" or "earnest." Just as the disciples were constantly praying for the release of Peter, so our love for one another is to be "unceasing." The Greek word literally means "not hypocritical" - not to be some kind of show-off, but coming from the heart – Rom. 12:9. Thus they would show to their enemies and persecutors the transforming nature of their religion and furnish an impressive proof of its reality.

POINT:

Fervent love is important because it is a demonstration of discipleship; a demonstration of our spiritual life; and a demonstration of our relationship to God. Jesus gave a new commandment – Jh.13:33-35. It is a commandment to love one another, even as Jesus loved us. The reason for such a commandment: to convince the world that we are truly His disciples! But failure to have a fervent love like Christ had for us will cause the world to doubt our discipleship! "Love of the brethren" is an indication that we have passed from spiritual death to spiritual life – 1 Jh.3:14. Failure to love the brethren is an indication that we are still spiritually dead!

How do we measure up to this type of love? It's possible because our souls have been purified. By obeying the truth we have been forgiven - 1Pt. 1:22; Acts 2:38. By continuing to heed the truth, we are taught to be pure Eph. 4:20-24. Therefore we can be fervent in our love for it will be a pure love. It's possible!

1 Peter 1:23-25: THE ETERNAL WORD

A. HAVING BEEN BORN AGAIN, NOT OF CORRUPTIBLE SEED BUT INCORRUPTIBLE (v23-25)

1. Born again by the incorruptible Word of God!
 - a. The Word lives
 - b. The Word abides forever
2. All flesh is as grass, all the glory of man as the flower of the grass
3. The grass withers, its flower falls away
4. The word of the Lord endures forever
 - a. The word which by the gospel was preached to you

This being 'born again' fits perfectly with what Peter had just written in verse 22 about the believers all having a family relationship, as brethren in Christ. It says that our having been born again is a completed past action with ongoing results into the future, implying permanence, and that being 'born again' is God's accomplishment in us. In the natural realm, things that are born eventually die, so Peter makes the point that being 'born again' is by nature 'imperishable'. It is by the written Word of God, which has as its central message for salvation, the content of the gospel. The wonder of God's Word is "living and powerful" – Heb. 4:12. Jesus said: "...The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." – Jh. 6:63. When a person receives the Word of God and obeys it, he or she is truly born again! - Jam. 1:18. It can produce continual spiritual growth because the Word is alive and powerful, divides soul and spirit, and discerns thoughts and intents of the heart.

All flesh is like grass -- it withers and the flower falls. Peter undoubtedly quoting from Isaiah 40:6b, 8. Indeed, all of our earthly life is like the grass which eventually dies. "All flesh" is everyone in their natural state. Man is finite and temporal and transient - he is "as grass." "Grass" is temporal and fragile. There is nothing permanent in grass. "The glory of man" is man's accomplishments. All the achievements of man, his records, writings, are as fragile as grass. The word "withers" means to dry up as in a drought. The person without God is in a drought. His life is corruptible. Even man in all his glory withers and fades away. A pro football player eventually loses his strength and is cut from the team. He was striking for a while, but after a short period of time he becomes no longer important. A celebrity dies like everyone else. People go through their lives trying to ignore the reality of death by going about the business of the day. Then comes a day like today when we are confronted with it. We can try to escape it by living a good life, but it is not to be put off. The glory of man shines for a while then like grass it disappears. We need to keep eternal values in view for the glories of this life will fade, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.

SUMMARY:

Before they turned to Christ, they had conducted themselves in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. Peter exhorted them to remain sober. After all, no matter how well you prepare your mind, being intoxicated with all kinds of things is going to affect your ability to react. We cannot cultivate and fortify a strong hope if we are so "weak-minded" that we allow things to divert us away from our true calling! The problem with many Christians today is not that they have no hope, but that their hope is weak and shallow. And that is because they are preoccupied with the affairs of this temporary life. To remain faithful to the Lord, we need to heed Peter's exhortation to fortify the focus of our hope by freeing our minds of those things which would hinder us. Being more serious about the kind of life our Heavenly Father would have us live – Lk. 12:35-40

Christians are not to be "conformists", but true "non-conformists", or "transformists" - Ro 12:1-2. "Conformists" simply imitate others, sometimes claiming to do so only outwardly. But "transformists" are those who:

- Have undergone a true change on the "inside"
- And who manifest the difference on the "outside"

We need to be sure we are not adopting the sinful habits or mannerisms of those in the world, therefore behaving properly as "obedient children." Holiness is not something we put on when convenient, like on Sundays. Instead, our daily life, our entire conduct is to be "set apart" in service to the Lord – Rom. 12:1. For this to be true, every aspect of our life must be in harmony with God's demand for holiness! This means our work, our speech, our dress, our recreation etc. All should be in harmony with the principles of God's Word.

From verses 14-21, then, we learn that "Proper Conduct As Obedient Children" means that: We are not to conform ourselves to former lusts, but we are to be holy in all our conduct, and conduct ourselves in fear. By purifying their hearts, by obeying the truth, they were all one family, and would love one another fervently. We must not expect God to overlook the sin in our own lives, for while it's penalty has been paid at Calvary, God is at work to purify us to His glory.

We should live our lives in this present age well aware that we are citizens of heaven and that our conduct must not only meet the requirements of earthly authorities, but also of our Father in heaven. We were not redeemed from our sins with silver or gold, but only by the precious blood of Christ!

Obedient children means, no addition and no subtraction! ; no conforming to the evil desires they had when they lived in ignorance. The beauty of this is that we have everything God intends us to have in Christ Jesus. God's Word is perfect and complete. We do not have to conform to old ways or actions. At some point in life every person must be totally convinced that if he is to please God, it must be on God's terms. That means doing what God wants the way God wants it done. Nonconformity means failure or refusal to conform. He wants us to be holy because He is with us and **in** us. He does not want to be contaminated by the impurities of His people.

APPLICATION:

Have you responded to the grace of God in order to receive such wonderful blessings? - Acts 2:38. Where there is no "Christ-like love", our actions betray our words. Prepare the soil of your heart. Have a sincere longing, desire, and thirst for the Word of God. Can it be said that we have the proper desire for the Word of God ?; If we do not read, study and meditate upon the Bible daily; If we go year after year, failing to read through the Bible on a regular basis? Then the fear of the Lord, the reverential awe of God is missing which will lead to a holy life. To have that fear or awe of God, choose with your will, to want to have the fear of God above all else. Confess your desperate lack of this fear, and ask God for it by faith. Do a study of the subject. In the days ahead, think of how you can be more fervent in your love of the brethren. But just don't think, ACT! Open your hearts and homes to each other!