

Be Holy

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening. It's a privilege to be here tonight and to go through this passage with you all. And I'm just going to commit the time to God in prayer before we start. God, Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that it is available in our own language and in many different translations and versions.

And we pray that tonight as we go through it, that you will speak to each one of us and that we will grow in our Christian faiths. And that if we aren't a Christian here tonight, we will be challenged as to what that means and the response that we need to give to that question.

So we ask your blessing on this tonight and pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So we're looking at 1 Peter over seven weeks. And last week, Luca took us through the first 12 verses of 1 Peter.

So it's always good to know the context of what we are studying. So in case you weren't here last week, 1 Peter is a circular letter written to non-Jewish Christians.

By that, I mean it was a letter written to be passed around the churches in Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey. And it was for them to read to the congregation. And it was mainly to the Gentiles or the non-Jews.

[1 : 14] It was written during the reign of Emperor Nero, which is around 54 to 68 AD. And so it's only 20 to 30 years after Jesus' ascension from the earth.

And it's called 1 Peter as it was written by the Apostle Peter. And the main purpose of his writing was to encourage and challenge the Christians to be distinct disciples in the world, even in the face of suffering.

So if you were here last week, you should have left thinking, our salvation is great. Our home is in heaven. That is where we're going to. We are to rejoice in this fact, even though we might be suffering right now.

The knowledge of our salvation and that our home is in heaven puts our current suffering into perspective. And it's from this point that I want us to start tonight. The title for this week is Be Holy. There we go. Lovely. Be Holy. So I think to start off, we need to know what that means because holy is a difficult word. We don't use it in everyday language. So it's important to get to grips with it.

[2 : 27] So Oxford Dictionary, always helpful, defines holy as being devoted to the service of God morally and spiritually excellent. But as with many words, they can mean various things in various contexts and situations.

So here we're going to translate holy as sacred, fast forwarding, sacred, pure, morally blameless, set apart. And I want you to keep this definition in your head as we go through the passage tonight. We are called to live holy lives as Christians in the world. We're to be representatives of God, blameless and morally upright among men. We've been set apart by God, made right before him to a life of distinct discipleship.

We are to be holy. Have you ever held up a white shirt or maybe a bed sheet and you think, oh yeah, that still looks good and clean, only to put it beside a brand new one and you find in fact it's more slightly yellow than white.

Now as much as the adverts of Daz or Purcell will have you believe, you can never get a shirt back to its original white. Not sure if you can see that, but one of them is slightly more yellow than the other.

[3 : 44] We were once sinners. We were once sinners dressed in filthy rags. But as Christians, we have been made new, clean, as white as snow by the Lord Jesus.

Now we aren't to go against this and roll around in the mud as it were. We're to live holy lives, giving praise to God for the position he has put us into.

We're to constantly compare ourselves, our conduct and words, to our ultimate example who is the Lord Jesus, who lived a perfect life here on this very same earth that we are on.

So it's a large passage tonight and I'll not be going through each part in detail, but I would highly recommend you go home this week and study it through the course of the week. There's so much that we can take from this passage.

We're going to roughly split it in half and we're going to look at 1.13 to chapter 2, verse 3 with the heading of, we have been made holy and looking at 2.4 to 10 with the heading of, so we are to be holy.

[4 : 45] And hopefully that will make more sense by the end. So let's start with a question. Are you holy? We are called to be holy. Read with me in verse 15.

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. For it is written, be holy because I am holy. The second part of this verse is referenced in Leviticus 11.44 where God is commanding the Israelites to be holy and not to defile themselves by eating unclean animals.

You can check that up later on. If the Israelites did eat an animal that was unclean, then they themselves would become unclean and they would have to follow the specific commandments to be made clean again.

Now if you're a Christian, this is what is being asked of you. We are called to be holy. We're called to be clean in the sense of not sinning and following God's instructions.

And this isn't something we can nod along to and go, yeah, I'll get to that at some point in the future. We're to live a life that is completely different to those around us. We are to live lives which shine for Jesus by both what we do and what we don't do.

[6 : 01] Our words and actions are to point to the one by whom we have life and have it to the full, as Graham was telling us this morning. So what does that entail, practically speaking? Helpfully, this passage takes us through what this looks like.

If you follow me down the passage in verse 14, we see that as obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had. Verse 17, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

Verse 22, love one another deeply from the heart. Chapter 2, verse 1, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

And 2, verse 2, crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation. Going back to the context of the passage, which is always good practice.

Peter was writing to people who were suffering and they were about to suffer even more severely in the short-term future. How much of a greater impact would these actions we've just heard have on those who are watching these Christians?

[7 : 12] When times are tough, it doesn't give us an excuse just to ignore these commandments and just do whatever we want. We're to be shining lights in the world and it is in the darkest places that the light shines brightest.

Let's go in through them. Do you obediently do what God says at all times, fleeing from sin and your old ways, as verse 14 would tell us? We have been made new.

We have a fresh start. We can't go back to being slaves to sin, letting our evil wants take over and rule our lives. Do you live as a foreigner, not fitting in because you don't actually belong here anymore, as verse 17 would tell us?

Our home is in heaven. In Edinburgh, you can spot a tourist a mile away. Maybe that they're wearing unusual clothes or speaking in a different language or maybe they're actually just looking up and around rather than at their phone or the pavement.

Basically, it's because of what they're saying and what they're doing. We have to be the same. By our actions and words, we are to be radically different in the world, making people stop and think, why are they different?

[8 : 23] Why do they bless others when they are suffering themselves? We're to love one another deeply from the heart, as verse 22 would tell us. We're to be selfless in order to serve others and put them first.

We're not to be friendly and loving on the surface, but underneath, envious and spiteful. We're to flee from all talk, which puts others down.

It goes against who we are now as Christians and isn't true or is hurtful to others. 2 verse 1 tells us we're to flee from those things. There's always the phrase, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.

How untrue is that phrase? Words and what people say to each other can be the most damaging of all. I once had a guy who'd recently been started going along to a church and he said to me, why would I want to become a Christian?

They all speak so badly about one another. That's not to be us. We're to be pure in word, building each other up and encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ.

[9 : 30] Finally, we're to crave spiritual milk. That's God's word in order to grow as Christians. 2 verse 2 tells us.

Being a Christian means to be Christ-like and we can only be Christ-like in our words and deeds by learning more about him. That's why it's so important to read your Bible and to come to occasions like this where the Bible is taught.

The bracelets were popular and they still are. Say, WWJD, what would Jesus do? That should be our first thought in any situation that we face.

He is our ultimate example and guide. Now this is no short order and I don't expect you to sit there and go tick, tick, tick. Yep, what next?

The truth is that we fall short and we can't do this on our own. We fail and we're weak but this is exactly the point. We can't do this on our own.

[10 : 28] We need God's help. Verse 18 to 21. These verses explain what our hope rests in. Not imperishable things but in the imperishable.

If you read with me verses 24 and 25, they explain that all people are like grass and their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall but the word of the Lord endures forever.

It's what Christ has done that matters not who we are or what we have done. If you're a Christian here today, if you aren't a Christian here today, then you need to be made right with God.

God is holy. Completely separate from sin and evil. We on the other hand are sinful. We are all guilty. Not a single one of us lives a life without sin.

Our sins hurt others and God in the process. This means that God being holy is separate from us in our sinful state. There is this divide which we cannot cross.

[11 : 36] People try and bridge this gap with good deeds. Go into church or some sort of balance system where you do more right than wrong and you'll be okay in the end. But none of that's good enough.

All our attempts to be holy on our own are futile and they will fail. Verses 18 and 19 read with me, say, For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors but with the precious blood of Christ a lamb without blemish or defect.

Only by trusting in the Lord Jesus can we be reconciled to God through Christ and his redemptive sacrifice. Jesus paid the price for us.

He redeemed us so that we can be set free from a life of slavery to sin to a life of freedom and a close relationship with God. Only Jesus could have bridged that gap between us and God as he was fully man and yet fully God lived a sinless life here.

he gave up that life so that sinful people that's you that's myself so that we could have that close relationship we could be saved from that eternity separated from God which is what we call hell to an eternity with God which is what we call heaven.

[13 : 04] Jesus took our place he took the punishment that we deserve so that we could become children of God adopted sons and daughters of the living God and it didn't just end there Jesus was raised again to life as verse 21 tells us by God to show that death was defeated and the redemptive work was complete.

How amazing is that? We've been made holy by Jesus' work by the shedding of his blood that is what our hope rests in and this isn't a hope that is unsure but an assured hope.

We don't rely on anything that we've done but on what Christ has done and this is a good job because we aren't good enough and we can never meet God's perfect standard.

If you're sitting there today knowing that you've never accepted the Lord Jesus as your saviour asking him to come into your life and to forgive you for your sins then you need to act. I'm struck by the words of the hymn and I'm very thankful that we've sung it already What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus O precious is the flow that makes me white as snow No other fount I know Nothing but the blood of Jesus We are to be holy We are to set our hope on Jesus Verse 13 The founder and perfecter of our faith We are to live our lives obediently Verse 14 As foreigners 17 Loving one another deeply 22 Ridding ourselves of all impure talk 2 verse 1 Craving God's word 2 verse 2 He is the ultimate example and guide in our daily lives We can learn about Jesus and his life on earth in the Bible and it can be trusted because unlike us the word of the Lord endures forever as verse 25 tells us Second half moving into the second part of our passage We're called to live lives of praise prayer and service

[15 : 19] There's an identity crisis going on in the world today The idea of who someone is and what defines them is massively changing I remember my grandfather used to say that he used to be known as Tom's boy or Jane's girl and you would introduce yourself and it would be the first thing you would say I'd say Hi I'm Jonathan son of Paul and Denise But nowadays we introduce ourselves by our job don't we?

You know we say Hi I'm Jonathan I'm working the family business Among young people there's an identity crisis with people not knowing of who or what they identify to and this matters so much because their identity also defines them and is as much a part of them as their legs and arms This passage tells us that our identity is in Christ and we should really be saying Hi I'm Jonathan a Christian In verse 5 we're called living stones which are being you can read with me being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ A spiritual house is a house in which God dwells In Old Testament times this was the tabernacle and then later on the temple Now the priests in the temple they would have various roles and responsibilities but ultimately they were to serve and bring praise to God

However this did not give the priests unlimited access to God The high priest could only enter God's presence once a year into the place called the Holy of Holies We are a spiritual house because God dwells in us from the moment that we become a Christian God no longer dwells in a temple or a building but in his people We are living stones of the spiritual house being the church with Christ as the cornerstone as verse 6 and 7 tells us Now there's much debate as to what this actually means or what stone in the building it's actually referring to Is it the capstone?

Is it the cornerstone? But ultimately Jesus is the indispensable stone He is the one who holds us all together and aligns us correctly We're not on our own We have Jesus as our head and as our foundation We're described as being a holy priesthood in verse 5 and a royal priesthood in verse 9 We have unlimited access to God's presence That's a mind-blowing statement We have unlimited access to God's presence What a privilege and a responsibility that is When remembering Christ's death on the cross I've always been struck by the curtain in the temple being torn in two from top to bottom Now this curtain was a heavy, thick woven piece of material which separated the holy place to the holy of holies which is where God's presence appeared So Jesus' death on the cross meant that man had direct access to God's presence

We're to appreciate the gravity and the opportunity of this fact We're all priests with responsibilities to serve to praise and to pray Are you praying?

[18 : 43] We're to pray for those around us Our non-Christian friends family, colleagues our brothers and sisters in Christ who may be rejoicing or they may be suffering We're to pray for our country our government our world We're to go with thankfulness in our hearts for all that God has done for us and the blessings that he heaps upon us We're to pray with that reverent fear knowing that we are in the presence of the holy God and yet with the knowledge that we are blameless before him because we are adopted as his children Wouldn't it be of great encouragement if we all knew that we were fervently praying for one another?

I'll ask again Are you praying? We're also to offer spiritual sacrifices as verse 5 says Once again in Old Testament times the priests were to carry out duties of sacrificing and presenting offerings to God Elsewhere in the New Testament there are passages about what these spiritual sacrifices are and some of these sacrifices are I'm going to read the references out in case you're making notes or want to look them up later on In Hebrews 13 verse 15 and 16 some of these spiritual sacrifices are praise good works are possessions Romans 12 verse 1 tells us that our body is a spiritual sacrifice Romans 15 and 16 says that service is a spiritual sacrifice We're to give God the praise that he deserves for what he has done and that he is doing for us We're to do good works in order to bring him glory

We're to share our possessions and be hospitable and selfless in all situations and to all people We're to give our bodies and have complete commitment to God's ways We're to serve God in whatever he would have us to do using our God-given gifts to do so Once again this is no easy task but by relying on Jesus the foundation and cornerstone of our faith we can live a life worthy of the calling that we have received Our sacrifices are not perfect but Jesus mediates to make them perfect before the Father so we aren't to shy away in fear from our responsibilities and our privileges Finally verse 9 is a great encouragement to finish this section You can read with me But you are a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of the darkness and into his wonderful light Our identity is in Christ We have gone from being a nobody to being a child of God We have gone from being a temple of sin to a royal priesthood We are chosen God's special possession Going back to who this was written to Imagine for a moment the Gentile the non-Jewish Christians who were hearing all this You know these phrases which spoke of God's people the Jewish nation the Israelites and they were being described in the same way and it's true for us tonight as well These truths would have given such comfort at a time when these people were suffering and they would go on to suffer even more These words should be an encouragement for us here today whether we're going through tough times or not We are chosen a royal priesthood a holy nation God's special possession Verse 10 says

Once you were not a people but now you are the people of God Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy Summing it up We have been made holy by the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus We're therefore to be obedient as foreigners in the world loving one another deeply ridding ourselves of all malice craving spiritual milk which is God's word We do so by setting our gaze on Christ and his coming when we will be made new and spend eternity with him in heaven We are a holy priesthood and have the privilege and responsibility of praying and offering spiritual sacrifices to God We're to put others first serving God where he has placed us and using the skills and gifts that he has given to us We can take comfort that we are chosen

[23 : 33] We have received mercy and are the people of God Our identity is not in our job It's not in where we come from or how many Instagram followers we have It is in Christ We are to live this out in the world being shining lights for God in the darkest of places Like we thought about at the beginning we've been made clean as white as snow not just the sort of off-white like your shirt or your sheets when they've been through the wash We've been made new and so we aren't to roll around in the mud and ruin what has been done for us We are to live holy lives relying on God's help bringing the praise and the glory to him and we're to be constantly comparing ourselves to Jesus who is our perfect example My friend got married in the summer and they had a hymn which at the time I hadn't heard before but we've sung it quite a bit since and I've sung it in the car even more often and I think songs and hymns often have a way of saying things so concisely and succinctly that just sum things up and it's really powerful

So I'm just going to finish with the words of this It's yet not I but through Christ in me No fate I dread I know I am forgiven The future sure the price it has been paid For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon and he was raised to overthrow the grave To this I hold my sin has been defeated Jesus now and ever is my plea Oh the chains are released I can sing I am free Yet not I but through Christ in me I'm just going to pray to close God and Father we thank you for your word we thank you that we as Christians have been made holy by the work of the Lord Jesus We thank you that it has nothing to do with ourselves that we would never be good enough going it alone We pray that as we rely on you day by day that we will fulfill our duties as priests that we will bring praise to you we will serve others and that we will pray we pray that we will look out for one another in our daily lives and in the struggles that we go through and that we will support those who are suffering and going through tough times so we thank you for your word and we pray that these things will continue to have an effect as we go away from here and I ask that you will bless our weeks going forward whatever that may look like we pray all these things in Jesus name amen amen amen again and time to repeat■