

TITLE: Responding to Salvation Grace (Part 3)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 1:15

THEME: Our Response to the Glory of our Salvation

NUMBER: 1PET27-1005

DATE: October 2, 2005

Read Passage

We've noted that this passage follows some profound truth that relates to our salvation. Saw it beginning v. 2 {review vv. 2-12}

Then we come to vv. 13-21 and we have the first direct application of those truths related to our salvation.

Responding to salvation grace results in the pleasure of hope and the pursuit of holiness.

We do that with our minds and our hearts

Nearly 200 years ago, English Poet & Spiritual Mystic William Blake encouraged his readers to "put off holiness and put on intellect." Blake was badly mistaken. Holiness and intellect are not mutually exclusive and intellect divorced from holiness is like . . . well, it's like life on a typical American College Campus today.

Let me take you back to the summer of 1776

American colonies had been fighting a War of Indep. from Britain for over a year (since April 19, 1775 when 1st battle took place at Lexington)

Colonists were weary of paying what seemed like an endless amt. of taxes to George III. Were frustrated at t/English Parliament who passed laws like t/Stamp Act, laws that negatively affected them that were passed by politicians whom they had not themselves elected.

Colonists who had settled in America seeking religious freedom wanted to be truly free; free from t/ endless meddling of the English Govt. Time

had come for their freedom, but how could they officially express what they felt?

At this time Thomas Jefferson was a young man of 34. In an era where t/average height of a man was about 5' 7", Jefferson was a giant at nearly 6' 3. He was articulate and well-liked.

During t/summer of 1776, Jefferson wrote what is unarguably one of t/most imp. documents ever written in t/world of law. After sev. revisions, The Declaration of Independ. was approved by t/Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, thereby officially creating t/U.S.A.

Jefferson went on to become the 3rd President of the United States. Years later, in his old-age, Jefferson penned what may have been for him the second most imp. words of his career when he wrote the words that would adorn his grave-stone:

Here was buried
Thomas Jefferson
Author of the Declaration of American Independence
Of the statutes of Virginia for religious freedom
and Father of the University of Virginia

Ten days before his death he reflected once again on his unshakable beliefs that helped found a nation:

...the mass of mankind has not been born, with saddles on their backs,
nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately.
By the grace of God, these are grounds of hope for others.

In the providence of God he died on July 4th, 1826 - 50 years to t/day after his Declaration of Independ. had created the U.S.A. [adapted from <http://www.lawbuzz.com/ourlaws/declaration/declaration.htm>]

Declaration of Indep. is t/found. document as it relates to our nation. In that doc. we are told that an inalienable right for each citizen is t/pursuit of happiness.

As citizens of God's kingdom, The Bible is our foundational document. In this letter we call 1 Peter we find that our joy as believers is to savor in t/pleasure of hope and the pursuit of holiness.

vv. 13-21 form a passage that begins & ends with a note of hope

In v. 13 we are told to ==>

... set [our] hope fully on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ

In v. 21 we see that thru t/Res. X ==>

... [our] faith and hope are in God.

In between those two bookends of hope we find the pursuit of holiness.

... be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written: "You shall be holy, for I Am Holy."

The entirety of this passage, from v. 13 to v. 21 (and beyond)==>

I. Our Response to the Glory of our Salvation (13-21)

The first point we looked at from v. 13==>

A. We are to Fix our Hope on Future Grace (13)

Therefore, having girding up the loins of your mind, with sober-mindedness, set your hope fully on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Secondly (we saw this last week) ==>

B. We are to Forsake our Former Passions (14)

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,

1. This is what we are not to do

Lit. "As Children of Obedience" - that is, children of God who are characterized by their obedience, don't be squeezed into t/mold of your former life of stupidity (I'm taking a little liberty w/text).

... do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,
Don't do that. You have new passions in keeping w/who you are as God's child.

Don't do that. Instead, do this (our 3rd point) - in response to salv. grace>

C. We are to Pursue Holiness (15-16)

But like the holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

Word "holy" occurs 2x in this v. Word "holy" in its diff. forms occurs over 600 x in t/Bible. Book of Leviticus is exclusively devoted to God's holiness. When you have a concept that is so frequent you know that this is imp. to t/mind/heart of God. God is passionate about his holiness.

Not like former President Calvin Coolidge who returned home from church service one Sunday and was asked by his wife what the minister had talked about. "Sin," Coolidge replied. When his wife pressed him as to what the preacher had said about sin, Coolidge responded "I think he was against it."

Maybe the preacher wasn't being clear; maybe Coolidge wasn't paying attention. But let me be perfectly clear: God hates sin because he is a holy God.

We, as His very off-spring, born-again through the grace of X, we are to make our lives focused on ==>

1. The Pursuit of Holiness (v. 15)

Certainly, when we speak of holiness we are talking about a concept that requires a standard. Holiness is purity & purity stands in juxtaposition to impurity. There may be many opinions on what's pure & what's not. In t/minds of men t/standard changes more often than t/weather here in Rochester. But when it comes to holiness t/standard never changes ==>

a. The Standard: A Holy God

But like the holy One who called you . . .

Phrase τὸν καλέσαντα . . . ἅγιον [^] is a virtual title for God. He is "The Holy One." That Gk. phrase is frequent in LXX.

Psa. 71:22 & 78:41 ("Holy One of Israel"); See same thing in Isa. 1:4. Prov. 9:10 ("The Holy One"); In Isa. 5:16 ("the Holy God").

Phrase "The Holy One of Israel" alone occurs over 30x in OT.

(1) What Does it mean that "God is Holy?"

One writer notes that ==>

"The word for 'holy' is 'hagios' whose root meaning is 'different.' The Temple is 'hagios' because it is different from other buildings; the Sabbath is 'hagios' because it is different from other days . . ." [Barclay, 188]

While God is certainly different in the sense of being unique, his holiness transcends that. John Piper puts it best in his definition==>

"The word 'holy' is the little boat in which we reap the world's end in the ocean of language. The possibilities of language to describe God come to an end they spill over into a vast void of silence. Holiness carries us to the brink, and from there on all our experience of God is wordless. . . . Every time you try to define the word 'holy,' you simply wind up by saying this, 'God is holy means, God is God.' . . . God is one of a kind, sui juneris, in a class by Himself, and in that sense he is utterly holy, separate. . . God is glorious! The glory of God, very simply, is the manifestation of His holiness. God's holiness is His incomparable perfection in Himself, His glory is the display of that Holiness for His creatures and the members of the Trinity to behold. God is glorious means that God has gone public with his Holiness. His glory is the open revelation of His secret holiness (Lev. 10:3). When God displays holiness what we see is glory, because His glory is the visible manifestation of His holiness and his holiness is the invisible essence of His glory. Holiness is concealed glory. Glory is revealed holiness." [John Piper, "Going Hard After the Holy God," Cassette Message on Philippians 3:2-16, Jan. 8, 1984 a.m., © Desiring God Ministries, 720 13th Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55415]

(a) God's holiness is the central attribute of his nature

It's the fulcrum upon which his character rests. It's the epicenter of His Goodness & Greatness. Every one of God's attributes, be it sovereignty,

omnipotence; omniscience; mercy; wrath are driven by his holiness. All of his attributes (perfections) are pure & holy because God is pure & holy. His omnipotence is a holy omnipotence // love // mercy // graciousness // wrath // justice . . .

It is that which Isaiah the prophet saw in Isa. 6:3==>

And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the \Lord\ of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

It's that which John, stranded on the Isle of Patmos saw in his vision recorded in the 4th chapter of his Apocalypse ==>

And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around & within; & day & night they do not cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was & who is & who is to come."

When we speak of God's attributes, we tend to put them in 2 categories>

(2) Communicable vs. Non-Communicable attributes

There are attributes of God's nature that t/creation (us) can share in. When we say that God is omnipotent we are saying that his power is unlimited. No other creature under heaven shares in that sort of power (therefore, it's a non-communicable attribute). When we say that God is love we affirm that we who are created in his image can themselves demonstrate that particular attribute (communicable).

(a) What of God's holiness?

That's an attribute that theologians count as communicable & non-communicable at same time. Obv. there's a communicable element to it (v. 15 doesn't say, "like the omnipotent one who called you, be omnipotent" - couldn't say that). But there's still an element of God's holiness which is a wholly-otherness; it's a flaming fire that cannot be equaled. Even angels shield themselves from it when they find themselves in his presence.

His holiness in it's blazing purity is something that would be as impossible to pursue as would be his omnipotence in all it's uninhibited power.

Yet, ==>

b. God calls us to pursue holiness

Don't misunderstand. It is holiness that God calls us to.

(1) Word "holy" = ἅγιος

Same word that's translated "saint" t/o t/NT. Every Xn is a saint because every Xn is positionally holy because of t/imputed right. of JC.

(a) At its most basic element t/word means "set apart"

As it relates to God, it means that He is perfectly set apart from anything and everything else in the creation, including sin. As it relates to us, we are to be set apart from sin unto righteousness.

What we see here is that==>

(2) God's calling is a holy calling

But like the holy One who called you . . .

(a) What is the "call" of God

There is in theology what we call the ==>

i. External and Internal Call to Salvation

The external call of the Gospel is that which goes out to everybody. IOW - when a preacher preaches t/gospel to a mass of people everyone who is listening is subject to the external call.

The internal call is that work of t/HS on the heart that causes the sinner to respond in faith.

*** Example of both is found in Acts 16**

Apostle Paul (Silas, Timothy, Luke) is in Philippi. They find no synagogue there (took what was called a "minyan," a min. of 10 men), so in keeping with the practice of the Jews during the exile, Paul goes to t/river & finds a group of women who were there gathered for prayer. He preaches the gospel to this group of women. That's the external call;

each & every one of them heard. Then in v. 14 we read that God opened t/heart of a woman by name of Lydia so that she could respond to the message & be saved. That's the internal call.

What Jesus referred to in Matt. 22:14 when he said that==>

. . . many are called but few are chosen.

That's what it means when Peter says

But like the holy One who called you . . .

To be called in that sense is not only to hear w/the ears, but hear w/the heart. Note what it also says==>

. . . be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

(b) You can't separate the call of God to salvation from the call of God to holiness (They are inextricably connected)

1 Thessalonians 4:7 **For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification** (ἀγιοσμος)

Ephesians 1:3-4 **3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be** (ἅγιος) **holy and blameless before Him.**

This focus by Peter on God's sov. calling is one reason why we are to be holy. He is a holy God & He calls us as his people to share in his nature, in that which delights him as opposed to that which he despises.

c. What does it mean for us to be "holy?"

What does it mean when it says ==>

. . . like the holy One who called you, be holy yourselves . . .

We noted what it means that God is holy. But what does it mean that we be holy? We obviously cannot be holy in the exact same way as God. To do so would be to be God.

"In bidding us to be holy like himself, the proportion is not that of equals; but we ought to advance in this direction as far as our condition will bear." [Calvin, 47]

(1) The phraseology in the original language is precise

It's ἀλλὰ (but) κατὰ (according to) the Holy One who calls you. Not "in the same way & to the same extent" but "like or in keeping with").

God is the standard for holiness much as the sun is the standard for light. We can't match the light of the sun, but we can approximate it. We can't match t/holiness of God, but we can approximate it; we can strive after that standard.

(2) Again - What does that mean?

"To be holy as God is holy includes a full and pervading holiness that reaches to every aspect of our personalities. It involves not only avoiding outward sin but also maintaining an instinctive delight in "God and his holiness as an undercurrent of heart and mind throughout the day." [Grudem, 79]

"Holiness . . . consists of that internal change or renovation of our souls whereby our minds affections and will are brought into harmony with God."

[A.W. Pink, The Doctrine of Sanctification, 25]

"Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervors, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks, and in willing as God wills." [19th c. Scottish theologian John Brown]

So if you put these 3 defs. together you have a separation from sin unto God & his righteousness // holiness that affects the entirety of our personalities // delight in God & in His holiness // affections & thoughts brought into harmony w/God // thinking & willing as God thinks & wills

d. That's all good and well

It's one thing to know what it means; it's certainly another to put it into practice.

(1) Christians throughout the history of the church have tried to put this into practice in many different ways – some quite disastrous

i. Asceticism (self-denial)

From monks in monasteries living a life of poverty confined in a dark 6x8 cell to men & women who t/o history have engaged in all sorts of religious gymnastics in futile attempt to mortify t/flesh by way of self-denial & self-punishment. In many cases this was an attempt to atone for one's own sin by injuring oneself in some way.

That doesn't work - As far back as the first century TAP dealt with this false religious practice and in Colossians chapt. 2 he wrote==>

These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

ii. The kissing cousin to Asceticism is Legalism

Legalism attempts to relegate all of Xn living to a list of do's and don'ts. TAP also addressed this in Colossians 2 where he talks about false teachers who were pressuring the Colossian Xns to follow a Xnty consisting of ==>

“Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?

Summarizes nicely t/plague of legalism: It attempts to place t/teachings of men in t/place of t/teaching of God & it relegates obedience to dry formalism rather than that which flows from a heart changed by JC.

I want to take a few moments at this point to say something about ==>

* Difference Between Legalism and Biblical Obedience

Unfort., this is t/way it usu. works in t/CH==> *"Did you know that Pete believes that it's sin to work on Sunday? "Oh, that Pete; he's so*

legalistic!" And did you know that Francine believes that it's okay for Christians to drink wine or have a beer?" "That Francine, she's such a liberal!"

We end up being the standard! Anyone who 's more strict than we are when it comes to living t/Xn life is a legalist & those who are not as strict as we are, well we write them off as antinomian.

Let's be clear that as those w/i t/Reformation tradition, our standard is t/Bible. Principle of Sola Scriptura. There is liberty for t/Xn on those things that are o/s of t/authority of Scripture.

But what about those things that the Bible does uphold? Can we still be legalistic on those things? Of course. I think that to great extent, it's t/difference between working out of t/flesh or working out of t/Spirit.

True Righteousness is spiritual; it comes out of the heart. Legalism is fleshly; it comes out of the flesh.

Here's an example. Living in the Northeast I get concerned that t/months of May - Sept. are basically viewed by some Xns as "summer break." We break from everything, even our assembly in t/CH. Mind-set that, "Summer's here. We can do things, enjoy the weather, play some games, & we'll get back to being involved in church when the weather gets bad and there's nothing else to do." I believe that attitude grieves God. I understand that folks take vacations and what not; that's not what I'm talking about.

We could go beyond that issue & talk about CH involvement in general. There exists a signif. amount of people in t/CH that are pew potatoes. Here: we have a sig. number who attend CH anywhere from 25 to 50% of t/time. We could come down on people like that & I could pontificate from t/pulpit that this is terrible & you need to be here or we will remove your name from membership (on and on). We could be a CH of peer pressure where you will feel real guilty if you're perceived (rightly or

wrongly) of being a slacker as a Xn. That approach would make some people force themselves to toe the line even though they don't want to. And if you did that & if t/leadership was pleased that you forced yourself out of guilt & peer pressure to conform, I think that would be a pretty good indication of being legalistic.

Remember, true righteousness is biblical and spiritual. IOW - It's a heart issue. So here's how I would deal with this same issue in a non-legalistic way. I would say, "Listen, the Bible is clear that a genuine Xn is to be plugged into a good local church. That not only assumes coming on Sunday, it also assumes regular involvement beyond one day per week. (I know there are exceptions: bad health; some sort of extra-ordinary personal or family situation) – but for t/majority of Xns this is the case.

If you're not active & consistent in t/CH, my question is this: You know that this is the right thing to do; it's what God tells us to do through His Word & you're not doing it. My question is, "what's going on in your heart & life that is preventing you from doing so? Listen: I don't; want to move you with guilt or peer-pressure. You could respond out of guilt & obligation, sit here 52 weeks out of t/year & still have at t/heart issues that you've never dealt with. Someone could score 100% on their involvement in CH and in their heart resent that; could be sitting here every Sunday saying, "I really don't want to be here; I'd rather be home sleeping or watching football." So, it's a heart issue. Leadership of t/CH & t/people in it need to address these sorts of things from t/Bible & from t/heart.

Holiness of life is holiness of heart; it doesn't come by way of legalism - even a legalism that is in principle basically biblical.

iii. The opposite of legalism is Antinomianism

Antinomianism says, "What's the use in trying? We are going to sin anyway, so let's sin that grace may abound!" "After all, if God's grace covers all sin, then if you sin more you get more grace." (saw last wk.)

Of course, we saw last week that the very nature of salvation and our union w/Christ demands that we not dare approach God in this way.

To be a saint, is to be ἅγιος, holy. You cannot trust X for salvation w/o trusting him also for holiness.

In 1692, Walter Marshall wrote about those who try to have X cheap:

"What a strange kind of salvation do they desire that care not for holiness . . . They would be saved by Christ and yet be out of Christ in a fleshly state. . . They would have their sins forgiven, not that they may walk with God in love . . . but that they may practice their enmity against him without any fear of punishment." [cited in Pink, The Doctrine of Sanctification, 29]

Jude wrote about this in his little letter and said that to turn grace into a license to sin is tantamount to a denial of JC.

iv. Mysticism

Mysticism would say that personal holiness comes by way of a subsequent to salvation experience; having a vision or some sort of ecstatic experience w/God. Found. of God's Word & sound doctrine falls by t/wayside into the weeds.

Again we see TAP addressing this in t/Second chapt. of Colossians==>

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement (false humility) and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, (that is, JC).

History of t/CH is filled w/the wreckage of lives that have been deceived by those who promote a mystical, purely subjective approach to spirituality. Fodder for cults & all sorts of heretical doctrines, not to mention those men & women who have made shipwreck of their faith.

v. Quietism & Pietism Movements of the 17th-18th c.

While t/Pietistic movt. wasn't all bad, it did help to spawn things such as the "Victorious Life Movt" and the concept that there are two classes of

Xns (1st class and 2nd class). The first class Xns are t/spiritual ones; t/2d class Xns are t/carnal ones.

For many, the key to Xn living & personal holiness is to Let go and let God. "Don't strive; that's a work of t/flesh, rather discover t/secret of holiness & rest in that through t/Spirit." Problem was, few were honest enough to admit that they couldn't find that secret of holiness lest they be deemed Xn-second class.

This sort of theology nearly led Harry Ironside, former pastor of Moody Memorial CH, to a nervous breakdown.

J.I. Packer, in his preface to John Owen's work Sin and Temptation wrote that it nearly cost him his sanity as well.

"The higher Christian life as I was conceiving it was an unreality, a will-o-the-wisp which no one has ever laid hold of at all."

I had my own experience with this as a new Xn. An older Xn man was working w/me & kept trying to instill in me t/secret to victorious living & when I would yet admit my struggles with sin he would admonish me. One day, he looked at me & said, "I don't know what it is Tony. There's something w/you that just isn't working?" Imagine how that made me feel.

Christians are still searching for the secret. Conferences people attend; bible teachers they follow; Books that are written (books that make their rounds through CHs from Maine to CA) all in pursuit of holiness, purpose in life, victory over sin.

e. A Balanced Approach to Holiness

(1) Starts with taking sin seriously (principle of the Reformation)

Reformers took God's grace seriously because they took sin seriously. They understood the holiness of God (so foundational). Foundational to evangelism. Whenever you see a religion or a person who thinks that being a good person can earn them brownie points that win a ticket to heaven please understand that religion or person doesn't have a clue about the holiness of God and the seriousness of sin!

(2) What Christ Has Done for Us (x3)

(a) Knowing Our Union with Christ

(b) Knowing our Positional Holiness

(c) Christ's Active VS. Passive Obedience

(3) What We are to Do (Phil. 2:12-13 principle)

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

We don't have time this week . . .