

# Gospel Holiness

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] right so right towards the the back of our bibles the letter of first peter chapter 1 verses 13 to 21 so we've been thinking together as a church for the last number of weeks about what is the gospel what do we believe about the gospel and then what kind of life should that create in an individual and in a church last week we thought about humility that as we think about all that jesus has done for us that it should humble us and cause us to humbly seek to serve others this week the gospel creates holiness so we're going to read first peter 1 verse 13 to 21 and let's again hear god's word therefore with minds that are alert and fully sober set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when jesus christ is revealed at his coming as obedient children do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance 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 since you call on a father who judges each person's work impartially live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear 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 he was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for your sake through him you believe in god who raised him from the dead and glorified him and so your faith and hope are in god amen so as we begin i want us to think about the life of an exile some of you will be very familiar with the highland clearances a very dark period in scottish history in the mid 19th century when people who had worked the land for generations were forcibly removed to make way for sheep that were more profitable and so they were sent off on ships off to the new world to america and places like that and as they went they sang songs and they wrote poetry and those songs and that poetry spoke of lament and it spoke of loss the loss of a home that the vast majority of them would never ever see again but one of the interesting things to know about these highlanders who who were forced to leave is that they kept preserved their culture and their identity they retained their language they retained their practices they lived as exiled highlanders and and pushing 200 years later you can still find communities of exiled highlanders around the world and they will still be engaged in highland games and the light peter is writing to the christian church here and he says to them in chapter 1 in verse 1 you are god's elect you are exiles so the church are told you are exiles of heaven heaven is your true home he was writing to a group of christians who were because of their faith living on the margins of society beginning to feel the squeeze

of opposition and so he writes this letter to encourage them to say keep your culture and your identity identity the culture of heaven the identity that you have because you've been saved by jesus set your hearts on him and live holy lives in ephesians chapter 1 and verse 4 when paul writes paul writes a letter to a different church he reminds them in his introduction that one of the reasons jesus came and died to save people was to save people was to save people holy and that's what we're going to think about today this reality that if we are a people who treasure god's saving grace then we will care deeply to pursue holiness knowing that without holiness it's impossible to see god and just as peter writes this letter to encourage these exiles of heaven in the backdrop of their cultural chaos so we find ourselves in the 21st century still surrounded by cultural chaos but being called to live out our identity as citizens of heaven to live a culture of faith and hope and love to live in god's grace and to live out of god's truth as we find it in god's word and so we're going to think about this reality that one of the goals for which jesus came and died is so that churches and christians would be committed to the gospel of god's grace and committed to pursuing godliness and holiness and holiness and we're going to think about what that means this idea of being set apart for god and set apart to live in obedience to him there are three things from our reading in verses 13 to 21 i want to draw your attention to in thinking about um being holy the first is this to be

holy we need to fix our hope on jesus so look with me again at verse 13 where we're told therefore with minds that are alert and fully sober set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when jesus christ is revealed at his coming so the verse begins with a therefore and whenever there's a therefore we ask what's the there for therefore and it's there to connect us to this great section of thanksgiving that we didn't read in verses 3 to 12 but if you look with me at verse 3 begins with praise praise be to the god and father of our lord jesus christ and then it goes on in his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope and that living hope comes through the resurrection of jesus christ from the dead so because jesus is alive christians have a living hope and the rest of this thanksgiving it speaks about the promise of eternal rewards the promise of future salvation the reality of life with christ this is our living hope and peter then says therefore because these things are true because this hope is is real therefore set your hope fully on grace still to come set your hope on future grace set your hope on the return of christ make the goal of your life be the desire to see jesus and to be with jesus and to enjoy jesus forever and he says then because of the resurrection you can bank on this hope this future hope this isn't wishful thinking this is certain hope based on the historic event of the resurrection because jesus is alive we have living hope and so the

question then becomes well what does this future hope have to do with how i live today how does this future hope of of the return of jesus make a difference to my life of obedience and holiness let's go back to verse 13 where peter in a sense reminds us that holiness is a battle for the mind and for the will our holiness will involve right thinking so peter says to them you know therefore wait with hope but he also tells them to wait with minds that are alert and fully sober wait with hope wait with holiness the idea of alerts is the idea of being ready for action being ready for battle the idea of being fully sober the idea of thinking clearly living self-controlled lives recognizing the battle for holiness is a battle for our minds thinking about this first i started thinking about those images that we see in the news from time to time of when maybe a reporter goes um on a tour with with let's say un peacekeepers you know so they're in hostile territory um and they're they're maybe in the armored convoy and what do you see there you see soldiers who've got their bulletproof vests on they've got their helmets on and you see them constantly scanning the horizon they are fully alert because they know an attack could come from any corner from anywhere and so for us in the battle with holiness we need to be alert and fully sober jesus told a whole range of parables on that theme of be ready be watchful be serving always in light of the fact that he is the king he is the master who will one day return and he wants to find his servants doing his will so because we know jesus is coming back we are to choose the way of obedience so as christians we put on the full armor of god as christians we are to stay alert to temptation and spiritual attack some of that comes from within that battle that rages because of our sinful nature but also those temptations that come from outside of us temptations that we see in the world temptation that comes from the devil we wait with hope and we wait with holiness our future hope our future home in heaven what's that going to be like it's going to be a holy place heaven is a holy place there is no sin in heaven there is no anger in heaven there is no jealousy in heaven there is no pride in heaven so if our hope is a holy place then we're being asked to live holy lives in preparation for that that's what jesus has secured for us that's what we're being prepared for and so we're called to live holy lives and bearing in mind that this is a battle for our mind and for our will one of the things that we need to learn as christians is constantly to be talking to ourselves in the sense of preaching the gospel to ourselves when we find ourselves in a moment of temptation in a moment of trial we need to talk to ourselves to remind ourselves jesus is better and his reward is greater than what this temptation is offering me when we are going through trials we need to remember following jesus and his reward is absolutely worth it we need to let the word of christ dwell in us richly so that when we are faced with a decision we're asking the question how am i going to obey jesus and his word in this moment so we need to talk to ourselves if we are to pursue holiness

there's one image and if our projectors were working we would we would have sung about christ our sure and steady anchor but but think about this if our hope anchors on something you know we all want our life to to be governed by something we're all living for something so if our hope is anchored and that anchor connects us to what we love most if it ties us to that sets the pattern for our life one question that we always need to be asking and reflecting where is my hope today where is my hope anchored today what's the focus for my life and peter is saying to us to be holy is to have our hope fully anchored in jesus and his grace there'd be that gravitational pull towards him that he would be directing the course of our lives towards love and holiness motivated by the reality

of future hope and future reward so to be holy we are to fix our hope on jesus he's thinking about our minds to be holy secondly we are to fix our identity on jesus this is verses 14 to 17 so again just to think big picture for a moment to ask the question why did if you're a christian why did god save you if you're not a christian why would god save you what would be his purpose in saving you why does god in the gospel take an enemy of god somebody deserving of god's wrath why does god send his son jesus to die for us to take god's wrath for us to reconcile us to himself to justify us to adopt us into his family why does he do it again to go back to the book of ephesians in part to make us holy we have a new life and we have a new identity first peter chapter 2 verse 9 if you turn over a page you will find this wonderful description used of the old testament believer used of the new testament believer 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 darkness into his wonderful light totally transformed identity to reflect to display the glory of god to draw others to him so think about this for a first century christian so all of the folks that peter is writing to so if he's writing to people who've recently become followers of jesus from a jewish background they are absolutely outsiders in their community they're not believing that the law saves them they're not doing the same rituals they're not using the food laws in the same way perhaps but if he's writing to people who've been saved and they're from a roman background they're also outsiders in roman culture because they're not saying caesar's lord they're saying jesus is lord they're not worshipping a whole bunch of different idols they're worshipping the one true and living god through jesus his son and so they are beginning to feel the weight of being outsiders to be pushed to the margins this is part of the cost of discipleship and some of us know this perhaps if we're the only christian in our family perhaps we're christians from a part of the world where it's very difficult to be a follower of jesus and so we feel the weight of this

so the question then is this well why why be holy if it's going to mean things like mockery if it's going to mean that the faith that we have is going to be misunderstood if perhaps it's going to be missing out on certain things missing out on certain friendships missing out on certain promotions perhaps or to go even more extreme and to think about people all around the world why be holy if it means being sent to prison why be holy if it means your whole family and community want nothing to do with you and in fact would like to kill you why be holy and so peter wants to encourage a group of believers who are feeling the weight of that and what he wants to encourage them with is to remember their true identity saying to them be who you truly are in christ so let's see how he says that what is our identity as christians peter says in verse 14 you are obedient children as obedient children do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance but just as he has called you as holy so be holy in all you do that's who we're called to be obedient children living holy lives because the father who called us is holy so we read earlier in leuiticus and leuiticus in 19 verse 2 be holy because i am holy is something of a motto verse in the book of leuiticus so the old testament israelites they were chosen by god's grace and they were set apart among the nations to be his people to live lives of worship and obedience and because they were god's people and because god is holy they were told to be holy and the same is absolutely true of the church in every age and generation it's made plain in first peter 2 verse 9 and so because that's true that peter says in verse 14 we are no longer to conform to our evil desires why because that's no longer who we truly are so so we don't get comfortable with sin anymore and we don't let the world squeeze us into its mold rather we show sin no mercy and we determine to live in faith and obedience so peter says to them you know just as as children physically share the characteristics of their parents for better or for worse just as children learn by copying and just as we expect children to take on the family values that they've been brought up in so it is in god's family our god is a holy father his children must be holy that is an essential family value within god's church sometimes we ask the question and it's an important question what's the will of god for my life well again paul cuts through a lot of that confusion in first thessalonians 4 verse 3 when he says it is god's will that you be sanctified that you be set apart and that you live holy lives it's god's desire for his children verse 17 since you call on a father who judges each person's work impartially live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear so just as jesus our elder brother lived his life determined at every point to honour his father and to obey his commands and to fear god rather than live with the fear of man and to follow the law of love at every turn so he sets a pattern for us

[ 20 : 17 ] as his brothers and sisters in the church so we understand that when my identity it is shaped by jesus that has implications for how i live and act and speak i want to please my father in heaven i want to follow in the footsteps of jesus remembering jesus is our saviour but not just our

saviour he is also our role model he shows us what holiness looks like and we're reminded in verses 17 in verse 17 that when i fear and honour my father in heaven it's his judgment of me that counts it's his opinion of me that counts he is the one whose approval i want to live for and by extension that means living as a foreigner in the world because this world is not our true home so to be holy we need to fix our identity on who we truly are and so we need to again learn to talk to ourselves who am i you know there are so many voices in our culture that want to tell us who we are as christians we need to hear god speak in his word saying to us if you are in christ you're a new creation if you are in christ you're a child of god if you are in christ you are saved to be holy and don't we see how this matters then for our everyday life so leuiticus 19 see how comprehensive god's view of holiness is our words our actions our relationships our workplace our sense of justice and mercy and care for the poor all wrapped up in the reality that i'm an obedient child of god and so i want to live his way so we pursue holiness peter says so that we can honor our holy father but we also choose holiness for the sake of our mission we could go back to first peter 2 verse 9 for a moment where he tells tells him this is who you are this is how you are to live so that you may declare god's praises for the sake of the world who is watching we need to show people truly what is god like is jesus good and true we also remember the words of the great commission matthew 28 jesus said go and make disciples of all nations and after talking about baptizing people he said teaching them to observe and to obey all that i have commanded so obedience and holiness is built into our life as disciples god wants the world to know jesus and to believe in jesus and to obey jesus and so we have to encourage one another to obey jesus and we have to show others in our obedience in our love the goodness and the beauty of our god we are in a very real way i think the lens through which the gospel is going to be read people are going to look at jesus through the lens of our character our lives and that's something we need to think about when it comes to our holiness as a church and as christians finally to be holy having fixed our hope on jesus and fixed our identity on jesus to be holy we need to fix our heart on jesus so here's a question whenever we're thinking about holiness it's really important to think how am i going to avoid that stereotype of holiness that really puts people off that comes across as really critical and judgmental

where it's all about a long list of do's and don'ts or where it just seems like dull duty how can we actually love the idea of holiness how can we see that it's good news for us how can we make it seem beautiful to others it's a really important question and the answer is only by the power of the gospel it's only because jesus has come to bring this wonderful redemption and it's only as we fix our hearts on what jesus has done for us and continues to do for us that will be empowered and motivated towards holiness and obedience so let's look at verse 18 first of all to notice something that we are redeemed from what does jesus redeem us from for you know 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 you've been redeemed from an empty way of life so that's either so thinking about this background here that's either a group of christians who've been saved out of a roman background and they've been saved from the false worship of idols and empty sacrifices or there's folks from a jewish background and they've been saved from a religion based entirely on law do this do that and if you do well enough maybe god will be pleased and what peter says is he cuts through either of those and says that they're both empty any attempt to be holy and good enough by ourselves for a holy god will never be enough and so he's rescuing us here from a temptation so we hear we need we need to be more holy he's saving us simply from saying okay what i need to do is i need to roll my sleeves up i need more willpower i need more resolution that the reality is what we need to be holy is we need spiritual resurrection nothing short of that will empower or lead to holiness so we're redeemed from an empty way of life and we are redeemed by something first of all i want us to notice that we're redeemed by or in line with the eternal plan of god look at verse 20 having spoken having spoken about jesus as the lamb without blemish or defect we're told he was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for your sake so just to remind us that in the eternal plan the eternal will of god jesus jesus the sinless son of god was chosen to be a savior for unholy unfaithful unwilling sinners like us and then in the fullness of god's time he was revealed in the last times he was revealed in verse 21 as the savior to believe in that because he has died and he has been raised again and god has glorified him and we believe in him and our faith and our hope are in god so we're redeemed by or according to god's eternal plan of salvation that's a wonderful privilege and we've been redeemed verse 19 with the precious blood of christ in the evenings we've been thinking about the book of exodus and we get to the passover

we'll be there in a couple of weeks that's a powerful picture so so god announces that judgment is going to come upon egypt but there is a way for israel to be spared the judgment and that's through this passover lamb this pure lamb that is to be looked after and then it is to be killed and the blood is to be sprinkled so that on the night when the judgment of god passes through egypt and falls on egypt it will pass over the houses of israel why not because they were sinless and perfect but because the judgment has fallen on the passover lamb the lamb has died so they might be redeemed the lamb has been the sacrifice who has taken sin who has turned away the anger of god so that god's people might go free that's a wonderful picture of what jesus does for us on the cross jesus takes the judgment of god so we might be forgiven and set free and set free to become that kingdom of priests to become that holy nation to become that people who don't live for ourselves rather we live for the glory of god the one who loved us and gave his son for us and so it becomes clear then that to be holy we must first be born again we need the saving work of god through jesus in our hearts and lives so we need to come to jesus and then to live these holy lives we must fix our hearts on jesus again to preach the gospel into our hearts every day so that we be pursuing holiness and obedience not as a sense of dull duty not thinking we need to work hard enough to earn it but because we are children of grace and because of a profound sense of gratitude for what god has done in sending jesus to be our savior so as we draw this to conclusion let's ask ourselves the question am i ready to live as an exile am i ready to choose the way of holiness so i was thinking about this week you know thinking about those highlanders setting sail in their boats you know having bidden a tearful farewell to those few who remain behind and seeing the land pass on the horizon they would all have been faced with a choice knowing you're heading to the new world you've got a choice you can move on you can forget the old ways maybe the new ways are better or that's what so many of them did they can constantly hear the call of home and they'll protect their culture and they'll treasure their sense of identity even as they live as exiles you and i are called to our own choice today and every day first of all to hear the call of the gospel to hear the voice of jesus calling us away calling us out of empty ways calling us out of those evil desires so that we would receive his redemption would receive his rescue from our slavery from sin that we be changed from the inside out so that we would live as a child of god and a citizen of heaven and then we're called then to live out the culture of the gospel to take seriously our call to be obedient children not just in some of life but in all of life not just when it's easy but when it's hard following jesus pattern of love walking in the footsteps of jesus our elder brother guided by god's word to recognize how to obey so let's fix our eyes on jesus let him be our hope let him be the one our life is centered on let our hearts be fixed on him so that we would truly live as exiles of heaven let's pray together once again father god we thank you for this wonderful privilege that by faith in jesus we can live we can live as obedient children that we can dare to call you father lord thank you for reminding us that your call to save us also comes with a call to live holy and obedient lives lord we recognize how often we are inconsistent we recognize how easy we can find it to ignore those parts of your word that challenge us or make us feel uncomfortable lord we pray that you would fix our eyes on jesus that he would be our savior he would be our pattern that we be reading your word that the spirit would be guiding us to know what obedience looks like day by day lord that we would want to honor and fear you as our father that we want to display your glory and your goodness in our lives that we want our church to be a place marked by genuine holiness not by a legalistic set of rules and regulations or a sense of dull duty but a sense of living joy because we have a living hope that our holiness would be a living one following the way of jesus and his way of love and we pray in jesus name that you would help us so that we might glorify you amen