

Talk the Talk, Walk the Walk - 1 Peter 1:13-2:3

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[0 : 0 0] Go along, that's 1 Peter chapter 1, and that's on page 1217 of the Church Red Bibles. 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 is 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. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart.

[1 : 3 4] For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, though or through the living and enduring word of God. For all people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word that was preached to you. Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation. Now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Thank you, Dan. Good morning, everyone.

Pleasure to be with you again this morning. Before we begin, let's just go to the Lord in a word of prayer. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for the freedom that we have to gather in your name without interruption, without fear of harassment or persecution.

[2 : 5 3] Help us not to take that freedom for granted, Lord, but help us to use it in this very moment to lift our voices and lift our hearts and lift our minds to be elevated in our worship.

Holy Spirit, we ask that you would continue to direct us in our worship, and we ask that you would help me as I, as an imperfect vessel, bring your perfect word.

So whatever has to be said of you, Lord, may it be lifted up. May my own words be forgotten, but may your words live forever. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

About ten years ago, Seneca and I were still dating, and I took a trip with her and her family to visit her dad's relatives in Wisconsin, in the middle part of the U.S., and we took a day trip to see Lake Michigan, which is basically a large ocean in the middle of America.

And on the shore, Seneca's dad picks up a rock, and he turns to me and he says, how many stones can you skip across the lake? Now, unknown to me, Seneca's family had an in-joke, that only men who could do a certain number of skips across the lake would be worthy of marrying one of their daughters.

[4 : 03] So naturally, I accepted the challenge, stone skipping, not marriage, and based on nothing more than testosterone and male ego, proceeded to do my worst. And I really mean that.

Inconsequential as it was in the end, I portrayed myself as being good at doing this particular thing I'd been challenged to do, skipping stones. I was not good. It became obvious by my efforts that I was not good at doing this thing.

You see, I talked a big game, even for something so trivial, but I couldn't back it up. Thankfully, a few months later, Tim exercised a kind of mercy and graciously allowed me to marry his daughter, so at least that went in the right direction in the end.

But basically today, Peter is telling us, let's not just talk a big game, but let's walk the walk, let's back it up. So last week, we learned that we were shielded, that we're being kept, that our inheritance is guaranteed, that if you follow Jesus Christ and you submit to him, you can call yourself a Christian.

This week, we're going to start looking at the way we ought to live because we're Christians. So we don't just talk the talk, we walk the walk. And we're going to look at three things that we ought to see in our lives, that we ought to model out for other people.

[5 : 17] If you have one of the handouts, it's in front of you. Otherwise, feel free to take notes. Firstly, we're going to see that we ought to be holy. Secondly, that we ought to be reverent.

And thirdly, that we ought to be loving. So we ought to be holy, reverent, and loving. Let's jump into the first one. I actually want to start by looking at verses 15 and 16, this idea of what it means to be holy.

So Peter writes, Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. For it is written, and he quotes the Old Testament, Be holy, because I, the Lord, am holy.

Now that verse is the anchor of this whole section. So underline it, draw a circle around it, write something in the margin. The first reason that we ought to live lives that are good and righteous and God-honoring is that God himself is holy.

Now, holy is a mysterious-sounding word. For some reason, I always think of incense when I hear the word holy. It's probably just my background. Maybe some of you think that too. But it's not really a mysterious idea.

[6 : 26] As we were just singing about, holiness basically means being set apart from sin or being set aside from sin. So God is holy because God is perfectly without sin, completely separated from sin.

He has nothing to do with sin because of his very nature. The prophet Isaiah, in his vision, had a vision of God sitting on his throne and angels hovering around him and covering their eyes because they couldn't look upon the holiness of God and singing, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.

And like us, Isaiah knew he was a sinner. And he knew that sinners cannot enter into relationship with the holy God unless that holy God reaches out and does something.

Ultimately, he did that by sending his own son. To pay the penalty for that sin. Your sin, my sin, and the sin of all who would follow him.

One writer puts it this way. How hateful must sin be to God for him to punish it with the death of his own son. And because that holy God reached out, because that holiness led him to conquer sin and bring us to him, God tells us here, through his servant Peter, be holy, for I am holy.

[7 : 57] You call yourself my child? Act like it. God calls us to be different from the world because he is different. So how do we act like it?

Well, verse 13 tells us to have minds that are alert and fully sober. It doesn't necessarily come across very clearly in the translation we're using this morning, but other translations say this, prepare your mind for action.

Prepare your mind for action. Get ready. That's an interesting idea. The phrase actually goes back to this practice when you were going on a long journey, on camel or on horseback, that you would actually tie up your robe around your waist so that it wouldn't dangle and trip either you or the horse up, which would end very badly for both of you.

Basically, it's like getting ready to run a race. For instance, Alex ran in the New York City Marathon. Was it last year? Yeah, last year. And before he started the race, he made sure he was dressed appropriately to run in the race.

He didn't go to the starting line and try and run 26 miles wearing a full suit of medieval armor and carrying a 50-pound bag of spuds. That's an image for you, isn't it, Alex?

[9 : 10] So we're to make sure we have the right clothes on, that we have those things on us that means we can run this race. We're to make our minds, Peter says, alert and sober, free from intoxication, free from anything that's going to cloud you and prevent you seeing the truth.

This hope, this grace, Peter says, that will truly be ours when we go to be with Jesus. We have to make sure, friends, we're not wearing anything or carrying anything that we shouldn't be.

Look at verse 14. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. That word desires, another way to put it would be lusts.

Lusts. What was it you lusted after before you became a Christian? For me, it was my career. It was ambition. And still something I have to watch out for.

Just like we were singing and just like Sam was talking about, this isn't a once and done process. These are things you must learn to do throughout your life. And one thing I've had to learn to do is when I look at the next promotion or the next competition for promotion, I have to think carefully, why do I want this?

[10 : 29] Is it because I want more money? Is it because I want more position? Power? Authority? A better pension? That last one is true, but that's okay.

I have to think carefully. Do I want to do this because it glorifies God? And I can do it in such a way that actually points others towards Jesus.

By being the best civil servant I can be. By being the best teacher, the best mechanic, the best student, the best father, the best mother, whatever it is.

I've had to tie up that loose end to keep watch on it because it still might trip me up if I don't watch it. That was my former ignorance, one translation puts it.

Before, I didn't know any better. I was lost, dead in my sin, Paul says. But now, God is my father. I do know better.

[11 : 30] Because I talk the talk, I have to walk the walk. So what is it that trips you up? What is it that you tend to struggle with? And I could mention lots of things here, but here's just a few.

Just completely random thoughts. Maybe they hit home, maybe they don't. Are you addicted to comfort or entertainment? In your spare time, do you automatically glue yourself to your iPhone or Netflix?

Or do you open your Bible and you read and listen to what the Lord has to say? How about this? This happened to me this morning when I was driving here.

When someone calls you out on something bad you've done or said. In this case, it was the driver who came across the intersection. Is your first reaction to get your back up?

To get defensive? Well, I did the right thing. I don't know what that guy's problem is. Or do you freely admit your fault? Do you freely admit, I can do better and humble yourself?

[12 : 36] How about this one? I've seen a lot of this lately. When you're on social media, when you're on Facebook, Twitter, whatever, do you use that freedom of speech that we were just praying about to spread anger and to spread outrage?

You know, the roads in this country are disgrace. It's disgraceful what the government is doing. I swear, disgraceful is the most popular word in Irish people's lexicon. Or do you use that freedom of speech to point others towards the tender love of Jesus?

Do you use a platform of speech not to push an agenda or grind an axe, but to actually demonstrate what it looks like to be a Christian?

In other words, friend, do you look any different from the world around you? Are you holy in the things that you do? Do you have a desire to grow in this holiness?

And again, you won't get this perfect because we're all imperfect. But what path are you on? Do you blend into the background of self-absorption that the rest of the world seems to be mired in?

[13 : 46] One writer put it this way, if you were put on trial for being holy, would there be enough evidence to convict you? As with all things, don't look to your own efforts.

Yet not I, but Christ in me. Look to Christ. Look to Jesus who set aside his heavenly rights and his heavenly dwelling and he made himself nothing to become the suffering servant who would set you free.

Jesus didn't come into the world so that we would look like the rest of the world. Jesus came into this world that we would be set apart from this world.

So don't just talk the talk. Walk the walk as well. So we ought to be holy. Secondly, we ought to be reverent. 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.

Have you ever said this? You can't judge me. Only God will judge me. You're absolutely right. He will. He'll ask you, first of all, what did you say about my son?

[15 : 02] Who did you say he is? And if you call upon him as Lord Jesus, he'll ask you, what did you do in my son's name? Jesus said that every person will have to give an account, friends, for every idle word and every idle thought that they've ever uttered, that they've ever thought.

You could nearly put it this way. Because you're a Christian, live your life in such a way, this reverent fear, that you show the proper respect and deference towards God.

Because Peter says he's an impartial judge. He'll ask you to give an account for being his servant. And that's pretty much what reverent fear means. Having an appropriate sense of who God is versus who we are.

Not trembling, not cowering in a corner like you're terrified of, I don't know, spiders, the dark, heights, whatever the case might be. It's not that kind of fear. It means respecting the difference between us and God.

Honoring him and living lives that honour him. I'll illustrate this with a personal example. My dad and I were very close. I loved him and I respected him.

[16 : 17] And he'd tell me and illustrate to me what to do in order to show that I actually was part of this family, that I would prove myself to be part of this family. And I respected that. I respected his direction and his advice and his opinion.

And I remember once when I was going through a fairly long period of unemployment, I was naturally pretty depressed. If you've been unemployed, you understand that feeling. I was depressed and discouraged and I was sort of venting this to dad on the telephone.

And he said, it's all right, Dan. You're an Usthäzen. You'll get there. You're an Usthäzen. You'll get there. Now, he wasn't just telling me to sit back and let it happen.

He was saying that he saw certain qualities in me that he saw in himself, saw in his brothers, saw in his father, saw in his grandfather, things like hard work and perseverance and determination.

What he was saying was, keep going. Keep going towards the prize. Remember that you're my son and my son ought to run the race in such a way that he'll cross the finishing line.

[17 : 27] That's basically what Peter is saying. You call yourself God's child. Do you run the race in such a way that you will cross the finish line? And this reverend fear, like I said, it's not because we're terrified of God.

That's not what it's about. It's because we know what he's done for us. Look at verses 18 to 19. God redeemed us. That means he ransomed us, bought us, not with currency, not with euro or pounds or whatever's going to exist after Brexit comes through, not with silver or gold, Peter says.

You know the old saying, you're worth your weight in gold. No, you're not. You're worth much more than that to God because the price that had to be paid for your sins and for my sins was the precious blood of his son.

That was the only thing that could clear the debt. So high was that price. And that's what Jesus meant when he said on the cross, remember this, he said it is finished. Not it has begun, not the down payment has been made and now you can enter into a monthly variable installment arrangement.

It is finished. In Greek, tetelestai, it's what they used to stamp on the deed of a house or a mortgage to show you that the debt had been paid completely.

[18 : 47] The debt is discharged, paid in full, nothing left to be collected, final payment made. I lived my life in a certain way because I revered and I respected my dad.

And I wanted to honor him by the way I lived. So how much more ought I honor a God or live a life that honors a God who sent his son and completely eradicated my sinful debt?

Verses 20 and 21, it is through God's own son that we believe. This son who was chosen, the literal word there is foreknown, before the ages began.

If you were here last week, you might remember we talked about this idea of being foreknown. God's desire to be intimate with us goes back to before creation itself and in the same way the son was foreknown by the father.

So think about this. Despite our sin, the father was pleased to crush his son, Isaiah tells us, to bring us into relationship with him based on the same relationship that the father has with his son.

[20 : 02] And now you and I, if we declare that Jesus is Lord, Paul tells us, we are children of God and fellow heirs with Christ in his kingdom.

And despite the fact that Jesus was perfectly divine, totally united with the father, he submitted to the will of the father. He revered and respected the father even though he was and is fully divine and deserved everything with his divine trappings and surroundings.

He deferred to this plan to save lost people. See, being himself God, friends, Jesus knew the only way that these people can come into relationship with God is if God reaches out.

And so in full agreement with this plan that was set in motion before the ages began, he voluntarily accepted this role. Taking on human form, he became like us.

He gave us the perfect example of reverence by submitting himself completely and totally to the will of the father. And because of his submission, he was able to declare, it is finished, complete, done.

[21 : 14] friends, we ought to be reverent by honoring God's will for our lives. So we have to ask ourselves, does my life honor God?

When I stand before him and he asks me that question, Dan, what did you do with your life? What did you do with this freedom that I gave you? What will I submit as evidence? Will I say I did things my own way?

I looked to my own strength, Lord. I did the best I could. I spent all my time on my iPhone. I had to tell people about what was going on with the national roads infrastructure.

You know me, Lord. Or will I say, Lord, I honored you because I sacrificed myself daily like your son did. Will I be able to say I walked the walk?

You might ask how do we do that? Well, Peter tells us, our last point. Because we're Christians, we ought to be loving. Verses 22 and 23. Now that we have purified ourselves by obeying the truth, that means now that we're saved, now that we're believers, so that we have sincere love for one another, that means we're saved into a fellowship of believers, not just by ourselves, we're saved into a church.

[22 : 34] Because of these things, we ought to love one another deeply from the heart. We use that word love a lot. We say it to our spouses, to our parents.

The highlight of my day is when Jack or Alice comes up to me and says, I love you daddy. I think that puts a smile on every parent's face. Some of us love our wives cooking, maybe a little too much, speaking for myself.

We can be both meaningful and casual in the way we use the word love. love. But this love, that Peter refers to, is grounded in nothing casual, in nothing flippant.

It is grounded in the precious love of Jesus. We should love one another deeply because we have been born again. We have been resurrected with Christ into new life.

We've heard the good news that Christ came into this world to save sinners among whom we are chief. And this good news, this word, Peter says, is imperishable seed.

[23 : 36] It doesn't die. It just lives. And you see, friends, this is his point. Everything in this world is eventually going to fade away. Your career, my career, my ambitions, your bank account, your favorite political party.

We're like grass, verse 24, and all our glory is like the flowers of the fields. They look good for a season. Maybe they even yield a little bit of fruit in their season.

But eventually they wither and they fall. And none of it lasts forever. The only thing that does, Peter says, is the word of the Lord, the reality that Jesus conquered death and sin and opened the gate so that all who call on the name of the Lord would not die but would live forever.

And that's the point, friends. You don't have to have it all figured out before you come to Jesus. Jesus came. He didn't go straight to the righteous or the self-righteous or the religious or people who had their lives all together.

He went into the home of a prostitute. He went and sat with tax collectors, which is obviously near and dear to my heart. He went and spent time with the most lowly people in society.

[24 : 53] He didn't go to the people who had it figured out. He went to the people who needed a savior, people like you and me. Now look at the first two verses of chapter 2 and then we'll finish.

This is the application. Verse 1, therefore, now that I've told you that, here's what you do. Now that I've told you all these things, this is how you walk the walk.

Peter says, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit and all hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind. Rid yourselves, Peter says.

Pick it up, bundle it up, and throw it away, as far as you can throw it. And the things he says speak for themselves, so I won't unpack each one in detail.

Instead, think about things like this. Again, just some random thoughts. Malice. When someone disagrees with you, or maybe even gives you feedback, or constructive criticism, them, when it looks like they're not in your sight, do you desire to cut them out of your life?

[26 : 04] How about deceit? When there's something you stand to gain, job, money, position, whatever the case might be, when you stand to gain something, do you tell people what they want to hear, so that you get it?

Hypocrisy. Are you sitting here right now thinking, I really hope so and so is paying attention, when there's something God is trying to tell you? How about envy?

When somebody else gets recognized for their gifts, maybe even in the church, maybe even gifts that you have, gifts of teaching, music, leadership, whatever the case might be, when someone else gets recognized for those things, do you envy them for it?

Do you resent them for it? Or slander? If you have a problem with someone in this church, and because I know people, people always have problems with each other, if you have a problem with someone in this church, do you go and talk to them about it face to face?

I've been really meaning to talk to you about something, something in my heart, I need to talk to you about, or do you just gossip behind their back? You see, if I call myself a Christian, friends, Peter puts these in the negative, if I call myself a Christian, but my behavior isn't loving, then, frankly, I'm not acting like a Christian.

[27 : 30] I might be talking the talk, but I'm not walking the walk. I'm focused on my own glory, and all the glories of this life, my career, my money, my house, everything like that, but ultimately, they all fade away, they all fall and die.

God's glory is forever, because you see, Jesus came and there was no malice in him. He didn't come and condemn the world. He came to save the world.

He didn't come and spread deceit, but he told people the truth about God. He wasn't hypocritical, but he perfectly obeyed the will of his father on the road to Calvary.

He was jealous for nothing, except his sheep. He slandered nobody, but spoke to others in love.

He didn't seek to glorify himself, he sought to glorify the father. And we look to that example of love as a way to honor God in our lives, to put other people before ourselves.

[28 : 36] The apostle John puts it this way, we love, because he first loved us. It really is that simple. We love because he first loved us.

This simple idea, verse 2 calls it the spiritual milk, it's pure. It's just like a baby nursed by his mother. Depending on that milk for life, so too our spiritual life depends on this truth, depends on modeling out this holy, reverent, loving nature of Jesus Christ.

Imperfect as it will be, because we're not perfect, we're all fallen. But because he came, and because he first loved us, we ought to love one another.

It's the entire reason we're saved, that love is the great truth of God's gospel. You see, we need to keep our minds focused, friends, on this simple truth, and meditate daily on the word of God, which reminds us of his love.

love. That's why Psalm 1 says that the blessed person who delights in the law of the Lord, who delights to know the things of God, reflects on it day and night, and he or she is like a tree planted by streams of living water which bear fruit.

[29 : 57] Peter writes, this is how we grow up in our salvation. It's how we mature as believers, and you're never mature enough. It doesn't matter if you've been a Christian for 30 years, it doesn't matter if you grew up in a Christian family, or you became a Christian last week, there's always room for us to mature.

This process is ongoing. This process will take the rest of our lives, and we'll just get a small glimpse of what it looks like, until we go and be with him forever. And think about this, every time you have one of these little battles, these things that trip you up, these things that just happen to you in life, these opportunities to demonstrate love, and holiness, and reverence, every time you have one of those moments, and you actually choose the right path, do the God honoring thing, do the loving thing, do the holy thing, hang on to those moments, and hang on to how you think can feel in those moments, because you're going to feel like that for the rest of eternity, when you go to be with God.

So be encouraged, you will fall, but he who began a good work in us, will bring it to completion in the day of Christ Jesus.

This love is how we come to understand and appreciate the depth and the greatness of God and his character. love. We simply have to love one another. And we do this, verse three, because we have tasted the sweetness of the Lord's goodness.

In other words, because we have come to Christ, we have seen the goodness of Christ, we have seen his love, seen his holiness, seen his reverence. In love, God reached down to us, and in love, we ought to reach out to each other.

[31 : 50] Jesus said it as usual, most simply and most profoundly. A new commandment I give to you, love one another. As I have loved you, so also are you to love one another.

And by this, all people will know you are my disciples, if you love one another. Because of what he's done for us, friends, we ought to mimic Christ.

Because he's holy, set apart from sin, we ought to be holy. Because he was reverent and honoured the Father, so ought we do the same. And most of all, because he first loved us, we ought to love one another.

Now after we finish, we're going to sing, and we're going to go to the Lord's table together. And as we go to the Lord's table, we remember the sacrifice of Jesus. We remember the Lamb without blemish, whose body was broken for us.

So when we break the bread, we remember this sacrifice where Jesus was broken. When we take the wine or the juice, we remember the sinless Messiah whose blood was shed for us.

[33 : 03] And we remember the one who shows us holiness, reverence, and love. I don't know your individual circumstances, but you do, and the Lord does.

So we'll pray before we break bread together. But ask this, this is what I'll be asking him. Lord, help me to be holy.

Help me to be reverent. Help me to love the people in this church the way you love them, and the way you love me. Amen. Let's pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, we give you all due glory and praise for what you have done for us by setting aside your heavenly privileges and becoming nothing like us, so that through your death and resurrection you would be ascended to the highest place.

We thank you, Lord, for giving us your word which is so clear and so profound and so simple. We ask you, Lord, to help us in our daily lives with those things that can trip us up.

[34 : 15] Help us to be honest with ourselves. Help us to see those things which don't honor you, those things we have to be putting to death, and help us to simply get rid of them, to model out instead the holiness that you have, Lord, that you hate sin, that you are apart from sin, and help us to do that by revering who you are and respecting who you are and what you've done for us and realizing that our own efforts count for nothing and that ultimately it was only because of the perfect submission of your son that we are able to come to you.

So help us to be humble as we live out these lives and try and be holy and help us most of all, Lord, to be loving because we know of faith, hope, and love, the greatest of these is love. We pray, Lord, that you would really give us a heart for each other, that you would melt our hearts of stone, that you would give us hearts of flesh in you, and that day by day you would help us to grow in this pure spiritual milk that is the word, that you came for people like us, not for perfect people, but that you reached down into a world of darkness, and you came to those who needed you the most, ourselves included.

So as we come together around the table, Lord, we pray that we would remember these truths, and we pray that you would give us a real sense of your presence here this morning, and that in all things, we pray we would say and do and think everything for your glory.

So be with us for the remainder of our time today. We ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to ask the musicians to come back up, and we're going to sing When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, because all that's left to do, when you compare yourself to a holy God, when you compare yourself to what he's done for us, all it's left to do is to look to Christ and to sing songs of worship and to give him glory and praise.

So let's stand together and sing. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.