

BE YE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY

FOLLOW PEACE WITH ALL MEN, AND HOLINESS, WITHOUT WHICH NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD



The topic for this week's Bible study comes straight from the Word of God. As we are moving closer to the end of this dispensation, more than ever we need to leave behind those things we are occupied with every day, and focus on one thing only: we are all looking towards the moment Jesus will leave His heavenly domain, come towards the Earth and then call us to be with Him forever. However, just as flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, so no one who is not holy, will enter God's presence.

We will focus on the words of two New Testament writers, Paul and Peter. Both address the same critical aspect of Christian life, but to different audiences. God's call for holiness in our lives applies to all believers, no matter who, where, and what we are. Christian believers can become very complacent, thinking that their salvation, once assured, requires nothing more from them. However, just as an athlete has to run the race to the end before he can receive a prize, so the believer has to run his spiritual race to the end. Paul writes to the Hebrews, his own people, and gives this instruction:

¹⁴Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. – **Hebrews 12:14**

He uses this metaphor very effectively in chapter 12. We must:

- **run the race** and not walk, stand and sit as is shown in Psalm 1 (Hebrews 12:1);
- **focus on Jesus** (Hebrews 12:2);
- **strive against sin** (Hebrews 12:4);
- **accept and endure chastening** (Hebrews 12:5-11);
- **be strong** (Hebrews 12:12);
- **lead a holy life** (straight paths) (Hebrews 12:13);
- **follow peace** with all others (Hebrews 12:14); and
- **follow holiness** (Hebrews 12:14)

Since the deceiver will always be there to derail him (see the article of 28 May 2021), the believer has to immerse himself in holiness and clean living, without which we will not see the race through to the end.

Peter writes his first letter to the churches scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia and advises his readers:

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

When he writes this, he draws inspiration from the Old Testament. He quotes from the Law:

⁴⁴For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping

thing that creepeth upon the earth. ⁴⁵For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: **ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.** – **Leviticus 11:44-45**

Let us see how he leads his readers to this:

- They are **strangers** (Christians will always be seen as strangers by the unbelieving world.) and are **scattered** (They had to flee from Roman oppression. History proves, even today, how they hid and lived underground.) (1 Peter 1:1);
- They are **elect** (not because of favouritism by God, but because He knew in His omniscience that they would believe, and therefore He saved them (1 Peter 1:2);
- They are **sanctified** (made holy – see our lesson on sanctification) (1 Peter 1:2);
- They have a **lively hope** (1 Peter 1:3) for an **incorruptible inheritance**, reserved for them in heaven (1 Peter 1:4);
- They are **kept going** so that they can be revealed in God's presence (1 Peter 1:5);
- They are tempted by the world now, and their faith is tested, but because they endure, they will take part in the **appearing of Jesus Christ** (1 Peter 1:5-8);
- At the moment of reading the letter, they have not yet seen Him, but they **love and rejoice** (1 Peter 1:8);
- The end of their faith is their salvation. Their reward is seeing Jesus in heaven (1 Peter 1:9-10).

With this in mind, Peter urges them to:

- **gird up** the loins of their minds (1 Peter 1:13) which means that just like you tie your robe around your waste when you prepare for physical labour, they have to tie their minds – their spiritual attitude;
- **be sober** (in their way of thinking, not defiled by anything, as drunk people);
- **hope to the end** (keep the faith, run the race). The end will be the revelation of Jesus Christ; and
- **be obedient** (1 Peter 1:14), unlike when they were still unsaved. They are called to be holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).

CONCLUSION

Sin and holiness cannot live together in the same skin. If you are aware of unrepented sin in your life, confess it and ask for forgiveness. Then ensure that you are not led into temptation again. Remember that we said last week that sin is like the point in the railway line that the devil sets to divert you away from the main line and lead you to sin? Maybe you should read that article again. Our minds are the scene of the greatest battle against sin, as Paul explains:

¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, **holy**, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ²And be not conformed to this world: **but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. – **Romans 12:1-2**

This week, make an effort to fight off sin, be transformed in your mind and above all, strive for holiness, without which we will not see God. Jesus is coming soon. Are you ready?

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. – John 3:16