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1 Peter 1:18-19 “The True Pathway to Holy Living”

Intro. Do you realize that in 2006 George Barna reported that barely one-third of Americans (35%) contend that “God expects you to become holy.” And when asked what it means to be holy, the most common answer was, “I don’t know,” expressed by 21%. Various other answers were given by the others.

Well in v.16 we have a command that is given in both the Old and New Testaments, “Be holy, for I am holy.” That is a very important command, and most people do not realize it, and most people do not even understand what holiness is. Even fewer people understand the pathway to holiness.

But first, what is holiness? It is clear from v.14 that it involves obedience to God, and separation from sinful lusts, which lead to sinful actions. It is living a godly, pure life.

But even if we understand the concept of holiness, we are confronted with another problem. Living a holy life is tough. Many would say it is impossible. There are too many temptations in the world. We have a sin nature. And the devil sure is working against you. So in this text of Scripture the apostle Peter tells us the true pathway of holiness. I hope by the end of this message you will not only be equipped to live a holy life, but also motivated to do so.

Now I want to begin by asking you to do this:

I. REMEMBER THE PROBLEMS WE FACED

In v.18 Peter reminds his readers of the sin problems they once faced. And if you are not yet a believer, these are problems that you now face:

A. We Were Enslaved, Needing Redemption - In v.18 Peter says, “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold...” That is clearly a reference to the redemption of slaves. The ancient world was very familiar with slavery, for it was a common practice. There were probably 60 million slaves in the Empire! Many slaves became Christians and fellowshipped in the local assemblies. One way to be set free from slavery was for someone to purchase your freedom with silver or gold. This is the picture that Peter is alluding to when he mentions the concept of redemption. Therefore, Peter implies that we were once enslaved by something. What were we enslaved to? Titus 3:3 says that at one time we were “enslaved [*douleuo*] to various lusts and pleasures.” Some here today were at one time enslaved to alcohol. You may have been enslaved to immorality. Or you just couldn’t stop lying, stealing, or cussing. If you object, and say you’re not enslaved to sin, then I challenge you to try stopping it even for 1 month.

B. Our Lives Were Aimless - In this text Peter mentions another reason why we needed to be redeemed. In v.18 he mentions “your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers...” The word translated “aimless” (*mataios*) means “useless, of no purpose.” It has the idea of an ineffectual attempt to do something, an unsuccessful effort to attain something. Rom. 6:21 says, “What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the

end of those things is death.” There is nothing quite so meaningless as human life apart from God. Every animal and every plant on this earth serves a purpose. The sun, the moon, and every star in the sky serves a purpose. But man without God is meaningless. Generally, Peter is referring to all the corrupt and sinful customs of their lives. Unsaved people today are blindly living on substitutes.

Unsaved friend, when you are on your death-bed, what profit will there be in all your former sinful delights? What good will they be when you face eternity? All that will be left of your sinful pleasures will be an accusing conscience, and a decaying body. And what purpose will have been served by your accumulation of worldly possessions? You sure can't take it with you. Solomon tried everything the world had to offer. His motto was, “Been there. Done that.” In the end all he could say was, “Vanity! All is vanity!” Would it not grieve any laboring man, to work hard all week, and then get nothing for his labor? Well you can live your whole life following after sinful pleasures and seeking to fulfill worldly ambitions, and what will you have at the end? So much of our life that is spent in the ways of sin is just fruitless vain living.

C. Our Sins Condemned Us – Another time when redemption money was offered was in the case of a criminal or lawbreaker. At times a fine could be paid to secure the release of the offender. So redemption also implies that we are condemned by our sin. How true that is. Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death.” You and I stood under the judgment of God, for the Scripture says “...the soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4). Jn. 3:18 says, “He who does not believe is condemned already....”

II. RECOGNIZE GOD'S ANSWER TO THESE PROBLEMS

What is the answer to these problems? How much would you pay for your spiritual freedom, if you could buy it? What would you be willing to do to secure your pardon from eternal hell? Well before I tell you God's answer, I want to warn you of what is *not* the answer.

A. Your Silver & Gold Cannot Redeem You - Peter says in v.18 that we were not redeemed with silver or gold. Redemption from slavery was purchased with silver or gold, and that was a precious thing in that day. But no amount of silver or gold could pay for our sin. Zeph. 1:18 says, “Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath....” Money cannot save you from physical death, and it certainly cannot save you from eternal death. Man has nothing to offer to God for his own redemption. My friend, what do you have that God needs?

B. Your Traditions Cannot Save You - In v.18 Peter mentions “conduct received by tradition from your fathers.” We were raised in various religious traditions. We knew of no other way to be saved than to just try to do our best at following the rules and rituals of our religion. But we knew we never measured up.

I want you to know that most of the religious traditions that people are brought up in will not save you from either the penalty of sin, or the power of sin. You may make sacrifices; you can inflict pain upon your body; you can be baptized, receive the Lord's Supper, and do many good works, but none of these things will atone for your sin and bring forgiveness.

So how could we be saved from our sin?

C. Only the Blood of Christ Can Redeem You – We are told in Leviticus that “it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11). God never forgave sin apart from blood under the Law. Hebrews, in looking at both the Old Testament and the New Testament said, “Without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). God cannot “forgive” sin by looking the other way and acting as though it never happened. God must punish sin. He said that He will by no means clear the guilty. That is because His holy, righteous nature abhors sin.

So how did Christ secure our freedom and forgiveness?

1. Because He Was Sinless - As v.19 states, Christ was “a lamb without blemish and without spot.” The original Greek places emphasis upon that phrase, “without blemish and without spot.” That is one requirement for it being saving blood. Though Jesus freely associated with sinners, never was He defiled by their sins. Even His most spiteful enemies could find no fault in Him. Boldly He challenged them with the question, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (Jn. 8:46). If Jesus had sinned, His would have been the blood of a sinner. But because He never sinned, He could die for the sins of others.

Yet a 2006 Barna report of unchurched Americans indicated that 51 percent believe that Jesus Christ sinned while He lived on earth. So they may question my statement that Jesus never sinned. Well let me tell you who would know. I realize that when people around the preacher, they tend to put on their best behavior. So I don’t know your faults very well. But I will tell you who does. Your spouse knows. Your children know. People who live with you know. Well Simon Peter lived with Jesus Christ for three years. And he said that Jesus was without blemish and without spot. He was absolutely sinless. I will take Peter’s word for it. Another reason I know that He never sinned is found in v.21. There we read that God raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him glory. God the Father never would have done that for a sinner! Yes, anyone could die on a cross. But God conclusively proved to the world through the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus that His sacrifice was distinctly different.

2. Because His Blood Was Shed at Great Cost – To redeem means “to set free by paying a price.” And what was the price of our redemption? It was the blood of Jesus! In my text Peter calls the blood of Jesus “precious.” The word “precious” (*timios*) has a root meaning of “valuable” or “costly.” Again, Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death.” In order for us to be saved, Jesus had to pay the ultimate price: His own blood shed in death.

As we reflect upon the shed blood of Jesus, shouldn’t we be moved with the thought, “O Jesus, why must *your* blood be shed? Why must you suffer so? It was *I* who sinned! That should be my blood that is shed on the cross.” But your Savior could reply, “It is only by my shed blood that you can be saved and forgiven.”

3. Because He Died as a Sacrifice - In calling Christ “a Lamb,” Peter was reminding his readers of an Old Testament teaching. It is the doctrine of substitution: an innocent victim giving his life for the guilty. The doctrine of sacrifice begins in Genesis 3, when God killed animals that He might clothe Adam and Eve. A ram died for Isaac (Gen. 22:13) and the Passover lamb was slain for each Jewish household (Ex. 12). Because of the fact that Jesus shed His blood and bore upon Himself the curse of sin, He has redeemed us from the curse. Gal. 3:13 says, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’” He received the punishment that our sin deserves.

Now what is the grand result of that costly sacrifice? We can now be forgiven! Now we can be cleansed so that in God’s eyes, we stand as though we had never sinned! 1 Jn. 1:7 says, “The Blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all sin.” Even in Old Testament times God

said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). How blessed it is to know that by faith in Jesus, there is no longer even a spot of sin defiling us. At the blood of Jesus, death has no power over us. With the blood of Jesus heaven's gates are opened, and eternal life is ours! Oh, the blood of Jesus is precious indeed!

Charles Finney was preaching in a great revival in Detroit. After the service one night a man said, "I want you to go home with me, Mr. Finney." Some who knew the man said to Finney, do not go." But he went. When they came to the man's house, the man walked in last, locked the door and pulled a revolver from his pocket. He said, "Do not be afraid, Mr. Finney, I am not going to shoot you. I heard you preach tonight about the Lord Jesus Christ. This revolver has killed four men. Is there any hope for a man like that?" Mr. Finney replied, "The blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanseth us from all sin."

The man answered, "Ah, but you do not understand, Mr. Finney. Down below this apartment where you are sitting there is a saloon. I have helped send men down the road to hell; I have helped men to rob their own little babies of food and milk. Is there any hope for a man who would run a saloon?" And Mr. Finney replied, "The blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanseth us from all sin!"

The man continued, "But you do not understand. I have been a gambler all of my life. I have spent my life taking money from people illegally. Is there any hope for a man like that?" Mr. Finney said, "The blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanseth us from all sin."

He persisted, "Across the street from this establishment there is a little home where there is a wife I have abused; a little girl who is disfigured. One night in a drunken stupor, I came home from gambling and drinking. She ran to put her arms around me and in my drunkenness I pushed her away from me, she hit the heater and is hopelessly disfigured. Is there any hope for a man like that?" Mr. Finney said, "The blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanseth us from all sin!"

Mr. Finney soon thereafter left. The man stayed away prayed all night. When morning came, his wife said to the little girl, "Tell daddy it's time for breakfast." She went upstairs and said, "Mama says it is time for breakfast." The man said, "Maggie, darling, I do not want any breakfast this morning."

She ran back downstairs and said, "Mama, Daddy said he did not want any breakfast this morning and he called me darling!" The mother said, "You made a mistake, you heard him wrong. Go back up there and tell him it is time for breakfast." In a moment, however, the man came down, took that wife in his arms and his little girl upon his knee. "Oh Wife" he wept, "I have sinned against you like few men have ever sinned against anyone, but last night I heard the preacher preach. I heard about Jesus and about the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus has cleansed me from all my sin. You have a new husband. Daughter, you have a new daddy."¹

Oh, let us agree with Peter, and view the blood of Jesus as precious. Let us highly value what Jesus did for us. Can you not see the value of the redeeming blood of Christ? In our world today, there are a lot of things that people highly value. We value our cars, our clothes, our electronics, and so forth. But all of these should pale in comparison to the value of the blood of Jesus, for we understand what His blood has accomplished for us.

And this leads to my last point:

¹ Jerry Vines, *Family Fellowship: An Expository Experience in 1 John* (Dallas: Crescendo Publications, 1976), 47-49.

III. RECOGNIZE THE DEMANDS OF REDEMPTION

Notice how v.18 begins, “knowing that....” Peter is building an argument as to why we should carry out the teachings of vv.14-17. Look at those verses with me, “as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear.” He that is redeemed from destruction by the blood of Christ is likewise redeemed from that vain and unholy manner of life that leads to it. On the other hand, if you find the love of sin and of the world stronger in your hearts than the love of Christ, then you are not as yet partakers of His redemption.

Let me tell you why the precious blood of Jesus should cause you to live a holy life:

A. The Blood of Christ Provides the Motive for Obedience - There is no motive for holiness so great as that which streams from the veins of Jesus. If you want to know why you should be obedient to God’s will, go and look upon Him who shed His blood for you, and the love of Christ will compel you to obedience. Rom. 14:9 says, “For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” If you fail to let Jesus be Lord of your life, then clearly, you have failed to fully appreciate the sacrificial love of Jesus for you. The whole purpose of His coming was to save you from sin.

So in just a moment, when you hold the cup that represents the blood of Jesus, I hope you will reflect upon how precious the blood of Jesus should be to you! When you and I meditate on the sacrifice of Christ for us, certainly we should want to obey God and live holy lives for His glory. We should respond by saying, “I love you Jesus, and I’m sorry that you had to shed your blood in order that I might be saved. But I will not just thank you with my words, but I will also thank you with my life!”

Let me encourage you to be ready to provide this answer for all the enticements of sin and the world: “Unless you can offer my soul something beyond that price that was given for it on the cross, I cannot listen to you. Far be it from me, that ever I should prefer a base lust, or any thing in this world, to Him who gave Himself to die for me, and paid my ransom with His blood.

When only a young lady, Frances Ridley Havergal saw a picture of the crucified Christ with this caption under it: “I did this for thee. What hast thou done for Me?” Quickly, she wrote a poem, but was dissatisfied with it and threw it into the fireplace. Later, they found the paper unharmed! So at her father’s suggestion, she published the poem, and today we sing it.

I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed;
That thou might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
I gave, I gave, My life for thee,
What hast thou given for Me?
I gave, I gave, My life for thee,
What hast thou given for Me?

A good question, indeed! I trust we can give a good answer to the Lord.
So the blood of Jesus not only provide the motive for obedience, but also:

B. The Blood of Christ Provides the Power for Obedience - Rev. 12:11 says, “And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb....” Ah, the blood of Jesus! Sin dies at its presence. Satan flees at the blood of Jesus. With the blood of Jesus fears flee and my troubles seem to disappear. In this is manifest the power of Divine grace in a man’s conversion, that it severs him so powerfully from the profane world, and gives him strength to run contrary to the great current of wickedness that is round about him.

Sources: Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old & New Testaments: James – Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975 reprint); J. Allen Blair, *Living Peacefully: 1 Peter* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1959); Robert Leighton, *Commentary on First Peter* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1853, 1972 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5 (Pasadena: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); A.T. Robertson, *New Testament Word Pictures, Vol. 14* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931); Charles H. Spurgeon, *12 Sermons on the Passion and Death of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976 reprint), 32-43 [25G.44]; Larry Pierce, *Online Bible [CD-ROM]* (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Warren W. Wiersbe, “*Be*” *Series: New Testament Volumes 1 & 2, 1 Peter* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989); Kenneth S. Wuest’s *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 2, Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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