

The Books of 1 and 2 Peter

Lesson 2: Be Holy; Ransomed by Precious Blood -- 1 Peter 1:13-25

Think for a moment about the most expensive thing you own. Maybe it is a house, or a ring handed down through three generations, or a car you saved years to buy. Now imagine someone asked you what it would take to part with it, and you found yourself naming a price. Almost everything we own has a number attached to it. Peter is about to tell a roomful of struggling believers that they were bought, too, and then he names the price, and the number is not a number at all. They were ransomed “not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” The most valuable thing in the universe was spent to buy back people the world counted as nothing.

In the first twelve verses Peter lifted his readers’ eyes to a living hope. Now he does what every good shepherd does after lifting the eyes: he points to the road. “Therefore,” he writes, and with that single word the letter turns from what we have been given to how we are now to live. Prepare your minds for action. Be sober. Set your hope fully on the grace coming to you. And then the great summons that gathers up the whole Old Testament in a single line: “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” Holiness is not a mood Peter is asking for. It is a family resemblance. Children come to look like their Father.

We do not use the word holy much anymore, and when we do it often sounds cold, like a marble statue or a stained-glass face that has never laughed. But Peter ties holiness to the warmest thing imaginable: a ransom paid in blood, a Father who calls us His own, a love between believers that comes from a heart made pure. Holiness, in Peter’s hands, is what a ransomed life looks like when it finally believes how much it cost to be set free. It is gratitude with its sleeves rolled up.

So read these verses as a freed prisoner reads the receipt that bought his release. You were not redeemed from a small debt by a small payment. You were ransomed from an empty way of life by the lifeblood of the spotless Lamb, and you were born again through a word that will never pass away. People are like grass; the grass withers and the flower falls. But you have been planted in something that does not die. Let that settle in, and then let it make you holy.

Group Discussion: Peter calls his readers to “be holy in all your conduct” because the God who called them is holy (vv. 15–16). In everyday speech, what do people seem to mean when they call someone “holy,” and how does that compare with the holiness Peter is describing? Why do you think Peter grounds the call to holiness in who God is rather than in a list of rules?

Personal Reflection: Peter says we were ransomed from “the futile ways inherited from your forefathers” at the cost of Christ’s precious blood (vv. 18–19). What is one “futile way,” a habit, an attitude, a pattern handed down to you, that you sense Christ paid to free you from? What would it look like to live this week as someone who knows the price that was paid?

Study Questions

1. Peter begins, “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (v. 13). How does the hope Peter described in verses 1–12 become the foundation for the way of life he now calls for, and what does it mean to set your hope “fully” on coming grace?
2. Peter contrasts the “passions of your former ignorance” with the obedient, holy life (v. 14). Where do you still feel the pull of an old passion or pattern from your life before Christ, and what would genuine obedience look like in that exact place?
3. Peter quotes God’s ancient command, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (vv. 15–16). What does holiness actually mean here, and why does Peter root the call to holiness in the character of God rather than in mere rule-keeping?
4. Peter says to conduct yourselves “with fear throughout the time of your exile” (v. 17). What does a healthy, reverent fear of God look like in daily life, and where might your own walk with God have grown too casual?
5. Peter says we were ransomed “not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (vv. 18–19). What does the language of ransom and the spotless lamb teach about the seriousness of sin and the cost of our redemption?
6. Peter says this redemption frees us from “the futile ways inherited from your forefathers.” What is one inherited way of living, a family pattern, a cultural habit, a default reaction, that you most need Christ’s ransom to break in you?
7. Peter says Christ “was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you” (v. 20). What does it mean that the cross was no emergency measure but God’s plan from before creation, and how does that shape the way you understand your own salvation?
8. Peter says that having purified your souls by obedience to the truth, you should “love one another earnestly from a pure heart” (v. 22). How earnest and how pure is your love for your brothers and sisters in Christ right now, and where is God calling you to love more deeply or more honestly?
9. Peter says we “have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God,” and then contrasts withering grass with the word that “remains forever” (vv. 23–25). How does this passage describe the means of the new birth, and what does it teach about the place of God’s word, and the gospel of obedient faith, in our salvation?
10. Look back across the whole passage. Peter moves from hope, to holiness, to the costly ransom, to a new birth through the abiding word, to earnest love. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through these verses. What single truth from 1 Peter 1:13–25 do you most need to carry into this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Leviticus 11:44-45, the original call “be holy, for I am holy” that Peter draws on; Romans 6:1-14, dead to sin and alive to God in the obedience of faith; Hebrews 9:11-14, the blood of Christ purifying the conscience; Isaiah 40:6-8, the grass withers but the word of our God stands forever; Titus 2:11-14, grace training us to renounce ungodliness and live self-controlled lives