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1 Peter 1:15–16

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

Reflection

Sometimes passages of Scripture seem to make almost impossible demands of us. Like when Jesus commands us, at the end of Matthew Chapter 5, to

48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

And yet as impossible as passages like this may seem in God's infinite wisdom he has included them in Scripture for our good and for our obedience.

Today's passage is somewhat like this. It comes from 1 Peter 1:15–16 which says,

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy

Set in context we read from verse 14,

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had

when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

Holiness. We are called to be holy. ‘Be holy in all you do.’ ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’ God has not called us to be like those around us. He’s called us to be like himself. And he is holy. Holiness, in many ways is the defining characteristic of God. And if we are his people, if he is our Father and we are truly his children then we will be like him, we will be holy.

But what is it to be holy? Holiness in the Bible describes both the majesty of God and the purity and moral perfection of his nature. To be holy means that Christians must conform their thinking and behaviour

to God's character. God's ways are not our ways, his thoughts are not our thoughts, they are much higher and so we identify with him by being set apart and by relating to the world on the terms that God prescribes. Here are his terms,

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

But how? How can we grow in holiness? The answer is 'hate', which is such a strong word that we dislike using it. But it is important that we do so in this context because God hates sin to the very core of his being. Because God is holy, he hates sin; hatred then is a legitimate attitude when it comes to sin. And so as we grow

in holiness, we grow in hatred of sin; and God, who is infinitely holy has an infinite hatred of sin. We might turn a blind eye to sin in our lives or play that dangerous game of giving in to sin because we know that by God's grace we will be forgiven but we cannot escape the fact that God hates sin. He hates our lustful thoughts, he hates our pride and our jealousy, he hates it when we lose control of our temper, he hates it when we worship our perfect home and our holidays and our possessions in place of him, and he hates it when we rationalise and say that the ends justifies the mean. We cannot peacefully coexist with our sins, God hates them and the path to holiness is to hate them just as he does; and to pull away from them just as you would pull your hand away from a burning stove.

Because God is Holy, he hates sin. We often say, ‘God hates the sin but loves the sinner.’ This is blessedly true, but too often we quickly rush over the first half of this statement to get to the second. We cannot escape the fact that God hates sin. We may trifle with our sins and excuse them but God hates them. Therefore every time we sin, we are doing something God hates. The path to holiness then is to cultivate in our own hearts the same hatred of sin that God has because hatred of sin lies at the root of true holiness.¹

Think & Pray

Are you growing in your hatred of sin? Is your greatest fear and deepest sadness

¹ In writing this talk I am indebted to, and have relied upon, Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (First British Edition; NavPress, 1999), 8–23.

to sin against our Lord? Do you take your sin as seriously as he does? Look at the lengths he went to to cleanse you from it! It cost him the blood of his firstborn Son.

Pray this morning that you and I both would take seriously the necessity of personal and practical holiness and that we would cultivate in our hearts the same hatred of sin that God has so that we might be like him, and be holy in all we do.