

Place: Lurgan Baptist 8:6:2008

Reading: 1 Peter 1:13-21

## WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

### 4. STAYING CLEAN IN A CORRUPT SOCIETY

Wouldn't it be great if the Lord saved us and then, within a matter of seconds, take us on to glory? Wouldn't that be a great relief? I mean we would never have any temptations. We would never have to face the devil, encounter the world, or battle with the flesh? We would never have the possibility of messing up our lives. *We could just be whisked off to glory .... saved, sanctified, galvanized and glorified.* Since that is not an option and since it is clearly God's desire that we prove ourselves blameless and innocent and above reproach we have to come with an alternative suggestion. How then can you stay clean in a corrupt society? Some have suggested sanctification by **isolation**, withdrawing from the world as the only way to keep it from rubbing off on you. After all, how can you walk through a coal mine without getting dirty? The logic seems reasonable. But the Bible offers a different tactic.

Paul writing to the Philippian believers says, "*That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom ye shine as lights in the world.*" (2:12) Notice the words, "*in the midst of a crooked*

*and perverse generation.*" You see though we are not to be of the world, we are to be in the world. Shortly before He was arrested, the Lord Jesus prayed for His disciples about their relationship with the world. Mark His words carefully, "*I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil (one).*" (Jn 17:15) The Lord Jesus does not ask the Father to **isolate** His disciples from the world but to **insulate** them, "*to keep them from the evil one.*" My ... it's not easy to live in this world and maintain a holy walk. We have to recognise that we live our lives *with the devil over us, the world around us, and the flesh within us.* When it comes to holiness we have a lot against us. The anti-God atmosphere around us that the Bible calls, "*the world,*" is always pressing against us, trying to force us to conform. Moreover in many hearts there is no great desire to be holy. People want to be saved, to go to heaven, to be happy, to be healthy, to be wealthy, and some don't even mind being wise, but who needs holiness? As A.W. Tozer once wrote,

***Christ calls men to carry a cross: we call them to have fun in His Name. He calls them to forsake the world, we assure them that if they but accept Jesus the world is their oyster. He calls them to suffer: we call them to enjoy all the comforts modern civilisation affords. He calls them to self-abnegation and death: we call them to spread themselves like green bay trees .... He calls them to holiness: we call them to a cheap happiness that would have been rejected with scorn by the least of the stoic philosophers.***

Now the root meaning of the word translated “*holy*,” is “*different*.” When God attributes the name “*holy*,” to Himself, He is drawing attention to the fact that He is separate, different, distinct, transcendent. A holy person is not an odd person, but a different person. His life has a quality about it that is different. His present life-style, is not only different from his past way of life, but it is different from the lifestyles of the unbelievers around him. ( 4:4 ) Now having begun his letter with praise to God for the blessings of Christian experience, Peter now goes on to give us practical instruction about holy living. Indeed in this paragraph, Peter presents to us four spiritual incentives to encourage us, to maintain a different lifestyle, and stay clean in a corrupt society.

### (1) THE LORD’S RETURN

Do you see the phrase he uses in ( 1:3 ) ? “*The revelation of Jesus Christ*.” We are to fix our focus on the second coming of Jesus Christ. Peter certainly did. It was almost as if he was preoccupied with the subject.

He talks about “*the living hope*,” in ( 1:3 ) “*and the appearing of Jesus Christ*.” in ( 1:7 ) He encourages us in ( 4:13 ) to rejoice when we are in trouble so that “*when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy*.” He tells elders and pastors to shepherd the flock conscientiously that “*when the Chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away*.” ( 5:4 ) My .... one of the

greatest incentives to holiness of life is the truth of the Lord's return. ( 4:7-11 2 Pet 3:1 ) This doctrine is nothing if not practical in its application. It's unfortunate that many have got caught up with this or that argument concerning the Lord's return, but few have paid little attention to its practical application. Peter tells us that living in the light of the Lord's Return will enable us,

#### (a) **TO HAVE A WELL-ORDERED MIND:**

“*Gird up the loins of your mind*,” simply means, “*Pull your thoughts together have a disciplined mind*.”

Peter is thinking of the eastern habit, the long flowing robe, which usually covered the ankles. It had its virtues, but it also had its faults. For if you needed to run you feet could so easily get entangled and cause you to trip. In such circumstances the man would tuck his robes under his belt so that nothing would impede his progress. ( Ex 12:11 ) My .... do our minds not often involve us in the same kind of awkward situation on the plane of the spiritual as the long flowing robe on the plane of the physical ? They are not only capable of hindering our progress, but also of causing us to trip and fall. Unbelted minds don't lead to a virile hope.

But when you centre your thoughts on the return of Christ, and live accordingly, you escape the many things that would encumber your mind and hinder your spiritual progress. What are these things ? *Worry. Fear. Jealousy. Bitterness. Unforgiveness. Impurity* My

... do you recognise that **outlook** does determine **outcome** ? **Attitude does determine action.** Abraham had his eyes of faith, on the heavenly city, so that he had no interest in the world's real estate. But Lot, who had tasted the pleasures of the world in Egypt, gradually moved toward Sodom. Abraham brought blessing to his home, Lot brought judgement to his home. Outlook determined outcome. Is your mind disciplined ? Is it free from such things as would hinder your spiritual progress, because it's centred on the Lord's return ? (a)

**(b) TO HAVE A WELL-DISCIPLINED LIFE:**

The word "*sober*," means "*to be calm, steady, controlled, to weigh matters.*" It's unfortunate that some people get, "*carried away*," with prophetic studies and lose their spiritual balance. Indeed it's so easy for the believer to be carried away with this or that, to become intoxicated with the latest fashion or newest craze. My ... the fact that Christ is coming should encourage us to be calm and collected. ( 4:7 ) Anyone whose mind becomes undisciplined and whose life "*falls apart*," because of prophetic studies, is giving evidence that he does not really understand Bible prophecy. (a) (b)

**(c) TO HAVE A WELL-DEFINED GOAL:**

For Peter says, "*And hope to the end ....*," ( 1:13 ) "*Hope to the end*," means "*set your hope fully.*" The goal of the Christian is to live and move toward

the day when the Lord Jesus Christ shall return and we shall be with Him and like Him. Its rather obvious that if our goal is to be with Him, and like Him then, in the meantime we're going to want to be more and more like Him because we're looking forward more and more to be being with Him.

My ... once we get our minds well-ordered, our lives well-disciplined and our goals well-defined, we will find one theme running through the whole of our lives . holiness, holiness, holiness. In 1917, when the USA entered into the Great War, there was a young couple in the West who had made their plans to be married. They had a little house which they had been furnishing for weeks, and all their resources had gone into the preparation of that home. Their plan had been to be married, and to move into their new home, but the war was declared and the young man, who was a reserve officer was called up. He was ordered to go the Mexican border to train before going to France. His wife to be said to him, the day before he was due to go on. "*It's not quite the date for our wedding, but you might be ordered overseas immediately, you might be killed. I might never see you again. I would rather go through life bearing your name, than go through life explaining that the man I loved had been killed in the war. So let's got through with it and be married right now.*"

So they were quietly married, and for their honeymoon he went with the troops and she went to the little house.

Day after day he wrote to her, he sent her gifts, a rug,

lace, pottery. One afternoon she was very lonely and she took some pillows and put them in front of the open fireplace, spread the rug on the floor and sat down on it.

She took the box with all her husband's letters, on the pillows she spread the lace, and put the pottery on a chair beside her. She settled down to enjoy herself with his letters and thoughts of him. But, as she began reading the letters and thinking of him, suddenly there was a step on the porch, the door opened and **he was there**. He had sent a telegram, but it had been delayed. My .... when she saw him, she jumped to her feet, the letters in her lap were scattered, she stepped on the lace, and knocked a piece of pottery on the floor, but she was in his arms, and that mattered more to her than anything else. He had returned. She had him, and having him, had all. My .... the Lord Jesus is coming back and He is going to find in one of two attitudes. Will you be flirting with the world, or will you be occupied with His love letters, His gifts, His work, thinking of Him ? (1)

## (2) THE SOVEREIGN'S CHARACTER

You know, a lot of believers are interested in heaven, but they are not interested in holiness. They are interested in health, but not holiness. They want happiness but not holiness. *But what God wants for us more than anything else is to be holy.* Now the argument here is logical and simple. Children inherit the nature of their parents. God is holy, therefore, as His children, we should live holy lives. We are "*partakers of the divine nature,*" ( 2 Pet 1:4 ) and ought

to reveal that nature in godly living. You see,

### (a) **HOLINESS IS REVEALED IN THE FATHER:**

Do you see what Peter says, "*But as He which hath called you is holy,*" ( 1:15 ) We could put it like this. "*Holy ( that is His name ) is the one who called you.*" Holiness is an essential part of God's nature. My .... do you recall the song of the children of Israel ? "*Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods ? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ?*" ( Ex 15: 11 ) Hannah prayed, "*There is none holy as the Lord.*" ( 1 Sam 2:2 ) And the seraphim cried, "*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts.*" ( Is 6:3 ) (a) But,

### (b) **HOLINESS IS REQUIRED OF THE FAMILY:**

You see we are not to live the way we used to. Peter says "*Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.*" ( 1:14 ) Formally we had been imitators of the world ( Rom 12:2 ) but now we are to be imitators of the Father. "*Be ye holy,*" says Peter ( 1:15 ) "*Be ye holy,*" says God ( 1:16 ) **Holy, so that we may reflect the Lord**, for surely it is God's desire that we should resemble Him. **Holy, so that we may obey the Lord**, for this is God's command. My .... Peter is quoting from the book of Leviticus, and there God says to Israel, "*Ye shall be holy, for I am holy.*" ( Lev 11:44 19:2 20:7 ) My .... we may choose a married life or a single life, but it is not left to us whether or not we live a holy life. **Holy, so that we**

**may glorify the Lord**, for nothing surely honours God so much, as “ *being holy in all our conduct.* ”

My .... is this not where you and I fail ? We can be holy in the church, but are we holy in the home ? We can be holy in the public place, but are we holy in the private place ? Are we holy at all times, in all places, with all people ? Now as I have said this word “ *holy,* ” means to be different, to be separate, to be set apart, to be reserved for a special purpose. My .... we are to be holy. Our mouth, our mind, our money, our morals, all belong to the Lord. To be holy means you set apart all of that for His glory, and for His purpose. The world may call us odd but we are to be different. We are not to drink the world’s booze. We are not to smoke the world’s cigarettes. We are not to tell the world’s jokes. We are not to use the world’s language. We are to be holy. We are to be different. For we bear God’s nature and we carry God’s name and our family name is holy. Do you see the incentives God has given us for being holy ? (1) (2) But there is a third incentive,

### (3) THE JUDGEMENT SEAT

Look if you will at ( 1:17 ) And what is this judgement that Peter is talking about ? It is the judgement of a believer’s works, it is “ *the Judgement Seat of Christ.* ” You see, heaven is going to be a joy, but it is also going to be a judgement. The Father is going to take each child, one at a time and judge him as only a father can. And my .... outward appearance, great wealth, family background, keen intellect all the things that more or less sway the opinions of men will not count with God

when it comes to this judgement for God judges “ *without respect of persons.* ” Here then is an,

#### (a) **EVENT WE OUGHT TO CONTEMPLATE:**

For Paul says, “ *For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.* ” ( 2 Cor 5:10 ) Now this is not our judgement as **Sinners:** for that is Past and we’re already declared righteous through Christ. ( Jn 5:24 ) This is not our judgement as **Sons:** for that is Present and even now, “ *whom the Lord He loves He chastens.* ” ( Heb 12:6 ) My .... this is our judgement as **Servants** and that is Future. This is a “ ***family judgement,*** ” the Father dealing with His beloved children. The word “ *judgeth,* ” means, “ *to judge in order to find something good.* ” God will search into the motives for our ministry. He will examine our hearts.

( 1 Cor 4:5 ) How solemn to realise that on that day our motives will be examined. The question will be, “ ***Why do you do what you did when you did it ?*** ” Why were you a pastor, an evangelist, a missionary ? Why did you sing ? Why did you preach ? Why ? Was it for power, prestige: pride ? Was it done for God ? Was it to glorify Christ ? To glorify Self ? Was your motive to be noticed, lauded, or applauded ? Are you ready for such an inspection ? Are you ready to answer the Saviour’s why ? Why all this preaching ? Did I use the pulpit to throw stones ? Did I use it as a social, or political platform ? My .... what a day it’s going to be. What about all the praying ? Did you pray that you might be heard only of men ? To receive their praise.

When you stood up to pray where you man conscious, word conscious, or God conscious ? *What about the giving ? The witnessing ? The contending for the faith ?* Remember what we do for the Lord is important, but why we do it is even more important. The story is told of a desert wanderer who found a spring of crystal clear water. The water was so pure that he decided to bring some to his king. After barely satisfying his own thirst he filled a leather bottle with the precious clear water and carried it for many days beneath the desert's scorching sun. *Finally, he reached the palace and laid his offering at the feet of his Sovereign.* By this time the water had become stale due to the old container in which it was carried. But the King would not disappoint his faithful servant nor let him imagine that the water was unfit for royal use. The king tasted the water with an expression of gratitude and sent the loyal servant away with joy. After the satisfied servant had left the palace other courtiers sampled the water and found it to be stale. "*Why then did the King pretend to enjoy it ?*" they asked. "*Ah,*" said the King, "***It was not the water I tasted but the love that prompted the offering.***" My .... many times our service is marked by multiplied imperfections, but our King looks at our motives and says "*it is good.*" (a) And in light of this event there is an,

#### **(b) ATTITUDE WE OUGHT TO CULTIVATE:**

For Peter says, "*pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*" ( 1:17 ) This is not the cringing fear of a slave before his master, but the loving reverence of a child

before his father. My .... it's not the fear of judgement, but a fear of disappointing Him. ( 2 Cor 7:1 ) Would it not make all the difference in the world if we allowed the Judgement Seat to cast its shadow over everything we do ? Now remember Peter is talking about incentives to holiness. He has spoken about (1) (2) (3) and now he speaks about,

#### **(4) THE REDEMPTIVE PRICE**

He says, "*Ye know that ye were not redeemed.... but with the precious blood of Christ.*" ( 1:18 ) Is this not the greatest motive for holy living ? The fact that we are no longer our own. The fact that we have been purchased by the blood of Christ. ( 1 Cor 6:19-20 ) My .... we were living a life of slavery. For redemption means, "***release as the result of the payment of a price,***" we were in the slave market of sin, but we have been set free. We were living a life of emptiness. Peter calls it, "*the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers.*" ( 1:18 ) But from the mastery of sin, from the vanity of life we have been set free. How ? Well, Peter answers that question,

#### **(a) NEGATIVELY:**

"*Not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold.*" ( 1:18 ) My .... these are the very things deemed precious by man. When some V.I.P. is taken captive, the ransom demanded is usually in terms of "*silver and gold.*" A slave could be freed with the payment of money, but no amount of money can set a lost sinner free. So speaking,

**(b) POSITIVELY:**

Peter says, “ *Ye were redeemed .... with the precious blood of Christ.* ” Only Christ’s precious blood could purchase us out of the slave market of sin and set us gloriously free. Listen, its the blood of Christ who was **certainly sinless:** ( 1:19 ) Its the blood of Christ who was **eternally selected:** ( 1:20 ) Its the blood of Christ who is **gloriously enthroned:** ( 1:21 ) Here says Peter is the price of our redemption .... **the precious blood of Christ.** Now surely it is unthinkable that we who have been “ *set free,* ” at such a cost should disregard the love of God and the sacrifice of Christ by living a life of ungodliness. Christ died to make us holy ( Titus 2:4 ) and therefore to live a life of ungodliness is to do nothing less than treat the sacrifice of Christ with contempt. My .... will you think of **What you Were:** living a life of slavery and emptiness, will you think of **What Christ did:** get to the Cross and think about the agony, ignominy, reality of Christ’s sufferings for you. Think of the wrath of God He endured. Think of the precious blood He shed and as you meditate on the Cross you will be motivated from the cross, and say with C.T. Studd, “ *If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.* ”

My .... when we meditate on the sacrifice of Christ for us, we should want to obey God and live holy lives for His glory. When only a young girl 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. The paper came out unharmed. Later 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 ?**

A good question. My .... can you give a good answer to the Lord ?