

1 PET. 1:13 – 2:10

By Ashby L. Camp

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C. Living holy lives in light of salvation (1:13-16) – ¹³*Therefore, having bound up the loins of your mind, being sober, set your hope fully on the grace to be brought to you at [the] revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not conform to the former passions [when] in your ignorance, ¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, you also be holy in all your conduct. ¹⁶For it is written, "Be holy, because I am holy."*

1. Given the greatness of the salvation in which they participate ("Therefore"), they need affirmatively to set their hope fully on the gracious blessings to be given to them at the Second Coming of Christ. This involves preparing their minds to do so by having a sober grasp of their salvation, a clear understanding of what that salvation entails; it involves appreciating the certainty and greatness of that salvation. When one grasps the blessings that are in store for the faithful in Christ, one is strengthened to live in light of that expectation, prepared to have one's present life shaped by that hope. Setting one's hope fully on the blessings of the eschaton goes beyond simply *expecting* those blessings; it includes choosing to live in light of those blessings, choosing to live a life that is pleasing to the provider of those blessings.

2. Thus they are called in v. 14-16 to live holy lives. Because the God who called them to salvation is holy, Christians are to be holy in all their conduct. No area of life is exempt from this directive.

a. Although holiness as applied to God involves his total distinctiveness, the stress is on his moral and ethical distinctiveness. He is set apart in that he is perfectly and infinitely good, righteous, just, faithful, kind, loving, forgiving, etc. God is not just bigger than we are; he is better! This stress is seen in the contrasting of his holiness to sin. In Hab. 1:13, after referring to God in 1:12 as the Holy One, the prophet says: "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong." Isaiah 5:16 states: "But the Lord Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness."

b. Christians *are* holy in the sense God has set us apart, made us special, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We are uniquely related to him in that we have received the holy cleansing of Christ's blood (see Heb. 10:5-10). In fact, the word translated "saints" is literally "holy ones." But we are called here *to be* holy because God is holy (not *as* God is holy, which would be impossible). This means we are to be morally and ethically distinct from the world because God is that way. This aspect of holiness is seen, for example, in Rom. 6:19 and 1 Thess. 4:4, 7. 1 Cor. 1:2 appears to combine both aspects of Christian holiness.

D. Living in light of God's judgment and redemption (1:17-21) – ¹⁷*And since you call upon a Father who judges impartially according to each person's work, live in fear [during] the time of your sojourn,* ¹⁸*knowing that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from [your] ancestors not with perishable things [such as] silver and gold* ¹⁹*but with precious blood, as of an unblemished and spotless lamb, [the blood] of Christ.* ²⁰*He was foreknown before [the] foundation of [the] world but was revealed at [the] last of the times for your sake,* ²¹*who through him are believers in God who raised him from [the] dead and gave glory to him, so that your faith and hope might be in God.*

1. Given the fact the heavenly Father they call upon is one who judges impartially according to each person's work, and thus one who will not wink at rebellion or defiance from anyone, they need to live in fear of the consequences of defying God. In other words, they cannot presume upon their relationship with God and imagine that it frees them to disrespect or to mock God by the way they live.

a. Jobes remarks (p. 116), "The pagan life that God abhors will be no less abhorred if it is lived by one who professes to be a Christian."

b. Schreiner states (p. 81):

There is a kind of fear that does not contradict confidence. A confident driver also possesses a healthy fear of an accident that prevents him from doing anything foolish. A genuine fear of judgment hinders believers from giving in to libertinism. The background to such fear can be traced to Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 4:10; 8:6) and the wisdom tradition (Prov 1:29; 3:7; 9:10; Job 28:28; Eccl 12:13), where the fear of the Lord informs all of life.

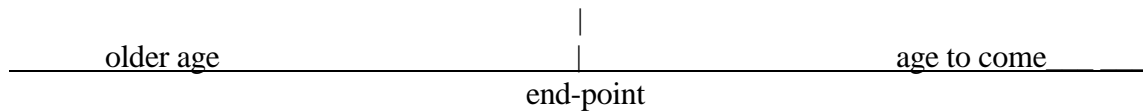
c. We are not to fear men as they seek to bully us from faithfulness to God (e.g., Mat. 10:28; Acts 5:29; Heb. 13:6; 1 Pet. 3:6), but we must fear God. That is all over the Bible. Psalm 111:10 says that fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. When Paul says of people in Rom. 3:18 that there is no fear of God before their eyes, it is not a compliment! Indeed, Peter commands them in 2:17 to "fear God."

2. The motivation toward holy living that is provided by a sober awareness of the dreadful consequences of defying God is reinforced or multiplied by an awareness of the breathtaking price that was paid for their redemption. They are to live knowing that their deliverance from the empty way of life they had inherited as Gentiles, a way of life that degraded them and held no hope for eternal life with God, was "purchased" with something more precious than all the wealth in this decaying cosmos; it was "purchased" by the supremely precious blood – the life – of the Lord Jesus Christ. His blood was analogous to that of an unblemished and spotless lamb offered for sacrifice under the old covenant in that it was poured out for the benefit of others.

3. The incarnation of God the Son as the God-man Jesus Christ and his accomplishment of redemption for mankind through his atoning death and resurrection

was known by God from eternity, but he was revealed in the last times, the last days, in the sense that he inaugurated the kingdom of God, ushered in the new age that marks the end of the old age in principle and the beginning of its end in fact.

a. Here is James D. G. Dunn's representation of Jewish thinking about the coming and nature of the kingdom of God in *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 464:



b. The N.T. teaches that the kingdom of God, the age to come, was ushered in or inaugurated in the Christ event but that its consummation awaits his return. As Preben Vang and Terry Carter put it in *Telling God's Story: The Biblical Narrative from Beginning to End* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 199:

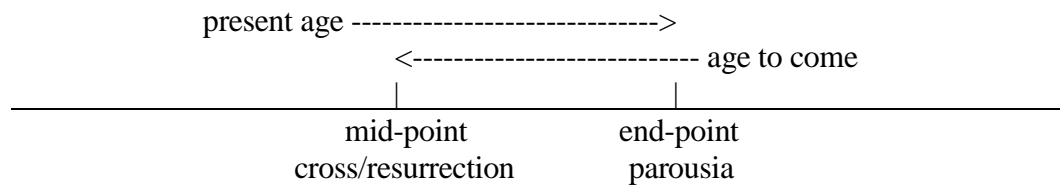
According to Jesus, the kingdom of God is already here. Jesus inaugurated it! The "age to come" has broken into the "present age." God is making his presence felt already now. Yet the kingdom of God is not here in full. Evil still exists. God does not yet fill "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). This will only happen at the time of consummation when Christ comes back. We now live between the times. The promised "age to come" has already begun but is not here in full. The "old age" is still here as well.

c. Michael Bird puts it this way in *Introducing Paul* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 114, 116:

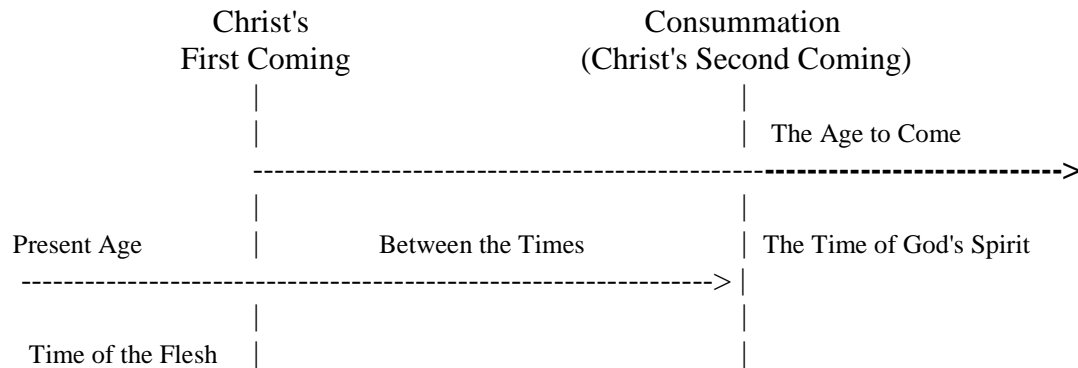
Fundamental to Paul's theology is that the future age (the eschaton) has already broken in and has been *inaugurated* through the life, death and resurrection of the Son of God. . . .

The coming of Jesus has inaugurated a new era of redemptive history and God's new age has been launched upon the world, something like a covert operation seizing key nodes along the rear echelons of an opposing force. Those people who confess faith in the Messiah and experience the transforming power of the Spirit of God are living billboards in our global metropolis advertising God's activity in the world and pointing to things soon to come. At the same time, the old age continues, death and evil are realities that need to be confronted and endured, but their power has been broken in principle and even in practice. What is more, the day is coming when God will finally do away with them and the old age will be no more. On that day God will be 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28).

c. Dunn diagrams the N.T. perspective this way (p. 464):



d. Vang and Carter diagram it like this (p. 200):



e. Schreiner says regarding 1 Pet. 1:20 (p. 88):

The "end of the ages" . . . signals the last days of salvation history, which commenced with the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Michaels rightly notes that the phrase here is to be distinguished from "in the last time" . . . in v. 5. The latter refers to the eschatological inheritance that awaits believers, but the phrase here indicates that the last times have commenced with the coming of Christ. [He adds in a footnote: "What we have here is inaugurated by not yet consummated eschatology."] The stunning privilege of believers is communicated once again because all these things occurred "for your sake" (cf. vv. 10-12). What a tragedy it would be to throw all these privileges away by ceasing to live in the fear of God.

4. It is through Christ that these Gentiles have become believers in God the Father. The gospel of Christ is God's saving work on their behalf, so in embracing that gospel they put their trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to the greatest heights, intending that people would put their faith and hope in him as a result of the redemption he provided in Christ.

E. Love as those reborn through the word of God (1:22-25) – ²²*Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth resulting in genuine brotherly love, love one another fervently from a [pure] heart,* ²³*having been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through [the] living and enduring word of God.* ²⁴*For, "All flesh [is] like grass, and all of its glory like [the] flower of grass; the grass withers and the flower falls,*

²⁵*but the word of [the] Lord endures forever." And this is the word that was preached as good news to you.*

1. They had purified themselves by obedience to the truth, meaning they had accepted the gospel, which included their submission to baptism (see 3:21). Peter Davids states (p. 76), "The image of purification is that of OT washings that made one ready to participate in the cult (Exod. 19:10; Josh. 3:5; John 11:55; Acts 21:24, 26; 24:18). This figure was taken over in the NT and stood for both inward purification through repentance from sin (Jas. 4:8; 1 John 3:3) and Christian initiation, which included repentance, commitment to Christ, and baptism, as here (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11)."

2. Their conversion resulted in their having a genuine love for fellow Christians. Their passage from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God brought them into a special relationship, into fellowship, with all others who had made that same journey. Conversion includes entrance into the brotherhood of the redeemed, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ; it includes loving other Christians simply because they are fellow-Christians.

3. But Peter commands them to deepen and intensify this love. They are to love one another fervently from a pure heart, meaning a heart that is untainted by ulterior motives. We are to be intensely committed to the welfare of our brothers and sisters in Christ, not because we are working some angle but because they are fellow heirs of God's gracious gift of life.

4. The instrument of their new birth was not an earthly, perishable seed, like the sperm of a human father, but the heavenly, imperishable seed of the word of God, which seed gives birth to imperishable life (1:4).

5. Everything in this fallen world will perish (in its fallen state), but the word of the Lord has no expiration date; it will remain valid and true throughout eternity. And that is the word that was preached to them in the gospel of Christ, the word that gave them new life.

F. Remove divisive sins and grow up through ingesting the word (2:1-3) – *Therefore, put away all malice and all deceit and [forms of] hypocrisy and envy and all [acts of] slander. ²As newborn babies, crave the pure rational milk in order that by it you may grow up into salvation, ³since you have tasted that the Lord [is] good.*

1. Given the need for Christians to love one another fervently in light of their common birth into new life through the word of God (Therefore), Peter commands them to put away all malice and all deceit and [forms of] hypocrisy and envy and all [acts of] slander. There is no place for any of this in relationships within the body of Christ. As Schreiner remarks (p. 98), "The sins listed tear at the social fabric of the church, ripping away the threads of love that keep them together."

a. Malice or ill-will is the opposite of love in that it desires harm rather than blessing.

b. Deceit (or guile) and hypocrisy, being a phony, undermine trust and thus make it very difficult for love to flourish. When one suspects that someone is "running a game" on them, it not only stifles compassion and reduces the desire to help the person but also clouds the question of how true love should express itself in his case.

c. Envy is a resentment over and a desire to have something that belongs to another.

d. Slander is verbally running someone down, saying things intended to lower them in another's eyes.

2. As newborn babies crave milk from their mothers, they are to crave the pure, the uncontaminated, rational milk that is the word of God so that by it they may mature as Christians. Schreiner states (p. 100):

The word *logikos* is translated by the NIV and understood by many to mean "spiritual." Usually, however, in Greek literature the term refers to that which is rational or reasonable. It is not equated with the term "spiritual," even though it overlaps with it. . . . Peter probably opted for the term to clarify that the milk he had in view was the word of God. The "word" (*logos*), after all, was the means by which God begot believers. God's "word" (*rhēma*) abides forever, and that very word is identified as the gospel preached to the Petrine believers (1:25). Hence, Peter used *logikos* to define milk here, so that the readers will understand that the milk by which they grow is nothing other than the word of God. The means by which God sanctifies believers is through the mind, through the continued proclamation of the word. Spiritual growth is not primarily mystical but rational in the sense that it is informed and sustained by God's word.

3. This growing up or maturing as Christians is "into salvation" in that the growth process begun with the new birth culminates in eschatological salvation. You see this same concept in 2 Pet. 1:5-11. Growing in the ethical manifestations of faith assures that we will never stumble from the path we are on, a path that leads to glory. There is danger in stagnating in our faith. If we are not growing, we become more vulnerable to the enemy.

4. This drive for longing to grow spiritually flows from their having experienced through their new birth in Christ the Lord's amazing goodness and kindness.

G. You have become God's holy people in Christ (2:4-10) – ⁴*As you come to him, a living stone, rejected by men but chosen [and] precious in God's sight,* ⁵*you also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood to offer*

spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in Scripture, "Behold I am laying a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame." ⁷The honor therefore is for you who believe, but to unbelievers: "[the] stone which the builders rejected, this one has become the head of [the] corner" ⁸and "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble by being disobedient to the word, to which they were also appointed. ⁹But you [are] a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for [God's] possession in order that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰You once [were] not a people but now [are] a people of God; you had not received mercy but now have received mercy.

1. Jesus is here called a "living stone." He is a living person, having been raised from the dead, who in the spiritual, new temple that is the church (see 1 Cor. 3:16) functions analogously to a cornerstone (v. 6) in a physical building (see Eph. 2:19-22). In ancient times, the cornerstone was not something put into place at the time the completed building was dedicated. It was the first stone laid, and it set the line or standard by which the walls were constructed (see Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 406-407).

2. As they convert to Christ, they are incorporated into the new temple being built by God. Davids comments (p. 86, n. 21): "That temple imagery is intended is clear from the usual use of the building image in the NT (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6, 10:21-22), from the 'house' language in 1 Pet. 4:17 that uses the Septuagint's language for the temple, and from the easy shift to priesthood and sacrifice in context."

3. Their incorporation into the new temple through faith in Christ is with the purpose of their being a holy priesthood that offers to God spiritual sacrifices rather than the physical sacrifices of the Jewish priesthood under the old covenant.

a. These spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. No offering is acceptable to God if it is made by one who has not been set apart as God's own through participation in Christ's atoning work. It is in conversion to Christ, coming to him, that one becomes holy and thus acceptable to present sacrifices to the Almighty.

b. The nature of the spiritual sacrifices Peter has in mind is indicated in v. 9 where he says that the purpose of their being a royal priesthood is to proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. As Michaels states (p. 110), quoting D. L. Balch in part (English versification in brackets):

"in contexts where ἐξαγγέλλω refers to 'proclaiming' the praises, deeds, righteousness, or works of God, the proclaiming always is to God in worship" (cf. Pss 9:15 [14]; 55:9 [56:8]; 70 [71]:15; 72 [73]:28; 78 [79]:13; 106 [107]:22; 118 [119]:13, 26; Sir 18:4; also Philo, *De Plant.* 128).

. . . Whatever else they may imply, the "spiritual sacrifices" are first of all the praise of God by his people.

c. This is similar to Heb. 13:15, which states, "Through him, then, let us always offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips praising his name." William Lane remarks in *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1999), 524 (see also p. 551) that here "[t]he writer [of Hebrews] draws upon a tradition of a song of praise which the community offers to God."

d. Edmund Clowney comments in *The Message of 1 Peter*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 95-96:

Peter says that we have been brought from *darkness* to *light* and made a *priesthood* so that we may show forth God's *praises*. This spiritual worship has no earthly altar or ark; it has transcended the elaborate ceremonials of Old Testament worship. It is vain to imitate in pageantry the ceremonies that ended when the veil of the temple was torn in two. Yet worship remains the central calling, not only of the Christian, but of the Christian church. . . . It finds its burning focus in lifting the name of God in adoration. This function of the priesthood cannot be delegated. God's praises must rise from the lips of all his people, assembled before his face and joining with the festival assembly of the saints and angels. . . .

Nothing can be put above worship. We adore God not to gain his favor, but because adoration is our response to his grace. We are, to be sure, uniquely blessed through worship, and as God's worshippers we seek his blessing. But the core of our worship is not receiving but giving. Peter reminds us that the inestimable privilege of entering the presence of the Lord contains a yet greater privilege: to lift his name in praise. If the singing and speaking forth of the praises of God are viewed as 'preliminaries' to the sermon, the meaning of worship has been lost.

e. We have worried so much about reducing Christianity to nothing more than our gatherings for worship that I fear we have unintentionally diminished the significance of those gatherings.

(1) Intimate communion with God is available for saints at all times and in all places, but it seems that an even more intense experience of God's presence is available when we gather as a group to worship.

(a) Recall that in Mat. 18:20 Jesus said, "where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

(b) Recall that in 1 Cor. 5:4 Paul refers to the power of the Lord being present when they were assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus.

(c) Recall that in 1 Cor. 11:10 Paul makes a passing reference to angels as present in (or at least watching over) their worship assembly.

(2) I think we will be blessed richly if we can get a sense of God's distinct presence in our corporate worship. Larry Hurtado writes in *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 50-51:

The author of Hebrews speaks of participation in the community of Christian believers in awesome terms:

You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Heb. 12:23-24).

Given that Christians were taught to think of themselves collectively in such terms, it is understandable that their cultic gatherings were seen as filled with meaning and significance as well. They did not have temple structures or the elaborate rituals familiar in the larger religious environment, but (perhaps, indeed, therefore) the gathered group was itself a living shrine and their praise and worship spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God. They did not have a priestly order; instead, they saw themselves collectively as a priesthood, all of them thus specially sacred and their gathering a holy occasion.

They experienced their assemblies as not merely human events but as having a transcendent dimension. They sensed God as directly and really present in their meetings through his Spirit. Indeed, even a gathering of two or three believers is graced with the presence of Christ (Matt. 18:20), giving it efficacy in prayer and other actions. In 1 Corinthians 11:10, the curious passing reference to the angels present in the worship assembly shows how familiar the idea was. Paul's Corinthian readers apparently needed no further explanation (though we could wish for one!). As the 'holy ones' (saints) of God, believers saw their worship gatherings as attended by heavenly 'holy ones', angels, whose presence signified the heavenly significance of their humble house-church assemblies. It is this sense that Christian collective worship participates in the heavenly cultus that finds later expression in the traditional words of the liturgy: 'Wherefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we do laud and magnify your glorious name.' Scholars have suggested similarities with the Qumran sect, who seem to have thought of their worship as likewise a participation in heavenly

angelic cultus, and thus as blessed with the presence of angels. The point is that in their sense of their worship gatherings as an extension of and participation in the idealized worship of the heavenly hosts, and in their view of their gatherings as graced with God's holy angels, they express a vivid transcendent significance pertaining to these occasions.

(3) We need to shed the notion that by giving the worship assembly any kind of special significance we detract from the importance of daily faithful living and thus encourage a kind of ritualistic devotion. That is a false dichotomy; it is not an either-or situation. We can catch the grandeur of our gatherings without falling prey to the idea that God cares *only* about our gatherings. Indeed, holy living is a predicate to acceptable worship in our assemblies.

4. Peter says in v. 6, by reference to Isa. 28:16, that the one who believes in Jesus, the chosen and precious cornerstone, will never be put to shame. The point is that the decision to trust in the Lord will be vindicated, will be shown to have been wise rather than foolish, however things may appear at any given moment.

5. He then says, by reference to Ps. 118:22 and Isa. 8:14, that believers will be honored, but unbelievers, those who reject and consequently stumble over God's chosen and precious cornerstone, will by implication be put to shame. They stumble into disaster by being disobedient to the word, by refusing to accept the gospel (see 3:1), which consequence of disobedience to the word was set or appointed beforehand. As John Elliott states in *1 Peter*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 434:

That which is "set" or established by God is the stumbling (*to proskomma*) resulting from not heeding the word, rather than the disobedience itself (Bigg 1902, 126; Beare 1970, 123; cf. the same sense of *keitai* in Luke 2:34, "this child is set [*keitai*] for the fall and rising of many in Israel"). Or to express it differently, it is the *result* of disobedience that is foreordained, not the decision itself (cf. also Spörri 1925, 163-65). That the author presumes free will in accepting or rejecting Jesus as the Christ is evident from 2:12, where he envisions that the honorable behavior of the believers might turn their accusers from slander to the glorifying of God. Similarly, in 3:1, it is anticipated that the holy behavior of wives might win their unbelieving husbands for the Christian faith.

6. These Gentiles previously were not part of the people of God. In Paul's words from Eph. 2:12, they formerly were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, were strangers to the covenants of promise, had no hope, and were without God in the world. But now in Christ they have received mercy and have been grafted into the Israel of faith (Rom. 11:13-20).