

1 Peter: Introduction

Lesson 4: Life as Response to God's Action

Goal Today:

Our goal in this lesson is that we may be guided by the Spirit to recognize Christian living not in terms of personal achievement but rather in showing others by our conduct what we already are because of God's gracious act of making us His saints.

Read: 1 Peter 1:13-21

THE CALL FOR RESPONSE

This particular passage begins with the word *therefore*. What does such a connection imply? It looks backward, does it not? In the present case, it connects what is now coming up for consideration with what has already been said about the actions God undertook for our salvation. These saving activities of the Triune God have been the main theme of everything the apostle has written so far. God seeks us out with His offer of grace. To that grace of His we are then asked to respond in terms set forth in the passage before us. It is in this way that we show ourselves to be "obedient children" (**v. 14**).

Readiness, steadiness, and a single-minded hope is what verse 13 calls for. For the first of these items the apostle reaches back into the Old Testament for the way he puts his request. You will recall how the Israelites were directed by Moses (see **Exodus 12:11**) to have their cloaks tucked in, their sandals on, and their staffs in hand on the night of the Passover. They were to be ready to move at a moment's notice. It is the kind of language Jesus

Himself employed to exhort His followers to be ready at all times for His return. (Here see **Luke 12:35**, in particular).

The Lord's coming back is referred to also in **verse 13**. It is described in terms of grace heading our way to reach us at the moment when Jesus Christ will be revealed in His splendor. The prospect might frighten anyone who thinks of it seriously. Hence the apostle also calls for both steadiness and a hope that is fully fixed on the liberation of God's children at the end of time.

There is another side to a proper response. It consists of not conforming to the lusts that characterize a pagan way of life and have their source in being ignorant of God's ways or deliberately ignoring them. The apostle, in his day, was writing to persons who, for the most part, had been won over to Christianity from total paganism, with all of its immorality and crude idolatry. For much of life in our society is not unlike the paganism of Peter's day. Sheer lust, religious ignorance, and outright idolatry prevail in large areas of life. As children of obedience—reborn to serve God—we are here asked to be different.

We are requested to shape our total conduct (**v. 15**) in keeping with the holiness of God who called us to be His children. It is by the Gospel that God calls us. That "good news is the account of what God has done for, in, and with us. Against this kind of background Peter sets forth the core principle of Christian ethics, namely, to shape our life in such a way as to be a response to God's actions. This is a way of saying that we should show ourselves to be what we already are: God's saints!

SET FREE FROM OUR OWN EGYPTS

Peter sees a parallel in depth between the Israelites being set free and our being ransomed from the kind of Egypt's people normally live in. He has already spoken of the ignorance of God and the evil desires that characterize life in general, before and without the new birth offered in Baptism (see **v. 14**). Now the apostle adds another item: sheer meaninglessness!

The phrase he uses is "empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers" (**v. 18**). The converts to whom he was writing had grown up in a culture with a long history. Its values and goals had been handed down from generation to generation. Yet a close look at this past in light of the insight offered by God's Spirit revealed these ways as being empty of any abiding significance. All the past could be summed up in the words of the Preacher (**Ecclesiastes 1:2**), "Meaningless! Meaningless!...Everything is meaningless."

Life without a knowledge of the true God and a relationship of grace with Him is really quite pointless. It has much meaning as Israelites making bricks for Pharaoh's taskmasters. God's ancient people were set free by God's power at the time of the first Passover. Peter now turns to this decisive event to describe the liberation that takes place by way of Baptism.

CHRIST, THE TRUE PASSOVER LAMB

How does the word *precious*, as applied to the blood of our Lord (**v. 19**), keep us from thinking of God's grace as being cheap just because it is free to us?

Read **Exodus 12:3-6**. Note how the Passover lamb was set aside at one time of the month and slaughtered later. How does **verse 5** make the application to Jesus Christ?

The benefits of God's action in Christ are available to all. Yet they are appropriated only by those who come to faith (**1 Peter 1:21**).

Such faith has as its object the God who raised Jesus from the dead and invested Him with glory. Anyone who accepts the fact of Jesus' resurrection and His ascension to the right hand of the Father will also realize that these events occurred to sound the Father's mighty "Amen!" over the suffering and death of our Lord as God's true Passover lamb.

Once again the apostle returns to the note of *hope*. And well he might! For the resurrection of Jesus Christ turns faith toward the future *in hope*.

Discussion:

1. Indicate in what way the fruit of the Spirit, as described in **Galatians 5:22-23**, cuts across our ordinary systems of values.
2. Comment on the application of **Hebrews 10:31** to **1 Peter 1:17**.
3. Give some reasons why great human virtues can be sought by those who are filled with God's grace and the Holy Spirit.
4. The story is told of how Benjamin Franklin kept a little notebook (diary) where he kept track of how he was doing each day in practicing certain virtues and avoiding certain vices. Is this an acceptable device for improvement in evaluating a godly life? Why or why not? Please explain.