



BACK TO THE BIBLE SERIES: 1 Peter: Hope Filled Living in a Culture of Despair
By Pastor Bryan Clark
Message Title: Therefore, Put Your Game Face On Pt. 2
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Verse 14:

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours in your ignorance*, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”(Vs. 14-16)

So now as obedient children—now we have been radically born again through the grace and mercy of God—I am now God’s child and my desire is to walk in obedience. He says we should not return to our **former lusts**. The word **lusts** there doesn’t necessarily have to refer to evil things. They’re just simply the desires of my heart that I was seeking to satisfy through the things of this world. Before my relationship with God, I had legitimate, deep longings, deep within my soul, but I did not know how to satisfy them. I tried all kinds of things in this world to find something that would ultimately satisfy, but nothing satisfied. I lived that way because I was ignorant of what was happening. I was ignorant of what my soul was ultimately longing for. But now that I have experienced new life in Christ, now I understand why those things of the world were not satisfying, why that wasn’t working. Why, now that I know the truth, would I ever go back to those things I was doing in my ignorance? So in essence that’s what he is saying, **“Therefore now, as obedient children, do not be conformed...”** kind of squeezed into the mold of this world. Don’t go back to those behaviors **“...to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance.”** So don’t do that! So what *should* you do? Well, *we should seek to be holy as God is holy*. He ends that paragraph with a quote from Leviticus, **Be holy as I am holy**.

So what exactly does that mean? If I was to say to you, “Don’t be conformed to your former ways of life, but instead be holy as God is holy. Have a nice day. See you next week,” you’re still left with the question, “I don’t know what that means. What does it mean to be holy?” It’s kind of that vague, religious language that sounds good, but you kind of walk away, saying, “I don’t know what that means”, and it kind of conjures up images like a halo, maybe you glow a little bit. Maybe it’s full of lots of religious behavior, religious language. Maybe I say, “Everything’s a blessing.” You know, whatever sounds kind of holy, religious like.

When my girls were younger and living at home, they would invite their friends over and sometimes their friends were a little intimidated—“I mean it’s the pastor’s house”—so I used to say to them, “Just tell them your dad’s like anyone else except he glows in the dark!” (*Laughter*) It’s kind of the imagery of, “Is that holy? Is that?” Sometimes we also kind of get this idea that

now that I have a ticket to Heaven, I'm obligated to obey the rules—so that's holy. "Here are the rules; you have to do them." There's kind of this negative tone to it. But that isn't what it's talking about at all.

The word **holy**—the root word means *to be different*; it means *to be other*. I think my favorite definition of holiness is *other than*. God is holy because He's utterly *other than* anyone else in the universe. Basically the idea is this: Before God created, God existed eternally in eternity past. Even though God is *One*, yet He is *three persons*. We were introduced in the introduction of this letter to God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit with the reminder that all three members of the Trinity are busy at work to bring about the fulfillment of the promise of salvation. Now the Doctrine of the Trinity is kind of this strange, wondrous, mysterious doctrine that frankly none of us can get our minds around. But the relevance is that from eternity past God has been a relational God. God existed in a relationship with Himself—the Father loving the Son, the Son loving the Spirit, the Spirit loving the Father; the Father celebrating and glorifying and enjoying the Son, the Son the Spirit, and the Spirit the Father. So there has been this life that has defined God forever. It is the very essence of life.

Theologians refer to this as the *Dance of God*. When you go back to Genesis 1 and 2, we were created as people made in the image of God—in essence to be relational as God is relational in a way that separates us from all other creation, in order that we might enter into the depth of the life and the love and the relationship that has defined God forever. That was God's intent. That is essentially what we were made for. But once Adam and Eve sinned, sin separated all of us from God; so we feel that deeply! In this world there's this sense I was made for something *different* than this. I was made for something *more* than this. There's kind of this restless feeling in our soul that somehow I think there's supposed to be more, I was made for more, and what that is, is my soul's longing for the world as God intended it to be—longing to enter into that life as God defines it. Essentially the offer of salvation is the offer—the invitation to *join the dance*. We experience it to some degree now, but in its complete fulfillment, at the revelation of the return of Jesus Christ, that's essentially what salvation is. So when Jesus is talking about *eternal life*, it's not just *a duration of life*, but it's *a quality of life*. This is life as God intended it to be! This is the fullness of life that is found in God, and on the basis of our salvation, we're invited into the dance.

So the idea of being **holy** is the idea of being utterly *other than* this world—to understand that life is found in God; it's found in the salvation that He offers! This is the life that has defined God forever. He's so utterly *other than* everything else in this world; and now as His child, why would I return back to the futile, empty ways of life that just left me disappointed and wounded and confused again and again and again, when He's actually called me to enter into this life that is utterly *other than* anything this world can offer? God says, "**Be holy as I am holy.**" Why? Because that's where the fullness of life is found...that's where we find life...that's where we find joy...that's where we find peace...that's where we find hope. That's the essence of what he's saying there.

Verse 17:

If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (Vs. 17-21)

Basically what that paragraph is saying is that the One that you now as a child of God call Father, there's a sense of relationship and intimacy there that now has been made possible. Never forget that the One that you call Father is still the sovereign judge of the universe. This is still the One who will judge every man according to his or her works. This is the God that ultimately brings condemnation on sin. The idea of fear is not so much afraid, but a deep respect. Basically the idea is that now that we call God, Father, now that we are no longer under the condemnation of our sin, but rather we have been forgiven on the basis of the blood of Jesus, why would we return to our old sinful, futile ways? The idea is now that you call the ultimate judge, Father, don't somehow convince yourself that sin is somehow not that big of a deal. Don't diminish the reality or the offense of sin! Don't somehow trivialize your sin—that now on the basis of the grace of God, God's got it covered—it doesn't really bother Him all that much—no big deal...no harm...no foul. It's actually saying, "No, actually the opposite!" Now that you call the ultimate judge your Father, you should be so aware that sin is so offensive to God that it actually separated us from God! It actually is so offensive to God that God brings condemnation on that sin, and for those that don't experience God's salvation, they will be ultimately judged and condemned forever...because sin *is* offensive to God! So now that you have been saved, now that you call the judge your Father, don't somehow trivialize sin and excuse it and think it's no big deal because God's grace covers it all.

So he reminds us of the cost, what it cost God to forgive your sin. He says, "Your sin is so offensive to God that you actually had to be purchased...redeemed." It's a slave-market term. You were purchased out of the slave-market of sin, in order to be set free before God. The purchase price was so great, it could not possibly be paid by something as worthless as gold and silver. The only thing that had enough value to purchase you out of the slave-market of sin is the precious blood of the Lamb, the sinless Son of God. It actually cost God His Son to pay the purchase price to cover your sin, because it's that offensive to God. There is a reminder that this Son who shed His blood was actually the eternal Creator of the universe, that He existed before there was anything else. Somehow, some way, the eternal God—the Genesis 1:1 Creator God—took on human flesh. Peter essentially says He actually lived in our lifetime—He walked this Earth while Peter and the first readers were alive on Earth, in order to shed His blood to provide salvation for future generations awaiting the return of Christ.

We learned that we live in the generation—the time period since the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus that the prophets looked forward to, and wondered who would be the lucky generation that would live in the fulfillment of the salvation God promises—something so spectacular that the angels longed to look on, to watch what God is doing. We happen to be

“*the*” generation—all those since the resurrection of Christ who actually live in the fulfillment of everything God promised. All we await now is the return of Christ and the fulfillment of everything God has promised. He says the ultimate result, then, would be *to the glory of God* and that we as His children *would find our faith and our hope in God*.

If verses 3-12 are true, **therefore** we should *not* go back to the empty way of life that defined us before. We should *not* be seeking to satisfy our deepest longings and needs in the things of this world. We did that when we were ignorant, but we are not ignorant anymore. We should *not* go back to that empty way of life, but realize that life is found in God! It’s found in this *other than* way that is so different from everything this world offers and can only be found in a relationship with God. We remind ourselves that our salvation was so costly to God that we should never trivialize sin, but rather, we should seek to walk in obedience. We should walk in holiness because that’s where life is found. Ultimately we then find our hope regardless of your circumstances, regardless of your pain, regardless of your confusion, regardless of your heartache, regardless of anything you’re going through. No matter what this world throws at you, our hope is found in God! Our minds are fixated on the grace to be revealed when Jesus returns. If you have trusted Christ as Savior—no matter what happens on this Earth—your future is absolutely spectacular, and that is the basis for your hope!

But here’s the deal: This is *not* how we just think naturally. Just because you heard this doesn’t mean somehow by osmosis it sinks in and that’s how you will think tomorrow. There is no one that is so spiritual that this is your default mode. I absolutely guarantee you this is *not* your default mode. The only way to experience the joy, the peace and the hope that can be yours in the most difficult moments of life is, it is absolutely necessary to get your game face on, and to understand in those difficult moments of life, “I have to fixate my mind, clearly disciplined in my thinking, to remember that ultimately my hope is found in the grace that will be revealed in the return of Christ. It is only when we, with all of our self-discipline and mental skills, get our game face on, get in the zone, and in those moments focus, that we remember—no matter what...no matter what!—I have every reason for hope. It’s the only way you’re going to live as a hope filled person, living in the midst of a culture of despair.

Cara: Bryan, thanks for the reminder to stay focused. I need that. Earlier this year in our study of Genesis, you referred to our world as the land of the dying. That seems to parallel now with your description of our culture of despair.

Bryan: Yeah, I think it is similar. It's got the same core issue, which we've talked about. How do you find that which satisfies apart from God? Does it mean they're always doing bad or evil things? They just can't figure out how to find significance and value and to satisfy these longings within, which creates the world system, and a world system without God can only lead to despair. So when we had our Life after Death series, we even talked about, that's like at the core of the definition of Hell; it's a place forever longing, but never able to have those longings satisfied.

Arnie: Bryan, when we start to realize that people around us are literally dying, it should motivate us to help them shouldn't it?

Bryan: Absolutely, it should. So whether they're dying physically, which we all are in some process of that, but emotionally, spiritually, I think we just underestimate, how much the people around us are in pain. And we have to move away from this us versus them, and viewing them as the enemy, and realize these are people in pain, and that leads to bad behavior and bad attitudes and solutions that will never work. But at some point we roll up our sleeves, we get into the mess and hopefully we have opportunities to share with them the truth that has set us free.

Cara: So you talked more about holiness in this message. It isn't so much a matter of obligation now, as it is living the life my soul was searching for and found in Christ, right?

Bryan: That is so important. So many Christians have their ticket to Heaven, and now they feel that duty to clean up their act as a way of saying thank you to God. And that just isn't what it is. It's not a duty, it's not a pay off because they have a ticket to Heaven. It's realizing this is the life that my soul has always longed for. And I finally found it. And that should create within me a genuine passion for righteousness.

Arnie: So Bryan in First Peter 1:17, it tells us to conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth. So tell me exactly what does it look like to conduct yourself in fear?

Bryan: Well, fear meaning not so much afraid, but respect. So respect that this is serious stuff. We're dealing with matters of life and death and eternity. That sin is so offensive to God, it actually cost Him the life of his own Son. So none of that should be minimized or taken for granted. Eternity hangs in the balance. So it's a reminder we have a mission to accomplish and we need to take that very seriously.

Arnie: Is fear the same as belief?

Bryan: No, I wouldn't say it's the same. Fear is like an awe or respect.

Arnie: Oh, so it's even a deeper than belief [Yeah] in some regard. Okay.

Bryan: Or maybe the outflow of belief in this case.

Cara: Right. So taking God's grace for granted seems like really a horrible thing to do considering what it cost Him.

Bryan: Yeah. I'd say taking grace for granted is a total misunderstanding of what has transpired, and sometimes maybe oftentimes, it stems out of a faulty presentation of the Gospel. If we've told people it's one, two, three, here's the formula, here's your ticket to Heaven, then it kind of sounds like ordinary grace, which is often going to be grace that we're going to devalue and take for granted. But if you think about grace as the basis for new life in Christ, that this is what my soul has been longing for, the idea of gird up our loins, to go for it. That it's a life full of hope and meaning and satisfaction. So there's no desire to use grace as an excuse or to take certain things for granted, but it's rather the basis by which I enter into the life I've always longed for.