

Be Holy

Holy Living Part 1

1 Peter 1:14-16 5-27-2012

Summary: You are either being conformed to evil desires or changed into the image of a holy God. Bad desires are caused by ignorance of what will satisfy. That ignorance is gone now, but because of lack of faith we still struggle with the desires. But we must be holy like God in every area, as obedient children (who desire to please their father). How? Through hope. Wherever you are, take the next step toward holiness and God will be pleased with you.

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1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 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."

Introduction: What Are You Becoming?

R.C. Sproul says that the term “human being” is a misnomer. He says instead of being called human beings we really ought to be called human *becomings*, because unlike God we are growing and changing into something different from what we are now. You are not the same person you were years ago, and years from now you will be very different from what you are like now. We are all changing, which means whatever you are now, you are becoming something else. The question is, what are you becoming? You are moving in a particular direction in your life right now – when you get where you are headed, where will you be? What will you be? What will you be like? In this passage Peter holds out two possibilities: a bad one and a good one.

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

That is the bad one. Some people are in the process of being conformed to the image of their sinful desires. Peter says, “Don’t let that happen. Instead...

15 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."

You are either conforming to evil desires or you are conforming to the holiness of God. You and I are being pressed into one of two molds. And whichever mold you are being pressed into determines what you will be like when you come out. So let's take a look at those two molds.

The Bad Mold: The Image of Ignorance

Peter starts with the bad one.

14 ... do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

Let's call that one the image of ignorance – or more precisely, the image of ignorant desires. That is a fascinating way to speak of our old life.

Depraved Desires

The thing that was so bad about your old life was that your desires were messed up. This word translated **desires** always refers to evil desires in Peter. That word appears in a list in chapter 4 with debauchery, drunkenness, orgies, and carousing. That gives you an idea of the kind of desires he is talking about – desires that arise from the impulses of the body in ways that draw us into sin. In 2 Peter 1:4 he says those desires are what cause the corruption that exists in the world. And in 1 Peter 2:11 he says that they war against our soul.

Messed up by Ignorance

Our lives used to be driven by depraved desires. And it is interesting what Peter says was the cause of those depraved desires. What was it that messed up our desires so bad? Ignorance.

How does ignorance mess up your desires? Well, let's think through what causes desires. Desires are not an inborn part of who you are. Appetites are, but not desires. We are all born with the same appetites, but as life goes on we each begin to desire whatever we think will satisfy our appetites. And that is where ignorance comes in. If I am ignorant about what would satisfy my appetites, then my desires will be off. I will desire the wrong things.

If a baby is hungry, and he is crawling around on the floor and sees some lint – if he thinks that lint will satisfy his hunger, then he will desire the lint. Take it away from him and he'll cry. That is an ignorant desire.

If you are dying of thirst, and you see an ice-cold bottle of water, you will desire that water because you think it will satisfy your thirst. What if it is salt water – or sewage water? If you know that, then you will not desire it. But if you are ignorant of that information, then you would desire it. Desire always runs one step behind our evaluating faculty. The part of you that assesses what things are worth is what dictates your desires. If you are starving, and you see a bowl of fruit, you desire the fruit – but only because you are ignorant of the fact that it is plastic fruit. So you are looking at something that would not satisfy your appetite, but you desire it anyway because of ignorance. That is how ignorance affects desire. It makes you desire things that will not satisfy because you do not know they will not satisfy.

Prior to salvation, we were ignorant – not about water and fruit, but about holiness. We did not have any idea about the value and beauty of holiness, and so we did not desire it. We preferred the sewage of this world instead. That is how ignorance causes moral corruption.

Lack of Faith

That was the problem with our old life. Before we were Christians we were ignorant about the truth, which messed up our desires. Now that we are believers, that ignorance is the thing of the past, right? Peter calls it our *former* ignorance.¹ But here is where this gets interesting: If the ignorance is gone, why are the desires still a problem? We are no longer ignorant, and yet Peter still has to command us not to conform to those desires that come from ignorance. Why is that? It is because even though we know the truth now, we have trouble believing it. We know God's way is better but sometimes our own way looks so good, we just have a hard time believing what we know to be true. We doubt the truth and as a result those desires remain a problem, because lack of faith has exactly the same effect as ignorance. Not trusting the truth has the same effect as not knowing the truth.

Conformed to Sinful Desires

So even though we now have the truth, we are still at risk of being *conformed* to evil desires – which is a striking image. The word **conformed** means to be squeezed into a mold. Desires will do that to you. They will mash your soul into the shape of their own image. They will turn you into that kind of a person – a person characterized by the filthiness that results when lusts and the impulses of the flesh go unrestrained.

You are a human becoming. Ten years from now you are going to be something different from what you are now. And if we let ignorance or unbelief remain, that image you will see in the mirror ten years from now will not be a pretty sight. The image of ignorance is vile, repulsive, ugly and impure. And so Peter says, “Don’t be pressed into that mold - instead, be holy.”

The Good Mold: The Image of God

15 But like the holy one who called you, be holy in all your behavior.

Instead of conforming to the image of ignorant desires we are to conform to the image of God. And if God is anything, He is holy. That is the good mold – the image of God, which is holiness. Holiness is the only attribute of God that is ever raised to the third degree of repetition – holy, holy, holy is the LORD God Almighty. And that statement appears numerous times in Scripture. Holiness is supreme among God's attributes.

The Holiness of God

God's holiness refers to two things. He is above and beyond the creation – transcendent above the universe and all created things. He is totally separated from sin and evil. One scholar defined the holiness of God this way: “It expresses a sense of God's awesomeness, power, majesty, glory, wondrousness, distinctiveness, and separateness from and intolerance of all that is evil, impure, unclean, polluted, and profane.”²

Jonathan Edwards taught that God's holiness should be loved first, prior to the rest of His attributes, because it is the best. If moral evil is the worst thing there is, then holiness is the best. All the splendor of all His other attributes is beautiful only because of His holiness. His complete separation from sin is what makes everything about Him wonderful. For example, take God's power. Is power a good thing? Not if the person who has that power is unholy. God's holiness is what makes His power wonderful, because unlike an evil powerful being, God's power is used only for perfect good. Is love a good thing? Not if you love the wrong things – like stealing or gossip or immorality. God's holiness is what makes His love beautiful, because unlike evil lovers, the object of God's

¹ Syntactically it looks like the word “former” refers to the desires. But if we still have to be commanded not to be conformed to them, it seems the desires are not really “former.” The only thing in the verse that no longer exists for the believer is the ignorance.

² Elliott, 360

affection is only the good.³ God's holiness makes His forgiveness beautiful, because unlike sinful forgivers God forgives only in perfect harmony with justice and never partially, insincerely or with mixed motive. God's holiness is the one attribute that makes all His other attributes good.

That is what God is like, and so that is the standard for what we are to be like.

16 Be holy, because I am holy.

That is all the reason we need. That is the highest reason there is. Way beyond whatever benefits come from holy living, whatever reward it has, however it helps other people – those are all great reasons to be holy, but the biggest is the fact that God is holy.

Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God

We are to be holy just simply because God is that way, and nothing is better than being like God.

In Everything

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do

There is no area of life exempt from the requirement of holiness. Sometimes we think, "I'll fudge a little over here, and make up for it over there. I'll gossip about someone, or speak disrespectfully to someone, but then I'll make up for it by lavishing a lot of praise on that person. I'll let my life slip in the area of pure speech, but I'll make up for it by doing a lot of ministry at church." Or sometimes it comes out this way, "Yes, I know I'm not doing well in that area, but I least I'm..." And we divert attention to some area of strength – some area where we are doing better than everyone else, as if that somehow cancels out our sin.

But that does not work. You cannot make up for sin; you cannot cancel out sin. You cannot slack in one area and make up for it by going above and beyond in another area because there is no such thing as above and beyond holiness. God requires holiness in every area. So if you are holy in one area, that is not above and beyond – that is just the minimum baseline requirement. You cannot do anything above and beyond holiness. You cannot do anything above and beyond what is required in any particular area, so it is impossible to make up for unholiness in another area. God requires that you be holy in your speech, in your thoughts, in your attitudes, desires, appetites, motives, drives, actions, plans, hopes, dreams – every part of you. He requires holiness at home, holiness in your marriage, holiness in your church life, holiness at your job, at school, in your neighborhood, on the golf course, on vacation, in front of your TV, on your computer, in your emails, on Facebook, when you are alone, when you are in a crowd – holiness in everything you do. When you look at all those areas of your life, and you look at your regular practice, could you write, "Set apart to the Lord," over each one? My TV watching – set apart as holy to the Lord. My choice of companions – set apart for God. My music, my business dealings, my eating and drinking – holy to the Lord, just like the Ark of the Covenant.

Practical, Not Positional

Now, you might hear all this and think, "Wait a second – why is Peter speaking to believers and telling them to be holy? I thought we were already holy. I thought Jesus' perfect holiness was credited to my account the moment I first believed. Isn't it true that all believers are holy in God's sight? Isn't that why we are called saints, which means 'holy ones'?" The answer to all that is yes. Jesus' righteousness is credited to our account as believers. However, God still calls us to strive to live up to our position in Christ. It is possible to have a position and to fail to live out the reality of that position. For example, imagine someone is elected President of the United States, but he is just really lazy and he never does anything. He never signs any legislation, never appoints judges, never carries out any of his presidential duties. Someone might come to him and say, "Mr. President, you need to start

³ It is true that God loves sinful men, but He does so for the sake of His glory, so the ultimate object of His love is His glory.

behaving like a president.” That is what Peter is telling us. You are saints – so strive to act like saints. Personal holiness is something we must strive for on a daily basis. And if we don’t, we distance ourselves from God.

Relationship, not Legalism

You might hear all that and think, “That sounds overwhelming.” You hear God make demands like this and it strikes you as discouraging or even condemning. Instead of inspiring you toward holiness, it makes you want to throw up your hands and just give up.

How should we respond when God’s commands hit us that way? I will tell you one way not to respond. Some people deal with that by saying, “We’re under grace, not law, so we should not look at the commands in Scripture as binding on us. That is legalism. To say we need to strive and strain and work and labor to be more holy – that is legalism. That is of the flesh.” I hope none of you respond that way. There are about 1000 commands in the New Testament – we are not at liberty to just sweep them all aside by calling them legalistic.

The Law of God is most definitely authoritative in our lives as Christians. Just look at verse 16.

15 ...be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

He is quoting Leviticus 19:2. The fact that it is commanded in Leviticus 19:2 means it is binding on us today.⁴ There are three aspects to the Old Testament Law:⁵

1. The moral instructions like this one
2. Ceremonial instructions for the sacrificial system
3. Civil codes for the running the country in ancient Israel

The civil and ceremonial have been fulfilled in Christ and are not directly binding on us, but the moral law is just as binding on us today as it ever was for anyone.

As Obedient Children

There is nothing legalistic about obedience. That is part of our family relationship. Look back at the beginning of verse 14.

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

Why does Peter begin with the phrase **as obedient children**? What is the difference between starting that way, and leaving that phrase out? Is there any difference between saying, **Do not conform to the evil desires you had...** and **as obedient children do not conform to the evil desires you had...**? What does that phrase add? It shows us that the basis for our righteous living is the father-child relationship we have with God. You see, when people say, “Now that I’m saved, I no longer have to concern myself with obedience” – they are failing to understand what kind of relationship we have with God. Being born again makes you the child and God the Father, which places you in a context of obedience. If Scripture requires anything of children, it is obedience. Very rarely does Scripture speak directly to children, but when it does, it is always “Children, obey your parents.” Honor your parents and obey your parents – Proverbs 6:20, Ephesians 6:1, Colossians 3:20, Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16, Matthew 15:4, Matthew 19:19, Mark 7:10, Mark 10:19, Luke 18:20,

⁴ Leviticus 19 is a very important chapter in the Bible. It is quoted many, many times in the New Testament. Some have suggested that the whole book of James is a commentary on Leviticus 19. Whenever the New Testament writers want to call us to a holy life, they refer back to the most important chapter on holy living in the Old Testament, which is Leviticus 19.

⁵ Some object to that system on the grounds that the Law itself does not make such a distinction. Leviticus 19, for example, mixes all three types of laws together in one chapter. There are commands against stealing and lying (v.11), commands regulating sacrifices (vv.5-10), and regulations about mixing two kinds of material in a garment (v.19). It is instructive, however, that even with the great number of New Testament references to Leviticus 19, it is only the moral commands that are cited, never the ceremonial or civil. This would be a strange omission if all the aspects of the Old Testament law applied today in the same way.

Ephesians 6:2. Only one command for children, and it is repeated eleven times. If there is anything true of children it is that they are required to honor and obey their parents. And that is the kind of relationship we have with God when we are born into His family.

I hear people say all the time, “So and so is a Christian, but he isn’t walking with the Lord. He isn’t walking in obedience.” If he is in some kind of relationship with God that does not involve obedience, he is not saved.

Teach your Kids to Obey

Sometimes I wonder if people in our culture are confused about this because there is so much permissive parenting. So many kids today are growing up in houses where sometimes disobedience is punished, other times it is not. Kids are allowed to ignore their parents, argue, talk back, debate. In some families, there is always one free pass. Mom says do something, and the child is always allowed to disobey the first time. There are never any consequences until the second or third or fourth warning, which teaches the child that it is always OK to disobey once. It is no big deal to disregard mom or dad the first time – just don’t go too much further after the warnings finally start.

And the result of that kind of permissive parenting is a lot more than just the fact that home life will be miserable and the child fails to learn self-control. Much more serious than that is the fact that that child is being trained to think completely wrongly about the nature of the father-child relationship. Being a child of God does not call to their mind a position of obedience and submission. And that totally confuses the issue when they become Christians. They do not have the right perspective toward their heavenly Father at all, and they have a sense that a certain level of disobedience is OK. Those are the people who fall into the error of thinking grace means it is OK to disobey.

But that kind of attitude is totally foreign to Scripture, and to Peter. He says, “You’ve been born again – you’re God’s children, so as obedient children, do not conform to ignorant desires anymore.”

Listening

So yes, we are required to obey. But it is a relational, family kind of obedience that springs from love for the Father. The word for **obedient** derives from the root word “listen.” Obedience in Scripture is always linked to listening. The obedient heart is not just one that acquiesces to some command. The truly obedient heart listens for the will of the father. The child who obeys with biblical obedience is the child who is interested in discovering what his father really wants, and then is easily persuaded to that way of thinking. Adam was punished because he listened to Eve. What does that mean? His sin was not that he paid attention to his wife when she was talking. His sin was that he listened in the sense of being persuaded to go along with her way of thinking. The child who truly listens to his father with an obedient heart does not just knuckle under to what dad is requiring. He allows his heart to be won over to his dad’s side. That is how we are to interact with God.

Calling (Personal)

It is so important that we understand that the Christian life is not obeying rules; it is obeying a Person. The command to be holy does not come to us as an impersonal regulation or decree. It is a calling - a personal summons.

15 just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do

Salvation is when God says, “Come to Me,” and we come. And movement toward God is always movement in the direction of holiness. There can be no nearness to God or movement toward God without holiness. That is why...

Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort ... to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Imitating God

So the command to be holy in every area of life is not an oppressive, burdensome rule. It is a call to be like God so we can draw near to God. The fact that we are called to be imitators of God is an amazing concept. Philosophers insist that it is not even possible to conceive of what God is like, so He is totally unknowable. But not only is it possible to understand what He is like and to know Him personally; it is even possible to become like Him! That is just a staggering reality. And not only can you be like God, you can imitate the best thing about God – His holiness. This attribute that is so essential to His nature, you can possess! There are forces that can press you into the disgusting mold of ignorant desires. But there are also forces that can put you into a mold that will transform you into having the character of Jesus Christ!

Are you discouraged because you cannot do great things? You can't sing or play an instrument, you can't preach, you don't have any great talent or skill that anyone would be the least bit impressed with. You are kind of a nobody at work, you are never going to achieve greatness there. Everything about you is kind of mediocre. You may not be able to do all those other things, but you can be holy. You can possess, as a real, genuine part of your nature, the very holiness of God! Nothing is more impressive than holiness. And nothing is more valuable, because more than anything else, holiness will enable you to draw near to God.

Fellowship with God through Holiness

Some of you are reading through the book *What's so Great about God?* The purpose of that book is to help you experience the presence of God by experiencing eighty of His attributes. As a church we are working hard at learning how to experience the attributes of God – experience His power, His love, His guidance, His protection, His jealousy, His generosity, etc. How do you experience those things? One of the greatest ways to experience them is by becoming the tool God uses to deliver them to other people. If you really want to feel the love of God, volunteer to be one God uses to show His love to someone else. If you want to have a great experience of God's justice, become His tool to bring about justice for someone who is receiving injustice.

One of the biggest obstacles to loving God more is the problem of knowing about His attributes but not loving them. You know all about them, you could ace a theology quiz on them, but they do not really touch your emotions very much. You see someone in the worship service reduced to tears when we sing about God's forgiveness, and you think, "I know I'm forgiven too, and there should be tears of joy in my eyes, but I don't feel anything." How can you learn to not just know the facts about God's forgiveness, but really see that forgiveness as the massive, priceless treasure that it is so it increases your delight in God? Easy – just go out and forgive someone who has really hurt you. Do that, and then you will have an idea what forgiveness costs. And then when you read about God's forgiveness in Scripture it really will bring you to tears. The more the attributes of God flow through you, the more insight you will have into the beauty and costliness of them, and the more you will love them. And that is never more true than with holiness.

How?

You are a human becoming. You are changing into something else. You are being squeezed into one of two molds, and you will come out either in the image of this corrupt world, or in the image of God. And we saw that the forces that will squeeze you into the world's image are the desires of ignorance. But what kind of forces will make you holy? What can we do to subject ourselves to the kinds of forces that will make us more like God? So we must not be conformed by the desires of ignorance, but rather we must be holy like God. How do we do that? You might be thinking, "I already knew I was supposed to be holy. I already knew I was supposed to be obedient. What good does it do for Peter to just tell me, "Be holy"? I need to know how." Is Peter going to tell us how to live a holy

life? Yes – the whole rest of the book is about how to live a holy life. I would go so far as to say holy living is the most prominent theme in the whole book.⁶ That is what the whole book is about. However, the most important principle on how to live a holy life is something Peter has already said. It is those first thirteen verses, which are all about hoping in God.

Hope

Peter is not changing the subject in verse 14. Those first thirteen verses on hope are the foundation for holy living. We will never have the ability to separate ourselves from sin unless we have some better alternative. Trying to live a holy life will never work unless you have your face pressed up against the window so that your heart is filled with joy as you anticipate your future inheritance. If you do not have hope in God's promises, then the pleasures of this world are all you have, and you will never be able to let go of them. The only way to get the soul to be willing to let go of sinful pleasures is by offering it better pleasures. So if you have not been here the last eight weeks, I would urge you to listen back through those messages, because hope is an absolutely essential ingredient to holiness.

What is it that makes those evil desires so powerful? Ignorance. So now that our ignorance is gone, why are those desires still a problem? Lack of faith, which functions exactly the same way as ignorance. If I know God's promises and do not trust Him to deliver on them, that is the same as not knowing them at all. So being pressed into a sinful mold is caused by either not knowing the truth or not believing the truth. What is the opposite of that? If I do know and believe the truth about God and His promises, the result will be hope. And hope has the power to press me into the mold of holiness.

Conclusion: Take the Next Step

One last word for those who still feel overwhelmed or discouraged. I know there are some people who think, "Man, if God requires personal holiness in everything in my life, He must be absolutely disgusted with me." So they just revert to thinking only in terms of positional righteousness in Christ, because when Scripture starts calling for practical holiness in every area of your day to day living, commands like that feel condemning.

If that is the response you have, it is probably because you have a conception of God that pictures Him as being pleased with nothing short of perfection. And that is a skewed perception of God's nature. If you think that way about God, you need to get to know Him better. In 2 Corinthians 5:9 Paul said, **We make it our goal to please him.** That was Paul's goal – to please God. Were there ever any days when Paul reached that goal? Or was it an impossible goal in this life? No – it is possible to please God. Enoch pleased God, and if we follow his example of faith, we can also please God Heb.11:5-6). The Thessalonians pulled it off.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living...

"Maybe he's talking about their positional righteousness in Christ."

No – look at the next line:

...Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.

This is something that happens in degrees. It is possible for us, as believers, to grieve God, it is possible to please Him a little bit, and it is possible to please Him a lot. So however much you are pleasing God right now, you should strive to please Him more.

⁶ Forms of the Greek word for "holy" appear in 1:2 (2X), 12, 15,16, 19(2X), 22, 2:5, 9, 3:5, 3:2, 15.

And that is great news because if you have lots and lots and lots of room for improvement in your life – lots of areas where you need to learn to please God more – that does not mean God is displeased with you now. Just like your children. You might be pleased with the progress they have made, and you will be even more pleased when they make more progress. That is the way God is with us. We can please Him or grieve Him in degrees, based on our holiness. So we must strive for ever-increasing holiness.

And if you see areas where you have a long way to go, what would it take for God to be pleased with you right now – today? If you are 100 miles from where you ought to be, and you are grieving God by going the wrong direction, what would it take for Him to be pleased with you? Our youngest child got his driver's license last week, so now everybody is driving. And the great thing about having kids who can drive is instead of driving them places, they drive me places and I can just ride and get work done as they chauffeur me around everywhere. Imagine that my son is driving me somewhere, and I tell him, "An emergency just came up at church; we need to go there right away. I know we were planning on going to a movie together, but we're going to have to change our plans. So turn the car around, and let's go to the church – because there's someone there who is in great need." Now imagine he rebels at that point. You would definitely have to use your imagination, because he is not like this at all, but imagine he says, "No – I'm sick of having to change plans all the time. I'm not turning around. I'm going to the movie, and if you want to go help someone at the church you can just take a cab from the theater," and he keeps right on driving toward the theater.

Now, as his dad I could just pull a power play and make him turn around, but at this point I am really worried about his heart. So we have a conversation about his attitude and his rebellion and the fact that God's way of honor and submission to authority is the path to far greater joy than the path he is taking. And we talk about this person at church, and how the Lord has compassion on that person. And finally we get to a point in our conversation where tears start to flow from his eyes, and through his tears he says, "I'm so sorry for my rebellion and for how I've dishonored you, and for my lack of compassion for that person. Dad, would you please forgive me?" And he wipes his eyes and turns the car around and starts heading for the church.

While he was in rebellion I was grieved and not pleased. At what point do I go back to being pleased with him instead of grieved? Does he have to drive all the way to the church before I am pleased? No. As soon as he repents and then turns the car around, I am pleased. Even though we are still miles away from where we should be, I am already pleased just because he has started moving in the right direction. If you are miles and miles away from where you should be in your character, if you are light years away from where you need to be, you are not light years away from being able to please God. You are never more than 180 degrees away from pleasing God.

If the command to be holy in all you do hits you as condemning or discouraging or paralyzing, remind yourself that all it would take for you to be thoroughly pleasing to God right now at this moment would be to just repent of your sin, turn around, and take the first step in the direction of His calling.

What area of unholiness can you see in your life right now? What steps could you take in the direction of holiness? Maybe deep down you know that getting involved in a prayer group would be very likely to improve your walk with the Lord. So what would it take for you to please God right here and now in this moment? You could write that on your prayer card right now, "I want to join a prayer group."

"But I don't want to do that because I know what's going to happen. Next Sunday will come and I won't have the resolve to follow through, and I'll just flake out once again. I know I won't be able to be faithful, so I might as well not even start."

The grace you need to follow through next Sunday will come next Sunday. You do not need to worry about that now. Do not ever refuse to do what is right today because you are assuming God will not provide enough grace tomorrow to enable you to be faithful. God can handle tomorrow; you are only responsible for today.

Maybe you have an unreconciled relationship; you are at odds with someone in the body, and you know that the Christ-like thing to do would be to make another effort to reconcile, but you have just been putting it off. You could please God right now by jotting down when you are going to make that effort, and committing to it.

Maybe you know you could make much greater progress toward holiness if you started spending time every day in God's Word and in prayer. Maybe you are so caught up in fear about your finances that you have stopped worshipping God through your tithe, and that lack of trust in Him is getting in the way of intimacy with Him. And you know exactly what you need to do. Maybe you are stumbling again and again in some really embarrassing area, and you know you could have better success if you got some help, but you just want to keep dealing with it on your own – even though that clearly is not working. Does God require total victory in that area before He will be pleased with you? No, just turn the car around. Just take the first step in the direction of holiness, and you will be doing what Peter is calling us to do when he says, "Be holy in everything." Any time Scripture commands a destination, you are obeying that command as soon as you take the first step in that direction.

Benediction: 2 Peter 3:10-14 the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. ¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

1:25 Questions

1. Do calls to obey God strike you as legalistic? Or do they discourage you or feel condemning? If so, what could you do to begin to change your perspective so that they strike you as calls to draw near to God rather than oppressive rules?
2. Is there some effort toward holiness that you know you need to make, but you have been putting it off? Are you willing to make a commitment right now to do it?
3. Which "desires of ignorance" threaten to conform you to their mold right now? How could you increase your faith in those areas?