"Walk in Holiness"
I Peter 1:13-21

Introduction:

Today marks the beginning of many things—new hymnals, planning for the new elevator, school starting, the beginning of another professional football season. I got to wondering “Why is anyone a Green Bay Packer fan?” (Or a Brewers fan or a Bears fan or . . .? You know what I mean.) Concerning the Packers, I suspect the reasoning would go something like this: I like football; the Packers are my home team; they have a great tradition; in Milwaukee, it’s the thing to do—it’s “cool” to root for them. “Therefore,” that is, because of the preceding statements something must happen—therefore, I will watch the games on TV—perhaps even going to a few; I will wear Packer “stuff”; I will learn about the team, e.g. Aaron Rodgers, Matt Flynn, Donald Driver, Mark Tauscher. I will defend them. Therefore, I will be a Green Bay Packer fan.

In verse 13, Peter uses the “therefore” in the same manner—sometimes we can ask, “What is it there for?” In the preceding verses, Peter has reminded believers that they have hope. They have been born again and they have an assurance of eternal life in heaven. They, also, have a hope of an inheritance when Jesus returns. In between becoming a believer and receiving their final reward in heaven, Peter writes that the Christian will experience a variety of trials. But Peter writes that the trials are a good thing—they will purify and strengthen the believer’s faith in God. Therefore, because of the assurance found in the preceding topics, in verses 1 through 12, there is a particular way a Christian should walk through life; they should “Walk in Holiness.” Peter gives 5 commands or guidelines for living.
I. Five Commands for Living (1:13-16)

A. Prepare your minds for action. First, Peter says that we need to prepare our minds for action. As we saw last week, being a Christian doesn’t mean we lie back in a recliner and watch the world go by. Just like a Green Bay Packer fan has things that he does because he is a fan, there are things a Christian must do. We must be active. Our prime directive is to go into the world and make disciples. While we are in the world, trials and temptations are going to come our way. We need to be ready to meet them and to grow through them. We need to roll-up our sleeves.

We need to center our thoughts on God’s gift to us and the promise of Christ’s imminent return. Our outlook will determine the outcome. A Christian looking for the glory of God has a greater motivation for obedience than a Christian who ignores the Lord’s return or anything God has done for him. We need to study God’s Word so that as Peter says in chapter 3, “In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” We need to be prepared for action—holy living begins with our minds.

B. Be self-controlled. Peter’s second command—be self-controlled—means not to lose spiritual control by adopting and accepting the world’s sinful system. Believers need to guard against accepting the world’s priorities and goals. Later in 1 Peter 5:8 Peter tells us to “be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” Instead of adopting any of the world’s goals, our goal should be God’s goal—to win others to Christ so that they can have the same hope we have and to praise and glorify God.

C. Fix your hope on God’s grace. Next Peter tells us to “Fix your hope on God’s grace.” Turn to Philippians 3:13-14. Rather than being snared by the sinful actions and attitudes going
on around us, like Paul, we need to focus on the prize at the end of the race—eternal life in heaven with Christ. Victory isn’t just wishful thinking—it is assured!

If a Christian finds anything more attractive than fellowship with Jesus Christ; if he yearns more to enjoy this world than to receive the joys of heaven, then he isn’t looking forward with love to Christ’s appearing—he isn’t focused on God’s grace and he isn’t walking in holiness. All believers need the same perspective or outlook as the Apostle John had in Revelation 22:20 where Jesus said, “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’” And John replied, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.” This is the right response for those who have received God’s great gift of salvation. This is fixing our hope on God’s grace.

D. Do not conform to this world. Peter’s fourth command is “Do not conform to this world.” As children of God our desires should no longer be like the world’s desires. As Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.” The Christian is to be different from the world—our conduct and attitudes need to be different. We are governed by different rules—our guide is no longer the world and situational ethics but the will of God and His commands. Things like: “You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not lie. You shall not covet.” Just to name a few.

E. Be holy. Finally, as children of God, we need to be like Him—we need to be holy. In Ephesians 1:4 we read, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” Later in Ephesians 2:10 we read, “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” With the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us, we are called to love and serve God and to separate
ourselves from the immorality and sinfulness that surrounds us and entices us—we are to be holy which means “separate from the world.” Just as little children imitate their parents, we need to imitate our heavenly Father.

In everything we do, we need to glorify God. As 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, even such things as eating and drinking can be done to the glory of God. If something cannot be done to the glory of God, then we can be sure it must be out of the will of God.

After these commands to walk in holiness, in verses 17-21, Peter gives several reasons why we should walk in holiness:

II. Three Reasons to Walk in Holiness (1:17-21)

A. God is our Father. God is our Father and as God’s children, we need to be serious about sin and holy living—just as God is. Our Father is holy (John 17:11) and righteous (John 17:25) and as His children, we should reflect or imitate His nature—we need to be holy and righteous.

B. God is our Judge. God will judge in absolute fairness. The word “judge” here means to look for something good. We will all appear before God’s judgment seat—turn to 1 Corinthians 4:5. Each of us will give an account of what we have done with the talents, time, and abilities God has given us and each will receive the appropriate reward. God will search our motives and He will examine our hearts.

We have been forgiven of our sins and they won’t be held against us. In 1 John 1:9 it says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” And in Psalm 103:12 David wrote, “as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” Depending on our motives, which God sees, we will receive praise for what we did for Him.
In verse 18 Peter writes about fear, but this fear isn’t fear of judgment, but a fear of disappointing God or sinning against His love. This is the loving reverence of a child for his parents not the cringing fear of a slave before his master. Just as children want to please their earthly parents, the believer should want to please his heavenly Father.

C. God’s love. The highest motive for holy living—for walking in holiness—is God’s love. As Peter has already said, Christ’s death wasn’t an accident—it was planned before the foundation of the world—before creation even began. We have been saved from an eternity in hell and, instead are adopted children of God with the promise of eternity in heaven with Him because of God’s love for us. This should be reason enough for us to seek to walk in holiness.

Conclusion:

If someone were to say that they were a Packer fan, but they didn’t watch or listen to the games; they didn’t know anyone on the team; they had no Green and Gold; and they didn’t defend the team, would you call them a fan? Of course not!

If someone were to say that they were a believer—a Christian—but they have no time to read His Word; their life and actions are the same as the rest of the world; their goals in life have nothing to do with God, Jesus, or heaven; they aren’t ready to tell others about Jesus, would you call them a Christian?

When we think about the sacrifice Christ made for us, as His children we should want to obey God and live holy—separate—lives for His glory and praise. If we are going to live lives of holiness, we need to be prepared for action, we need to be self-controlled and not follow the world; we need to be controlled by the Holy Spirit— with our eyes fixed on God and His grace, we need to resist the efforts of the world to make us like the world, we need to make God’s priorities our priorities—then we walk “Walk in Holiness.”