Swimming Against the Current of Un-Holiness
Message 4 in I PETER SERIES
Scripture Text: I Peter 1:13-16

As we continue with our SERIES OF MESSAGES from the Book of I Peter, I would like for you to turn in your Bibles to I PETER 1 and just leave your Bibles open there. We will be getting to today’s scripture text in just a few minutes.

Before we begin today’s study, let’s go to GOD in prayer.

(BRIEF PRAYER)

The Incredible Salmon

Out of all the amazing creatures God created, one of the most amazing is the fish we call THE SALMON.

The life of a SALMON is very interesting. They are born in FRESH WATER and as they get older they eventually go to LIVE IN THE SALT WATER SEAS. But when the SALMON reaches its maturity they have an absolute resolve to return to their FRESH WATER SPAWNING GROUNDS.

The trip back to their SPAWNING GROUNDS is a seemingly impossible task, full of dangers, traps and obstacles, as they must swim hundreds of thousands of miles against powerful river currents. At times they must swim through very shallow waters that is only 3-4 inches deep in places. But no matter how difficult the journey becomes, the SALMON never stops swimming, otherwise the CURRENT would sweep them back and they would never reach their final destination.
Why does THE SALMON do this? Wouldn’t it just be a whole lot easier for the SALMON to remain in the great big sea with all the other salt water fish? Of course it would be easier. But you see, THE SALMON IS WILLING TO SWIM AGAINST THE POWERFUL CURRENTS AND DIE TO ITSELF IN ORDER TO PROVIDE NEW LIFE FOR OTHER SALMON.

As Christians, God has commanded us to “swim against the currents of un-holiness.” And I think all of us as Christians know the odds are stacked heavily against us as we try to follow Christ in this world.

We are now living in a time when we are facing new temptations and perhaps even greater temptations than Christians who lived in any generation before us.

Every single day we are pounded by the currents of immorality and wickedness and if we don’t keep swimming against those powerful currents we will be swept away by them.

How do we do it?
How do we “swim against the current of unholiness?”

Peter tells us how in today’s scripture text:

READ: 1 PETER 1:13-16

In these verses PETER reveals three things we must do if we are to “Swim Against the Currents of Un-holiness.”
First of all we must

I. **THINK Like A Saved Person Is Supposed to THINK** (v. 13)

v. 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.

1. Notice that word **therefore** that Peter uses at the beginning of this 13th verse.

   **THEREFORE** is a **transitional** word that **connects** what has previously been said with what is about to be said.

2. Well what has Peter been talking about in the **previous 12 verses** we have looked at thus far? Primarily he has been talking about **SALVATION**. Three times in those first twelve verses, Peter reminded those suffering Christians of their **HOPE** of salvation. He did it in **verse 5, verse 9** and again in **verse 10**

3. So when Peter begins this 13th verse with that word “**Therefore**” he is continuing with his thoughts about **SALVATION**.

   In this thirteenth verse Peter is bringing this matter of our salvation down “**to where the rubber meets the road.**”

   He is saying, “If we are going to survive this wicked, sinful world, we have to “think like saved people ought to think!”
Peter says, “prepare your mind for action.” (v.13a)

This phrase has an interesting meaning. It literally means, “gird up the loins of your mind.”

Illustration: In Bible times men, as well as women, wore long robe-like garments that covered their bodies all the way down to the tops of their feet. (What a contrast to the skimpy, immodest apparel worn by so many today that leaves little to the imagination, huh?)

Well any way, if a Jewish man had a long journey to make, that long garment would impede his movement, so he would “gird up his loins” which is to say he would roll up his garment and tie it about his waist with a leather or cloth belt. This allowed the man to move about freely as he made his long journey.

You and I are on a long journey toward heaven. That means, as Christians, we have to “prepare our minds for action” “we have to gird up the loins of our minds.”

That involves two things regarding our “thought” life.

(a.) First, Peter tells us if we are going to “think like a saved person” we must exercise self-control over our thoughts.

v. 13 a, b Therefore prepare your minds for action, BE SELF-CONTROLLED.

When it comes to what goes into your MIND you are in total control. You are the one who determines what TV shows and movies you will watch......what you will read......what websites you will visit on the internet......and what music you will listen to. Therefore it is up to YOU and it is up to ME to exercise SELF-CONTROL over our thought-life.
PETER is literally telling us that if we are going to THINK LIKE A SAVED PERSON OUGHT TO THINK we have to “keep our MINDS out of the GUTTER.”

What are we think on instead? The Apostle Paul tells us in PHILIPPIANS 4:8 (NIV).

Paul writes: Finally brothers, whatever is TRUE, whatever is NOBLE, whatever is RIGHT, whatever is PURE, whatever is LOVELY, whatever is ADMIRABLE---if anything is EXCELLENT or PRAISE-WORTHY......THINK ON SUCH THINGS.

(b.) Second, Peter tells us “if we are going to think like a saved ought to think” we need to focus our minds on our SALVATION.

v. 13c “set your HOPE fully on the GRACE to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

ANALOGY Let’s go back to the SALMON analogy for just a moment. I don’t know what is in the mind of a SALMON as it makes its long, perilous journey from the sea back to its fresh water spawning grounds. But it is obvious that SALMON is so focused on reaching its final destination it does not allow the strong currents, the periods of shallow water, the big rocks or even going up-stream against waterfalls to impede its journey.

As Christians, we must do the same. We must keep our minds so focused on our final destination that we don’t allow the things of this world to take our focus off. Paul says it this way in Colossians 3:1, 2:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your MINDS on things above, not on earthly things.

If you and I are going to “swim against the powerful currents of un-holiness” in this world, we must THINK like SAVED PEOPLE ought to THINK!
Secondly, if we are to “swim against the powerful currents of un-holiness” we must………..

II. **OBEY** Like A Saved Person is Supposed to **OBEY** (v. 14)

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

1. Look at that term “As obedient children.”

   WOW! I could preach a whole sermon on that short phrase.

   I’m sure many of you have noticed things have drastically changed from the way our parents raised us and the way lots of children treat their parents today.

   -When I was growing up, if I “sassed” my parents…..or……
     “talked back” to my parents…..or “disobeyed” my parents, one of three things happened: I either got a stern scolding…..or sent to my room…….OR….more often than not, I got the “board of education applied to my seat of learning.”

   I know many of you were raised basically the same way. **OBEDIENCE** was not “optional”……..it was expected!

   By comparison, many children today, including the children of many Christian parents, not only “sass” and “talk back” and “disobey”……….they virtually have no respect whatsoever for parental authority. And when children are disobedient at home, they typically grow up disobeying the authority of their teachers at school..........and disobeying the authority of their bosses at work........and disobeying the authority of the laws of the land........and before you know it, there is a total breakdown of civility in society.
2. As Christians, OBEDIENCE to GOD is not **optional** it is **expected**.

   In fact that term **“as obedient children”** literally means **“Children of obedience.”** In other words, Peter is stating a fact: And that is “If you are a true believer you will OBEY GOD’S COMMANDS like a saved person ought to OBEY.”

3. As Christians, we are not to live our lives according to what we **THINK** is right……or ……what **FEELS** right for us personally…………or by whatever makes us **HAPPY**……we are to live our lives in OBEDIENCE to God’s commands.

4. And if you or I are **“Still conforming to the evil desires we had when we were living in ignorance”** it raises serious doubts about the validity of our faith.

   The apostle JOHN states this quite clearly for us in I JOHN 3:9-11:

   *No one who is born of GOD will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him, he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of GOD.* (now listen very carefully) **This is how we know who the CHILDREN OF GOD are and who the children of the devil are:** ANYONE WHO DOES NOT DO WHAT IS RIGHT IS NOT A CHILD OF GOD; NOR IS ANYONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER.

5. And so I have to ask you, “Whose your daddy?” Are you **“an obedient child of GOD?”** Or are you **“a disobedient child of the devil.”**

   If you and I are **“to swim against the powerful currents of unholiness”** in this world, **WE MUST THINK LIKE A SAVED PERSON OUGHT TO THINK……..AND WE MUST OBEY LIKE A SAVED PERSON OUGHT TO OBEY……..**
III. LIVE Like A Saved Person Is Supposed To LIVE (vs. 15, 16)

v. 15   But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;

v. 16   for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

1.   I could preach an entire sermon on these two verses alone, but let me just get right to the heart of what Peter is telling us about living holy lives.

(A) First we see the STANDARD for Holy living.

And that standard is GOD HIMSELF.

v.15 BUT JUST AS HE WHO CALLED YOU IS HOLY......

v.16 “BE HOLY, BECAUSE I AM HOLY.”

That word HOLY means “separate” or “distinguished.”

What “separates” or “distinguishes” GOD from everything else in creation more than HIS HOLINESS.

-GOD has never had AN UNHOLY THOUGHT
-GOD has never spoken AN UNHOLY WORD.
-GOD has never committed AN UNHOLY ACT.
-GOD has never acted out of AN UNHOLY MOTIVE.

While you and I can never EQUAL God’s holiness, we are to strive with the help of God’s Holy Spirit to live by the STANDARD of God’s holiness.

What that simply means is this: While GOD’S HOLINESS “separates” or “distinguishes” Him from all of His creation, there ought to be a holiness about us that “separates” or “distinguishes” us from those in the world who do not know God.
To be **HOLY** doesn’t mean we are **sinless**, but it certainly means we should **sin less**.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Last November when I was back in Indiana preaching a revival in my home Church, a number of people said to me, “I can’t believe how much you resemble your dad.” A man who was a deacon when my dad ministered there said, “The way you walk to the pulpit......the way you hold your Bible......and even the expressions on your face.....is just like looking at your dad thirty years ago.”

Well I was humbly honored to say the least.

When the world looks at you and me they ought to see the nature and character of God in us in such a way that we bear an unmistakable resemblance to our heavenly Father, who is the STANDARD of our holiness.

(B) Secondly, we see the **SCOPE** of holy living.

How holy do we have to be?

-Do we just need to be **holy** on Sundays, but not the other six days of the week?

-Do we just need to be **holy** in a few areas of our lives?

Peter answers this for us in **verse 15**.....

*V. 15 But just as He who called you is holy, so BE HOLY IN ALL YOU DO.*

In other words we are to be **wholly holy**!
Horatius Bonar describes THE SCOPE OF HOLINESS this way:

HOLINESS extends to every part of our persons, fills up our being, spreads over our life, influences everything we are, or do, or think, or speak, or plan, small or great, outward or inward, negative or positive, our loving, our hating, our sorrowing, our rejoicing, our recreations, our business, our friendships, our relationships, our silence, our speech, our reading, our writing, our going out and our coming in—our whole man in every movement of spirit, soul, and body.

What Being “Wholly Holy” Means and Doesn’t Mean

BEING WHOLLY HOLY doesn’t mean we have to talk in “religious lingo”, but it does mean we will seek to honor God by refraining from profanity or vulgar language.

BEING WHOLLY HOLY doesn’t mean we have to spend seven days a week in Church services, but it does mean we will live as though our bodies are the temple of God seven days a week.

BEING WHOLLY HOLY doesn’t mean we have to wear some kind of religious robe that makes us look like a weird alien from another planet, but it does mean we will seek to honor our heavenly Father by wearing modest and decent clothing.

BEING WHOLLY HOLY doesn’t mean we cannot own some nice material things, but it does mean we will seek to honor God by not allowing material things to own us.

BEING WHOLLY HOLY doesn’t mean we cannot enjoy some of life’s wholesome pleasures like fishing......hunting.....golfing.....boating......or camping.......but it does mean we will honor God by not allowing any of those things have a greater place of priority in our lives than God.

BEING WHOLLY HOLY doesn’t mean we can’t work hard and make a lot of money, but it does mean we will honor God by not allowing money to be our God.
CONCLUSION

As we bring our study to a close this morning, I want to share with you this final thought.

For centuries, skeptics have mocked Christians for living a different way of life than the rest of the world. They have mockingly said, “What if you find out when this life is over there is NO GOD and there is NO HEAVEN……think of all the sinful pleasures you will have missed.”

Here’s how I would answer that unbelieving skeptic:

If I should find out when this life is over there never was a GOD and never was a heaven, I won’t feel as though I missed a thing.

……..I will have lived my life by the best possible standard.
……..I will have lived my life treating people as I want them to treat me.
……..I will have lived my life associating with some of the finest people on earth.
……..And I will have devoted my whole life to making a difference in the lives of others.

WHAT BETTER WAY COULD I HAVE POSSIBLY SPENT MY EARTHY LIFE?

But here is what else I would tell that unbelieving skeptic:

If you should find out when this life is over there truly is A GOD and there truly is A HEAVEN and there truly is A HELL…….YOU WILL HAVE MISSED EVERYTHING…….EVERYTHING…….AND WHAT DID YOU GET IN RETURN……..A FEW BRIEF MOMENTS OF FLEETING SINFUL PLEASURE!
The challenge Peter has given to all of us this morning is this:

THINK LIKE A SAVED PERSON IS SUPPOSED TO THINK!

OBEY LIKE A SAVED PERSON IS SUPPOSED TO OBEY!

AND LIVE LIKE A SAVED PERSON IS SUPPOSED TO LIVE!

And no matter how tough it gets, “Keep swimming against the powerful currents of unholiness” until you make it home!