

A BLUEPRINT FOR HOLINESS

1 PETER 1

- A blueprint constitutes a complete guide or program for achieving a goal, a plan that explains how to do or develop something...it can also be a foundational pattern or standard that others follow
- In 1 Peter 1, Peter provides a blueprint for the pursuit of sanctification and holiness
- Ironically, Peter failed Christ miserably when he denied him during Christ's trials...he was guilty of:

1. Faulty Overconfidence

Matthew 26:30-35 ~ After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 31 Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.'" 32 "But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." 33 But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." 34 Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." 35 Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You." All the disciples said the same thing too.

- Peter was self-reliant and he did not know how weak he really was...he had too much confidence in his own ability to follow Christ...he was too sure of himself and too certain of his own devotion to Christ that he could not imagine such a failure
- He didn't know how weak he really was...he thought he had arrived at a level of spiritual maturity that exempted him from serious failure...he felt invincible in his pride and self confidence
- He considered himself incapable of disloyalty...he could not even imagine anything that would cause him to waver in his commitment to Christ
- He was absolutely certain that he had come to the place of spiritual maturity...he had arrived...his faith was strong...his convictions were solid...his priorities were straight
- It was inconceivable to him that he could even be capable of defecting from Christ
- He assumed he knew his own heart better than Jesus did and he could not envision any situation that would lead to his denial of Christ

2. Feeble Prayer

Matthew 26:36-44 ~ Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray. 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." 39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." 40 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? 41 "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

- Peter should have been spiritually alert and should have known how dependent on the Lord they really were...a willing spirit is not enough...it must be supplemented by persistent prayer
- But sadly, Peter didn't recognize this need...he was not dependent, not alert, and not awake
- His prayerlessness was a symptom of his overconfidence...he did not sense his own need in that moment so he did not pray

3. Fleshly Responses

Matthew 26:49-51 ~ Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, “Hail, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. 50 And Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you have come for.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him. 51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.

- Peter resorted to violence in this moment, maybe thinking he could save Jesus or at least go down fighting
- Peter had said that he would go to the death with Jesus, and this was his moment to prove it...he probably thought this would be his great test, the test where he would have to prove his allegiance to Christ

4. Foreboding Circumstances

Matthew 26:58 ~ But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

- In this moment, he placed himself in the very lair of Christ’s enemies...he came into the courtyard of the high priest...he was not among friends at that moment...he was in the midst of a hostile crowd
- These ingredients led to Peter’s dramatic denial of Christ → Matt 26:69-75
- “Yet Peter, with those failures we so easily identify, was restored. More than that, he made progress. Even more than that, he became an outstanding leader in the early Christian church. If anyone in the New Testament can teach us that even we can be devoted to God and make progress in holiness despite our past failings, it is Simon Peter...Few disciples of the Lord Jesus can have made more of a public mess of their early Christian life than he did. But the very fact that it is *this disciple* writing about holiness ought to reassure us that Christ does not command what he will not provide. There is no need to be permanently disabled by past failure or paralysed by the fear that we are doomed to repeat it.”¹
- 1 Peter 1 details many principles that form a blueprint for our sanctification

Principle #1 – Our Current State is One of Exile

1 Peter 1:1 ~ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen

- Believers are defined as being “aliens”

1 Peter 1:17 ~ 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;

1 Peter 2:11 ~ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.

- An exile is someone who is separated from his place of origin and is now living in another place entirely
- Aliens are persons who belong to some other land and people...who are temporarily residing with a people to whom they do not belong
- This is exactly how Christians are to think of themselves...as those who once belonged to the world but now belong to a new “nation” with an entirely new allegiance
- Christians are resident aliens in the world...this does not mean we must withdraw from the world...but it does mean that we be in the world and at the same time not of the world

¹ Sinclair Ferguson, *Devoted to God*, 5, 13. (emphasis original)

Philippians 3:20 ~ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

Hebrews 11:13 ~ All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

- The cause of this spiritual exile and what sustains us in it is what Christ has done for us:

1 Peter 1:18-21 ~ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 9 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 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.

- The cost of our redemption was great...it was not cheap grace...what is free to us was costly to him
- Jesus redeems us not with silver and gold but with his own blood
- This is what the prophets longed to understand...and what the angels try to comprehend

1 Peter 1:10-12 ~ As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

- The prophets were interested in two primary things related to the Messiah:
 1. They wanted to know who he was
 2. They wanted to know the timing of his arrival
- Sometimes we don't give the prophets credit for what they knew about their prophetic writings
- Often, we assume they wrote better than they knew
- However, Peter makes it clear that they wrote better than we give them credit for as they understood much of what they wrote
- They understood that they were writing about the Messiah and they desired to know how this all fit together
- They desired to know the time and circumstances surrounding these events
- They were told that the reward for their labors was that they were serving those of a later age (v. 12)
- It was revealed to them that their ministry would most directly profit not their own age but those for whom the foretold grace was intended
- So, they wrote and spoke of a grace which actually reached far beyond their generation
- They in a sense spread the table for those who would later come to feed on the food laid on it

- Someone tells of watching one night at dusk a lamplighter, who was himself blind, lighting the lamps
- He tapped his way from lamp post to lamp post bringing to others a light which he himself would never see

- That's exactly what the OT prophets did...they spoke of that which they would never see
- However, we get to experience the very salvation the prophets wrote about and were so perplexed by
- They prophesied it...but we get to experience it...the very salvation the whole OT anticipates is ours!
- By the way, v. 11 ("the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating) indicates that these prophets were carried along by the Holy Spirit as they wrote the OT

- This speaks of inspiration...these men were led by the Spirit who enabled them to write about Christ and the glorious salvation he would bring
- Thus, there is a dual authorship to Scripture: divine and human

2 Peter 1:20-21 ~ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

- The angels long to understand these realities related to salvation...these are “things into which angels long to look” (v. 12)
- “look” is the word *parakupto* = “to stoop to see...to bend over or contort the body to see something better”
- It refers to contorting the body to get a better look
- That's what the angels do with our salvation...they crane their necks, as it were, in an attempt to understand salvation from the vantage point of an outsider
- They are looking carefully and with curiosity at our salvation because it is unfathomable to them
- Despite all the privileges that angels have (access to God, announced Christ's birth, etc.), they do not and cannot experience salvation...they are merely spectators of it
- No evil angel has ever been delivered from sin...Christ did not come to take on the form of an angel
- So, they are pictured as standing outside the redemptive realm watching the unfolding of the drama of human redemption...they cannot understand it in terms of their own experience

- Holy, holy is what the angels sing...and I expect to help them make the courts of heaven ring
- But when I sing redemption's story, they will fold their wings...for angels never felt the joy, that our salvation brings

- “You can almost imagine these angelic beings watching in silence, holding their breath as they witnessed the crucifixion of God's Son. How could this be? How could he love sinners like that? If Christ is so much admired by those angels for whom he did not die, then Peter's point is surely well taken. How much more valuable should he be to those whom he die to save and sanctify? He is worth living in exile for. He is worth living the life of holy-love for. If such a Saviour suffered such a death in order to make us holy, how else should we respond but by giving ourselves entirely to him?”²
- All of this has occurred to cause believers to be “exiles”
- This informs our sanctification as it clearly demonstrates that we have been set apart for the Lord...he has claimed us for himself
- We therefore no longer belong to this world...we are in the world, but are not of it

Principle #2 – The Entire Trinity is Committed to Our Sanctification

1 Peter 1:1-2 ~ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

- Peter refers to each member of the Trinity in his opening, demonstrating that every aspect of our salvation, including our sanctification, is explained by what the Father, Son, and Spirit do in harmony and unity with one another
- The entire Godhead is committed to our salvation and sanctification
- This demonstrates that the entire Trinity is devoted to bringing about our devotion to him

² Ibid., 24.

- “This is, as it were, priority number two on the divine agenda. It is superseded only by God’s over-arching goal of bringing glory to himself and simultaneously giving enjoyment to us.”³

1. The foreknowledge of God the Father

- Foreknowledge is much more than the ability to predict future events
- It includes the absolute sovereignty of God in determining and implementing his decision to save sinful man
- It has the idea of “prior relationship”...it is an act in eternity past in which God chose to set his love upon us
- This demonstrates that holiness finds its ultimate source in God’s sovereign choice
- His act to elect to salvation is the foundation of sanctification, not the other way around
- God takes the initiative in saving and sanctifying us
- The reality of God’s sovereign choice of you should make you eternally grateful for your salvation as it is an awesome work of his sovereign grace
- This does not negate the fact that men and women are still responsible before God to submit to him...God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility are both true

2. To obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with his blood

- Christ aims for us to be saved through his work on the cross...but Christ did not just bleed for us...his blood represents his sacrificial death on our behalf
- He died for us that we might live in obedience to him

3. The sanctifying work of the Spirit

- The Holy Spirit aims to make us more like Christ...as such he is essential to every part of the Christian life and every step in it
- It is the Holy Spirit who awakens within us the first faint desires and longings for God and goodness
- It is the Holy Spirit who brings us to new life and into the family of God through regeneration or new birth
- It is the Holy Spirit who convicts us of our sin...and who leads us to the cross where that sin is forgiven
- It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to walk in holiness...to be freed from the sins which have us in their grip...and to live out the fruit of the Spirit
- Thus, sanctification is the fruit of the Spirit’s ministry...as those adopted into God’s family, we experience a real transformation of our lives so that we begin to display the characteristics of our adoptive family
- “The Holy Spirit...sanctifies us, transforming our dispositions and desires. Now we love what we once despised, and despise much that we once loved. Now, while the Christian life remains a battle to the end, we find that there is all the difference in the world between seeking to be holy when that is a burden, and seeking to be holy because we belong to the family of God and have the new family nature.”⁴
- Thus, the entire Trinity is determined to pour his energy into transforming us into the image of Christ
- Clearly, God is **with us** and **for us** and **behind us** in this endeavor
- Since this is true, sanctification ought to be our priority as well...if God has so committed himself to changing our lives, then we must be equally committed to the same
- Otherwise, God’s will and our will are in competition with each other

³ Ibid., 16.

⁴ Ibid., 26.

Principle #3 – Growth in Holiness is Related to How We View the Future

1 Peter 1:3-5 ~ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

- The certainty of our future grace and the glory yet to be revealed should transform the way we live today
- We are to live in light of a future reality that is far more significant than the present
- Peter reminds us that we stand to inherit an inheritance that:
 - “is imperishable” – our heavenly treasure is not subject to death or destruction...it can never die...it is permanent
 - “is undefiled” – there is no corruption in our inheritance...it is perfect and untouched by the seeds of rust or decay
 - “will not fade away” – the beauty of our inheritance will never lessen...even after eons of time in eternity
 - “is reserved in heaven for you” – God obtained an inheritance for you and it is continuing to be safeguarded until the time comes for you to receive it
- Additionally, we are presently being protected by the power of God...through faith...which will culminate in future glory (v. 5)
- God’s power is the garrison in which we find our security...no harm can reach us...despite living in the midst of the assailing forces of evil, we are the assured objects of God’s protecting power
- And note that faith is the intermediate agency for this guarding (v. 5)...the immediate agency being God’s power...it is faith that brings salvation and opens the way for God’s power to work
- Faith is the agent that hires the power of God for protection...the power of God does not produce the faith...but rather the power of God is appropriated by faith to fight against the enemy
- Knowing what we are destined for in eternity determines and energizes the way we live now

1 John 3:2-3 ~ Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

- “Christians therefore live their lives back from the future as it were. Knowing what will be true for us then makes an impact on how we live now...This final salvation will be holiness completed. We will see the face of Jesus Christ and will be transformed into his likeness. This is simply the consummation of the sanctification that God has already begun...If holiness is our heavenly happiness, and true happiness is, ultimately, holiness, then the prospect of that future will influence and shape our lives here and now. How strange it is that people think...that they will be happy pursuing holiness there and then in heaven, if they are singularly unhappy about the calling to pursue it here and now on earth! No, there is a continuity. Love holiness now, because we love the Holy One and we will love it all the more then, in the presence of the Holy One when we see him face to face. Despise it now and we will despise it then too. Or, to put this the other way round: if we do not desire heaven as a world of holiness and freedom from the presence of sin, a world of delight in Jesus Christ *here and now*, what possesses us to think we will love it and enjoy it – or him – *then*?...Those who enjoy holiness there and then are those who want to pursue holiness here and now.”⁵

⁵ Ibid., 28-29. (emphasis original)

Principle #4 – God Uses Trials to Sanctify Us

1 Peter 1:6-7 ~ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

- Suffering and glory are always connected in Scripture...since afflictions produce glory
- Afflictions are the raw materials God uses to shape us for eternity
- He knows what he is doing in our lives...trials are one of the means he uses to grow us in holiness
- For this reason, we can “greatly rejoice” (v. 6) in the midst of them because of the purpose God has through them
- Notice that these trials are both:
 - “for a little while” (v. 6) – these trials come in all shapes and sizes...but there is an end in sight even if it lasts the rest of our life...for the early glow of the eternal sunrise will soon become the full blaze of Christ’s appearing
 - “necessary” (v. 6) – the circumstances may look as though suffering is circumstantial but from the eternal perspective, it is necessary and therefore ordered by God
- Trials results in “the proof of your faith” (v. 7)
- Trials demonstrate the reality of our faith...and they result in the growth of it
- A faith under this kind of test will prove what sort it is...trials come to test the truthfulness of our faith...the test is not to determine doctrinal integrity but the sincerity of our profession
- If it flourishes under the harshest circumstances then it shows its origin is divinely wrought...anything less would crack and crumble
- We find out what we’re made of when our faith is tested...in the English vernacular, we call these kind of people “tried men/women”...i.e. those who have a proven record of faithfulness in the heat of battle
- Although we naturally don’t like pain or suffering, our growth requires it
- When the Lord puts us through the fire of affliction, he brings the impurities in our life to the surface so they can be drawn off
- This is the purpose of being “tested by fire” (v. 7)...for faith to be approved, tried, and purified it must go through fire
- Gold is refined by fire so that the dross, the unwanted material rises to the top to be skimmed off and eliminated
- “Why does he do this? To build Christian character, making us more like Christ. For it was through affliction that the Father moulded his life. If his Son’s obedience was developed through suffering, we should not be surprised if he continues to use the same method with us. Think of it this way. You may know somebody who becomes impatient and irritated but then apologizes: ‘I am sorry. I am usually a very *patient* person.’ But the truth is he or she is really an *impatient* person whose patience has never been fully tested! For patience developed only in contexts that can stimulate impatience and irritation. Certainly it is only in such an environment that it undergoes testing and proving. A fundamental way in which Christian character is strengthened is by stress. The friction God builds into the Christian life is, therefore, not accidental. It is deliberate, strategic, and intended to produce growth in holiness.”⁶

⁶ Ibid., 26-27. (emphasis original)

Romans 5:2-5 ~ through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 ~ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

James 1:2-4 ~ Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- “The furnace is never comfortable. But it does two things at once: it gives light to see ourselves clearly, and heat to burn away what we’re better off without. If you’re in the fire today, you’re not being destroyed – you’re being refined.”⁷

Principle #5 – God Commands Holiness in His People

1 Peter 1:13-16 ~ Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

- “prepare your minds for action” (v. 13) literally means to “gird up the loins of your mind”
- In the first century, people dressed in flowing robes that hung down to the ankles
- If called upon for action, they would gird up their loins which meant they would pull up the robe and tuck the excess in their belt allowing for free movement without entanglement
- This was especially important for the soldier since his life would be dependent upon quick movement
- This is a metaphor for how we are to live...since we are engaged in the fight of faith and are at war with our indwelling sin, we are to get battle ready
- The battlefield for our sanctification is in the mind...we are to pull together the loose ends of our mind and get engaged in battle
- “keep sober in spirit” (v. 13) refers to the opposite of being intoxicated with wine
- It refers to being clear-headed...avoiding anything that puts you in a spiritual stupor
- We must be sober-minded because the fight is a fight of faith...we must be clear-headed if we are to make progress in holiness
- We must not let ourselves be sidetracked by vain and empty things for the battle is real and the consequence is eternal life or death
- We must live a trimmed back life
- And we must “fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (v. 13)
- Amusements and recreation are gifts and privileges of Americans but we must not let that permeate our Christian walk...eternal destinies are at stake every day and we cannot divorce ourselves from this
- Keeping our faith fixed in a transforming hope will not happen without discipline
- Christlikeness does not come without trimming down, doing without, and disciplining the mind
- There are numerous things that the enemy will send our way to lead us away from the river of grace
- If we are to keep hope fixed on Christ’s coming then we must consistently and constantly trim the loose ends of our affections so that they do not pull us away from an ardent love for our soon returning Savior

⁷ Chuck Swindoll

- We must also “not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance” (v. 14)
- We must not allow ourselves to be shaped by those desires we had when you were still ignorant
- We are to put off and put on...lay aside the old self and put on the new self (Eph 4:17-23)
- It is when we loosen the loins of our mind that we will conform to former pursuits
- This inevitably leads to drifting back into the former patterns of sin
- All of this is to be done so that we conform our lives to the Holy One: vv. 15-16 ~ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”
- In all of our conduct, we are to pattern our lives after our holy God who called us
- God is the final template for holiness...he is the standard for us to follow
- The reason that some things are right and some things are wrong is because God delights in things the things that reflect his character and hates other things that run contrary to his character
- Therefore, we are to conform to his holy essence