

The Believer – 1 Peter 1:13-16 and Colossians 3:15-17

There are two areas of a believer's life which show the world around them how serious they are about their relationship with Jesus. Anyone care to take a guess as to what these may be?

The first one is personal holiness. Every Christian is called to pursue holiness. To be "holy" means *to be set apart from something, or to be separate*. God, by nature is the perfect example of this, simply because He is eternal and exists outside of our temporal existence. God is Sovereign.

While speaking to an audience mostly made up of former pagan worshippers, Peter implores his audience to focus on the holiness of God and let His holiness be their example. **Read 1 Peter 1:13-16.** Here's the thing... the only person who can decide to follow Peter's guidance is "YOU." Peter says if you desire to be holy... if you desire to separate yourself from the world, you must start with these three things. He says to focus on the grace extended to you from Jesus and place all your hope on His coming again. He then mimics and emphasizes familiar teaching from Paul which encourages the believer to obey God's commands and laws and turn away from the worldly things that people are so easily drawn to. Remember Romans 12:2, "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...*" Finally, Peter says, believers become more holy when they work to gain more knowledge of God's holiness and then apply that knowledge to their own character.

** Personal holiness begins in the mind, is motivated by grace, bathed in love, embraces the holiness of God's character, encourages faithful obedience, places all hope in eternity, and spiritually moves the believer towards Jesus. **

The second area comes from last week's message. If you want people to take your faith seriously, then they must see you actively involved in true fellowship with like minded people. We know this as the local church. Let's go back to Colossians 3 and focus on a few of the verses we saw last week as an example of what church life should look like. **Read Colossians 3:15-17.**

Here, Paul encourages the believer to let God's peace control the heart. In other words, true fellowship cannot occur if there is no peace. Each individual believer must do their part to promote peace. Paul teaches that this can only be achieved when God's peace "rules" the heart. And, as you know, your true heart is what guides your actions. I love how Paul concludes verse fifteen. "*And be thankful.*"

Next, Paul encourages the believer to trust in God's Word for everything. He uses the word "dwell," which means "to live." Every believer should at the bare minimum be familiar with the Bible. This book (the Bible) should not be a complete mystery to us. It should be acknowledged as the source for all truth and wisdom. When I read Paul's words, I'm reminded that a good local church is one where the Bible is taught, studied, and then put into practice. According to Paul, the Word's of Christ must fill our hearts, flow from our mouths, guide our actions, and stand as the foundation for our community, for our church family.

Paul goes on here to say that it's the power of God's presence in Spirit and Word which influences the believer to worship Him through various forms of musical expression. Psalms, which were written to be sung. The more familiar Hymns, which are usually longer and are meant to build one another up. And finally, the least familiar to modern Christians, Spiritual Songs, which are songs in the Spirit, sung spontaneously.

Paul sums all this up by making a bold statement which reminds the believer to do all these things for the purpose of giving thanks and praise to God, through the name of His Son, our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Guess what? For the rest of our time together we are going to put into practice what we have just learned from God's Word. Together, we are going to work on our holiness, and we are going to praise Him with Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs. I'm going to begin by sharing Psalm 98 with you.