

YOU CAN DO IT; GOD WILL HELP

1 Peter 1:13-21

INTRODUCTION

I have taken Home Depot's slogan to heart. "You can do it; we can help." I don't know how many do-it-yourselfers their slogan has also encouraged to tackle home-improvement projects, but I'm sure it's a lot. They provide the tools and materials (at a price, of course), and will even provide some of the know-how to be able to help people fix or renovate home projects. All you need to do is supply the labor—Most of the time!

There is a lot of similarities between the HD motto and what the Bible says. We see that in the opening word of v. 13: "Therefore." This little word is often an important word, so when you read the word, "therefore," you should always ask yourself, "What is it there for?"

And here, in 1 Peter, it is an important word that brings a change of mood, building on the reality of our relationship with Christ and the fact that we have been born again into a living hope. Peter begins to challenge the Christians to live out their faith. But the important thing to note is that Peter first began with a statement of fact:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. 1 Peter 1:3 ^{ESV}

Peter opens his letter with this great statement: God has caused us to be born again into a living hope and into an eternal inheritance. Through God's grace, we are now changed people. Not only do we have God's forgiveness through Jesus, but we also have God's Holy Spirit living in us. This is reality. This is true for every Christian. Now, in light of this reality and in light of this new status and change, we are now capable of living the way God wants us to live, with God's help.

Remember that Peter is writing to Christians who were being persecuted for living God's way. And God is trying to encourage them to not give up, or to think that the Christian life is too hard to live when there's opposition. We have been born again and have a new Spirit—the Spirit of God—living in us to help us.

Here's the key idea to remember:

You can do it; God will help!

With this new capability and life that God has given us, he now gives us four commands that challenge us to live his way in the face of the hostility and opposition of the world.

First, we are to:

I. KEEP YOUR GAZE FIXED ON OUR COMPLETE SALVATION TO COME

(13)

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13 ^{ESV}

Set your hope full on the grace that is coming. Christian hope is not wishful thinking. Christian hope is an expectation and a confidence about something that is going to happen in the future.

For us, the greatest hope we have is that Jesus is coming back and when he does, we are going to be transformed fully and completely into our new heavenly bodies, and we are going to receive our full salvation. Peter refers to this as the grace that will be brought to us when Jesus returns.

Peter tells us to set our hope fully, or completely, on Jesus' return. And he says to do it in two ways: one is by preparing your mind for action and the other is by being sober-minded, or better, by being self-controlled in your thinking. Taking these two together, it means to intentionally set your mind to expect Jesus to come back at any time, and live each day with that hope and expectation.

How will this help you? It will give you the mental discipline and encouragement to live the way God wants us to live. That means to hang in there when life is difficult; it means to choose to take the harder road of the Christian life and not compromise to take the easier way of the world; it means to decide to live by God's priorities and values.

You can do this every day—in fact, you need to do this every day. Get up in the morning, and intentionally think, Jesus could come back today. Then tell him that you want to live the way he wants you to live. Ask God to help you. You can do it; he will help.

E.g. For everyone who plays football, before you play the first game, there are usually two or three weeks of practice before you start into the season. Those 2-3 weeks are commonly called, "hell week." And that's because the coaches are trying to get you into playing shape because most players slack off during the summer a bit. I remember during those weeks, it was a grind. At Stanford, we would practice two, sometimes three times a day. All we did was practice, eat and sleep. But, what helped us get through those weeks was knowing that the first game was coming. We would fix our gaze on the date of that first game, and every day, we would say, we can do it; and that would help us get through the daily grind.

As Christians, living as foreigners in this world, we are to realize that the best is yet to come. Remember, Peter is writing to Christians who were being persecuted for their faith. It was like hell week for them, except they didn't know how long it was going to last. But Peter reminds them that Jesus is coming back, and to fix their gaze on that time to help them endure each day.

A second challenge to live God's way is to:

II. RESIST BEING CONFORMED TO THE WORLD AROUND US (14)

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. 1

Peter 1:14 ^{ESV}

One of the words constantly used to describe Jesus in his ministry to people is the word, *compassion*. E.g.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* *Matthew 9:35-36* ^{NIV}

Jesus didn't condemn them because of their problems, he had compassion on them because he realized they needed his help. Before, people may have lived in ignorance and were enslaved to their sin nature and immoral passions. But Jesus offered them his forgiveness and his grace.

For us, when we receive Jesus into our life we also receive the Holy Spirit. That means as we learn **how** we should live, we also have God's grace to enable us to live God's way. We have no excuse to not live the way God wants us to live.

One of the phrases every parent hears is, "But everyone else is doing it!" When our child, or when we say that, we usually mean that others are doing something that usually isn't right, or isn't what God wants us to do. But we are not to follow the pack. We are to follow God. That means we will be different; we will act differently.

God has called us to be obedient children and to not be conformed to the world around us. We are to not act like people who have not been born again. God has equipped us and supplied us with his grace and power to live his way.

This is the negative side of being transformed and acting like God's children.

And that leads to the other side of the coin; the third challenge God gives us is to:

III. BE HOLY (15-16)

...but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ *since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."* *1 Peter 1:15-16* ^{ESV}

We are to be holy.

As you might know, the word holy has two primary meanings. First it means to be set apart. E.g, I have some shoes that I only use when I go walking for exercise. They are designed for walking. They are set apart from my other shoes for a specific purpose. When I go walking, I put them on because they are designed for the purpose of walking.

God has chosen us to be set apart from the rest of the world who do not know Jesus. We are set apart for God's purposes, to do what he wants us to do.

The second meaning of being holy is to be morally pure. This means that we are to live lives in which we do not sin. Notice the standard that God gave first to the Israelites in Moses' time:

"You shall be holy, for I am holy." *1 Peter 1:16* ^{ESV}

We are to be holy because that is what God is like. We are to act like God. Does that intimidate you? Or does that seem impossible to you? Or does that excite you?

Remember, God never tells us to do something that he has not given us the ability to do with his help. **We can do it; God will help!** Remember, when we become born of God, we now have his Spirit and his nature, and we are to act like him.

Notice, too, that it says:

be holy in all your conduct... 1 Peter 1:15^{ESV}

This is a constant, engaging battle. Probably for a lot of us, we make progress in our holiness in the area of bigger sins. But as we continue to live the Christian life, God shines his flashlight, so to speak, on the smaller areas of our life that do not reflect the character of God. It may be that our motivations are not completely pure; it may be that our choice of words are not always wholesome or encouraging to others; it may be that we are continuing to battle lust or are envious of what others have; it may be that we are still bitter toward people and unforgiving of some.

E.g. God has gifted me with an analytical mind. That means I can analyze things and critique things well. But too often, my analyzing and critiquing goes in the direction of people, and I have a tendency to judge them. And that is sin. God is dealing with me to be more gracious toward people. You may say it's not as big a sin as lying or swearing, but it's still a sin. And God says to be holy in every area of my life.

We are to never be content to just have a high percentage of holiness. God has given us his Holy Spirit to live his way. We should never be content to just sin a little. We should be holy in all our life. Remember, **We can do it; God will help.** But, do we want to be holy?

One last challenge Peter gives to us is to:

IV. LIVE WITH A SENSE OF ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD (17-19)

Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 1 Peter 1:17-19^{NIV}

I imagine that when you leave church on a Sunday, you are motivated to live the way God wants. The music has inspired you, the fellowship with other Christians has encouraged you, hopefully the sermon has challenged you—you leave with the emotions of living for God.

Then Monday comes. And it is back to work or back to school. You are surrounded by people who act immorally, speak rudely, or provoke you in some way. And it is easy to slide back into a lifestyle that is not what God wants.

God wants us to realize that we are always going to be accountable to him. It is certainly true that God is our Father. That's a wonderful picture and reality of God's relationship with us. He is our Father and loves us deeply. But he is also the righteous judge. Every person—even Christians—will be judged in the future by God. God will impartially judge each person's work. It's important to understand that for us who are

Christians, Jesus' death on the cross has paid for every sin that we have or will ever commit. In the judgement, God will look at us and see us as perfect because he sees us through what Jesus did on the cross. He will not judge us as to whether we are saved or not. But God will judge our works. We will be accountable to God for how we live our Christian life. This is the picture Paul gives in:

So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 ^{NLT}

Again, this judgment is not a judgment about whether we are Christians, but it will be for our works that we do as Christians. And the fact that we are going to be judged should motivate us to live in such a way to please him.

Now, I don't want you to take this the wrong way. God is not a policeman following us around everywhere, ready to club us if we do something wrong. God has set us apart from the world, not just to live like him, but to serve him. We should want to use our abilities and our skills and our spiritual gifts, and our time and our money, to serve him as we live on this earth. God is challenging us to join him in making disciples and reaching out to people. He is challenging us to make a difference here at church by serving others.

I love how so many of you are using your gifts and abilities to serve God instead of doing something else. I am so encouraged by you who have your heart motivation to please God and serve him.

Next Steps:

1. A question: Do you want to live like God?
2. A prayer: Ask God to help you live like him.