

Sin-Free Living In A Sin-Filled World

September 14, 2014

What sins do you struggle with? Maybe it is materialism. You have a burning desire for something new. You need new things to make you happy. Once you buy them, the thrill is gone so you need something else. Now your closets are full of clothes you don't wear. Your garage is filled with junk you don't need and you are a candidate for "Hoarders" on A&E¹.

Maybe you struggle with sexual sins. You feel pressured to be in a relationship because everybody is dating somebody. Everyone on television is hooking up or shacking up except you. You are starting to feel weird because you are single. Maybe you struggle with the sexual sin of lust. The Internet is filled with eye candy just waiting to sink its hooks into your psyche so you can sin greatly with just the click of a track pad.

As Christians, we are under a lot of pressure to live sinful lives in a sinful world. How do we resist the tidal wave of temptations and sinful pleasures pressing against us? How can we strive for sin-free living in this sin-filled world? That is the question we will answer this morning.

If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. We are in a series of studies in the book of 1 Peter. The series is called, "Hope In Hard Times." We are learning how to make it through the trials of life. In previous studies we looked at the trial of suffering and 10 things we need to know when life falls apart. Last week we looked at the trial of biblical trust. What do we need

¹ <http://www.aetv.com/hoarders>

to know about the Bible when a college professor tells us we can't trust it as the Word of God? This morning, we move to the trial of living in a sinful society. How do we live for God in a world that is against him? If you struggle with temptation, this message will do you immense good. Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 1:13-21 as we read together. It is found on page 1,014 of your pew Bible.

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. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 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. 1 Peter 1:13–21 (ESV)

In these verses Peter gives us seven action steps to live for Christ in a world that is against him. The first one is the key to understanding the remaining six.

1. Set my heart on living for Christ's return

...set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13 (ESV)

What is the hope of your life? What are you living for? If you are college student, you are probably hoping for graduation, a good job and getting out of your parents' basement. If you are single, your hope is to get married to Mr. or Mrs. Right and have children. If you are in debt your hope is to get out of debt and have money in the bank. If you are working, your hope is to save for

retirement when you are too old to work. There is nothing wrong with having those hopes for the future. The problem with every one of them is when we obtain them, they will disappoint us. We may get a job but we will lose a job. We may get married but our spouse will not be perfect. Our marriage will frustrate us. We can save for retirement but the stock market can swallow the whole thing. Every earthly hope will disappoint.

Peter said that we are to set our hope on the grace that will be ours when Christ returns. When Christ returns, we will receive grace. You think you received grace now because Christ changed your life and made you a new person? You haven't seen anything. All the changes we have now are just the appetizer, only the aroma of the meal that is in the kitchen. When Christ returns, the Bible tells us in Ephesians 1 that God will unleash on us so much grace that we cannot imagine it. Christ has chosen us to be the most blessed beings in the universe. We are with Christ and under Christ in eternity. We are raised higher than the angels for all of eternity. Satan is very jealous.

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Romans 8:32 (ESV)

We are recipients of the maximum amount of grace God will ever, has ever or can ever display. It is all for us through Jesus. We deserve none of it!

That is something to look forward to when you are down in life, when you are facing death, when you are tempted by sin, look at the finish line. That helps us make it through the hard times in this world. No matter what we face, we may be disappointed or struggling, but it is nothing compared to what God will give us when he returns.

What are your thoughts fixed on? Are you living to make the starting line-up on the football team? Are your hopes to graduate from college and get a good job? Marriage? Children? They are all good things to hope for but they will disappoint. We need to live for something beyond what this world has to offer. We need to fix our eyes on a pleasure that is greater than this world can ever give, the day we will see Jesus.

2. Prepare my mind for action

Therefore, preparing your minds for action... 1 Peter 1:13 (ESV)

Peter told us to prepare our minds for action. Some of you have a translation that says “gird up your loins.” That sounds concerning. You are not sure if you can identify your loins and you certainly are not sure if you want to gird them. Gird up your loins is a Hebrew idiom that means prepare for action. In the ancient world men wore long robes. You couldn’t run in long robes. To get ready for action they pulled their robes up and tucked them in their belt making the equivalent of a male mini-skirt.

Peter said we should get our minds ready. We need to train our minds to be ready for the pressure we will get from a sinful world. Our minds need training to know more about Jesus, the day we will see him and the incredible grace that will be ours when he returns. If we aren’t training our minds with this information, we will fail in the face of the temptations and the pressures of the world every time. When we don’t know about our greater pleasures in Jesus, we cannot live for them.

If we want to fix our eyes on the future, we need to learn our Bibles. We need to study the Bible. If we don't train our minds in the Bible, we will only live for the lesser fading hopes of this world rather than the amazing hope we have in front of us when God blesses the socks right off us.

How can we go into training? Here are a few suggestions:

Make church a priority. We live in a mobile society. It is easy to skip church on the weekend. The church is kind of a big deal. The church is God's plan. He gave us the church so we can encourage one another. We need to remind one another about who we are in Jesus and the future we have in Jesus.

There is no such thing as a lone-ranger Christian. Christians who isolate themselves will not mature. They will not stay on track. It is very hard for them to grow spiritually and live for the future. Some people do church at home and isolate themselves. They sit on their front porch, call it church and think it is biblical. Some of you avoid church because they have annoying people. Do you know why there are annoying people in church? God put them here to help you grow. God sends annoying people to church because he loves you. He wants you to learn to love the hard to love people, and he will mature you through them. If you only spent time with people that were easy to love, what spiritual good would that do?

Read the Bible. God's Word is the way God changes lives. Reading the Bible changes hearts. If you don't have a Bible, take one out of the pew. It is a gift from me to you. If you want a different color, go to the Connect Center in the foyer and you can choose your color and even take the cellophane off. Just pay

the price you can afford. The only way you can put your mind into training about the future is to read the Bible.

Memorize the Bible. The Bible says when we hide God's Word in our hearts God will use it to keep us from sin. He brings the Bible back to our minds at just the right time we need it.

It is trendy for Christian kids to tattoo Bible verses on their body. I am all for tattooing verses on the body. When you tattoo a Bible verse on your body, you have it for life. My personal thoughts are that it is not worth tattooing verses on the outside of your body because you run out of real estate space, it costs too much, and it is painful. Besides, it is a real hassle to lift your shirt to share your favorite Bible verse on your chest with your friends.

I am all for tattooing Bible verses on your heart. That is called memorizing them. God brings them to mind and reminds us of our new identities and reminds us of our amazing future and steers us away from sin when we keep bringing the words we memorized back to mind. Tattoo verses on your body. Tattoo them on the inside of your body, your heart.

Study the Bible. Go to CrossWinds University. There are classes, like the Pentateuch, which teaches us about Jesus in the Old Testament. In CrossWinds University you will discover truth about Jesus you would most likely never discover on your own.

Another great way to study the Bible is to redeem your commute. Many gifted pastors have their messages available on the Internet. You can download their podcasts and listen in the car on your commute. I recommend pastors like

Tim Keller, Matt Chandler, and John Piper. Study the Word on the go. Talk radio kills brain cells. Good Christian teachers build brain cells.

Use good Bible software. Some of you know I love Logos Bible software². The Bible study program is free for all computers and smartphones, although the books cost money. They are worth it. If I could afford it, I would buy every one of you an electronic Logos library. I love to study on the go. Logos is great stuff. I am a Bible study junkie and almost all of it is through my computer, phone and iPad.

Discuss God's Word. This is very important. Too many of us do Bible study alone. We don't discuss the Bible with our spouses or our kids. Some of us neglect studying the Bible with our Life Groups. This is unhealthy.

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17 (ESV)

We need each other to grow. We must study the Bible with other people. You will learn much more. The Holy Spirit works among his people when they gather around his Word. He uses other people to help us see things in the Bible we wouldn't normally see on our own. I encourage you to try a Life Group for your own spiritual good. As some of you know we are working with LifeWay Christian Resources, having it help build our Life Group material. LifeWay is giving us great quality stuff, and I encourage you to use it.

It is in preparing our minds with the Word of God that we can keep our minds focused on the future that is ours, otherwise we will live for lesser earthly

² www.logos.com

pleasures, become easily distracted, discouraged and ultimately live unproductive lives for Jesus.

3. Avoid the mental distractions that cloud my spiritual judgment

...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)

Sober-minded literally means don't get drunk. It means more than just avoiding the bottle. Just as alcohol clouds our judgment so we make stupid decisions and just live for the moment, we are to avoid anything that clouds our spiritual judgment and causes us to make stupid spiritual decisions.

What clouds your spiritual judgment and causes you to live just for the moment? Some people are intoxicated by power. They are living for Christ but if they have an opportunity for a promotion, they throw their spiritual senses to the wind. No need to pray over the opportunity, they just jump at the promotion because they will do anything and hurt anyone, including their families, so they can have higher positions in the company. For others, they get drunk on relationships. Some girls are this way. They are living for Christ and things are fine until they meet guys. All of a sudden they don't want to read their Bible. They can't make time for their friends. All they can think about, text about and tweet about are the new guys in their lives. The guys make them completely lose control. Everything they promised themselves in the way of relational barriers and safeguards goes out the window because they are intoxicated on men. Some people get intoxicated on sports. They are singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" on Sunday morning but rip on the ref with a different four letter word from the stands

on Monday night. They are not sober-minded. Sports cloud their minds so they don't use spiritual judgment.

For some of us it is late night television or the Internet that clouds our better spiritual judgment and leads us to live for the moment. When we are tired and lonely we find ourselves tempted to look at things we know are unhealthy. We start living for the pleasure of this world and not to please Jesus. Peter said, "Stay sober-minded." Avoid the things that cloud your spiritual judgment and distract you from living for the future. Get off the Internet at night. Don't turn the television on after 9 p.m. or save yourself a ton of money and get rid of cable altogether.

This week, ask yourself what clouds your spiritual judgment and takes your eyes off living for the amazing grace that will be ours the day we see Jesus?

Peter told us that if we plan to live God-honoring lives in an ungodly world, we need to be careful about the things in this world that captivate us and cause us to take our eyes off Jesus and cut those out of your life.

4. Don't get squeezed into the passions of this world.

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance... 1 Peter 1:14 (ESV)

When Peter talked about passions, he was talking about lusts. Those are the things we think we must have to be happy. For you, it may be designer jeans. You must have them to be happy. For others, it is a premium automobile. You must have it to be happy. You wouldn't be caught dead in a Ford or Chevrolet. For many Americans it is a bigger house and toys to keep up with their neighbors. To get there, you go into debt. There is incredible pressure to

live for the passions of this world, to keep up with others our age. For others, it is an expensive trip or vacation. Everybody else goes on expensive trips, we need to go on expensive trips.

I am not saying cars, houses, boats and vacations are wrong. What is wrong is telling ourselves we need them to be happy because other people have them. Other people need boats, cars, houses and vacations to be happy because that is all they have to look forward to! All of those things are nothing when compared to what God will shower on us when we see Jesus. Those were the things you lived for when you were ignorant. Now we know better. Live for the future.

I ask you, what is it that you just must have to be happy? Is it the new iPhone 6 or the iWatch? Be careful you aren't getting tricked into taking your eyes off of being with Jesus. Being with Jesus is more than enough. Everything else this world has to offer is peanuts by comparison.

5. Make holy living the passion of my living.

...but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:14–16 (ESV)

Some people make healthy living their goal. They eat only natural food. They are health store nuts who eat no preservatives, all organic, no sugar, high protein foods. You know them because their conversation always drifts to the latest salads and soybeans. Some people have fitness as their life passion. Their conversation always drifts to the latest CrossFit routine at the YMCA. They have weights in their basements and Fit-Bits on their wrists. Other people are sports nuts. Five minutes into any conversation they are talking about the stats

on their favorite sports team. They have the logo of the Hawkeyes on their blankets, their cups, their plates, it is mowed into their backyards and the logo of their favorite sports teams fly on flags in their front yards. Because they are fans, everything in their lives drifts to their favorite sports team.

There is nothing wrong with eating right, working out or enjoying sports but those are all life goals that will die. If we are a fan of Jesus, the way we root for him is not through wearing Christian T-shirts. The way we show our team colors is through holiness. We let holiness become the passion of our lives. Our conversations don't just drift to diet and exercise, they drift to purity and what it means to follow Christ in this world. Our conversations focus on being with Christ in the future and the incredible reward that will be ours when we see him.

Sexually we are set apart and pure because that is who we are and who we were created to be. We have holiness in our speech. It is without swearing. It doesn't tear people down but builds them up. Our speech is holy because it is filled with gentleness, not abrasiveness toward others. There is holiness in my finances because my money is not just for me, it is a tool given to me for blessing others and doing spiritual good. My business dealings are not primarily about profit but they are first and foremost about integrity and keeping promises before God. We are committed to honesty and integrity to live a holy life and represent Christ in the world. Our school lives are about holiness. When others cheat and carry in crib notes to the test, we don't cheat and we take the lower grade because our goal is not acing a test but living a holy life. Holiness of mind,

thoughts, attitudes and actions is our goal and our passion. When holiness is our hobby and our team, we avoid sin in this life as we focus on the future.

6. Remember the future judgment.

And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile... 1 Peter 1:17 (ESV)

The Bible reminds us that as Christians, even though we are completely forgiven by Christ, we will still be judged by Christ for how we lived. God's judgment is perfect. He knows about our attitudes, our motives and everything there is to know about us. There is no way we can pull the wool over the eyes of God. When we are taken advantage of and cheated in this world, God will make it right someday when we stand before him.

This is a great motivation to live holy lives now. I sometimes hear people rationalize, "Why not sin? It feels good. God will forgive me for it." or "I know premarital sex is wrong but God will forgive me for it." There is truth and lie in that statement. Does God forgive us completely for our sin through Jesus? Yes! The problem is we will still be judged by Jesus for our sins. God is a rewarding God. He doesn't just delight to forgive us of our sins through Jesus but he promises to reward us in eternity for how we avoided sin in this world and lived for Christ. Look what we can learn from Moses.

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. Hebrews 11:26 (ESV)

Moses was willing to identify with his people, the Israelites, rather than the identity of the son of Egypt's pharaoh because Moses was looking for the future reward he would receive based on how he lived then.

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14:12 (ESV)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV)

...knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. Ephesians 6:8 (ESV)

When we suffer now, know God will reward us in eternity for trusting him and obeying him as we suffer. The reward we receive in eternity will be greater than any earthly suffering we endure, or it wouldn't be called a reward. It would be called a white elephant gift.

When you are tempted on the Internet or tempted with your girlfriend or tempted to say something nasty to get even, know that when we choose sin, we will be forgiven of our sins but we will also forfeit part of our eternal reward from Christ. What we forfeit is always a reward that outweighs and outlasts any pleasure sin can offer. When we say, "No" to sin, we are saying "Yes" to greater pleasure — our rewards from Christ. The greater the temptation to sin, the greater the reward in eternity from Christ for avoiding it.

7. Remember the cost of my freedom and future.

...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:18–19 (ESV)

Peter told us we get strength to turn away from sin by remembering what God paid to redeem us from sin and our sinful ways.

In the ancient world, when slaves were bought out of slavery, the payment for their emancipation was usually not paid directly to the slave owner. Their

payment was usually made through a local temple, and the temple had a nice transaction fee for processing the payment. When the slave paid for his or her freedom through the temple, that slave was considered liberated to serve the God of that temple.

Peter picked up this cultural practice and tied it into the Christian life. He said you were in slavery to sin. You were in slavery to living for the passions of this world because that is all you had to look forward to. That is all you were capable of living for. God, out of his great love for us through Jesus, bought us out of slavery. He didn't do it with a few pieces of gold or silver but he did it with the very precious blood of his own son, Jesus Christ. There is no more precious blood in all the universe than Jesus'.

He freed us by his precious blood so that we would live for the God who freed us. He freed us to live for the future that will be ours and the mind-blowing amounts of grace and kindness and exaltation that will be ours when we see him face to face.

Conclusion

Today we live in a society that wants to press us into its mold. We are told to live for bigger houses, better cars and fancy vacations. We are told to live for our sexuality, materialism and pride.

Peter gave us a different picture. The way we find the ability to focus on a sin-free life in a sin-filled world is we set our thoughts on the day we will see Jesus and the incredible blessing and honor that will be ours in that moment. It is all beyond our wildest dreams and is given to us by Jesus. We need to study

God's Word so we know about this future or we will never live for it. We need to avoid the distractions in life that take our eyes off of our future. We need to be conscious about not letting the world, the television, our friends and society squeeze us into their molds by telling us to live for things that aren't of ultimate importance. We need to make holy living the passion of our lives over health, fitness, cars and hobbies. We need to remember the future judgment and the rewards that can be won or lost based on how we live our Christian lives. We need to remember the incredible price paid for our freedom with Jesus' own blood. It all shows us God loves us much more than we can ever comprehend.

My friends..., for sin-free living, fix your eyes on the day we will see Jesus. It is the only way to survive in this sin-filled world.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at

www.Christ@RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

© You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided (1) you credit the author, (2) modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include the web address (<http://www.Christ2RCulture.com>) on the copied resource.

