

October 7, 2007 by Steve Brandon



## Holiness (part 1)

### 1 Peter 1:14-15

#### 1. Don't Be Conformed (verse 14)

#### 2. Be Holy (verse 15)

Can you think of events in the future that change your behavior today? In other words, can you think of situations in your life where you know that you are going somewhere or will be doing something, where your behavior is changed in anticipation of that event? After a bit of thought, I'm sure that you can think of many such circumstances in your life like this. If you are a student who is taking a test tomorrow, you will devote a portion of today studying. If you are a musician and have a recital next week, you will be sure to invest the proper time in practicing today. If you are soon to have a baby, you will spend your days preparing a room and gathering clothes that you will need when the baby arrives. If you are going away for the weekend, you will spend your Thursday evening packing. If you are going to attend a wedding, you will shower and put on nice clothes. This is how God made the world. There are events in the future that cause us to change our behavior today.

This is especially true as we anticipate the return of Christ. As we hope for the day of His revelation, it will change our actions today. Before we look at our text this morning, I want to show you a few verses in the book of 2 Peter. As you read these verses, please look for the following two themes: future events and changed behavior in light of these future events.

#### 2 Peter 3:10-14

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

Future events are mentioned several times in these verses. In verse 10, we see the mention of the coming day of the Lord. It will come like a thief. That is, unexpected. In that day the heavens and earth will someday be consumed. In verse 11, we see a mention of how the heavens and earth will someday be destroyed. In verse 12, we see a third time the mention of how the heavens will be destroyed and the elements will all melt. In verse 13, we see a promise of "new heavens and a new earth."

Scattered throughout these verses, there are conclusions drawn concerning the behavior that we ought to have in light of these future events. In verse 11, we see how our behavior should change as a result of that day when the heavens and earth are destroyed, "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?" In other words, because the heavens and earth will no longer be here in the future, it must have an effect upon the way that we live. We ought to live our lives in "holy conduct and godliness." In verse 12, we see the link again made clear. We live in "holy conduct and godliness," while we are "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God." We expect this day of destruction to come. We are looking for this day. And while we are looking, we are living holy lives. In verse 13, again, there is an anticipation of the "new heavens and a new earth," which we are looking for, which leads to the natural conclusion of verse 14, "Therefore, ... since you look for these things," make it your diligent ambition in life to live peaceful, spotless and blameless lives.

The link that holds these things together is the expectation of the future. Three times in these verses, Peter links our "look" to the future as the hinge that generates our holy behavior today. In verse 12, we are "looking" for the day of God in which the current heavens and earth will be destroyed. In verse 13, we are "looking" for new heavens and a new earth to come. In verse 14, we are "looking" for these things in the future.

This is a common way of reasoning in the Bible. Jesus used this reasoning. He said, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will" (Matthew 24:42-44). You know that Jesus is coming back, so live in such a way that you will be ready for His return.

Paul used this reasoning. He wrote of how God's grace instructs us "to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:12-13). In our looking for the return of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, we are called to live righteously.

Ezekiel's reasoning goes the same way. He said, "'Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,' declares the Lord God. 'Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you'" (Ezekiel 19:30).

The apostle John reasoned this way. He wrote, "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. And everyone who has this hope [fixed] on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

This is the same thing that Peter was saying in 2 Peter. "You know that a great cataclysm is coming. So live rightly today. Live in holy conduct (2 Peter 3:11). Live in godliness (2 Peter 3:11). Be diligent to live in peace (2 Peter 3:14). Live a spotless and blameless life (2 Peter 3:14)." Indeed, this is the message of our text this morning. Let's consider our passage. Though we will only be looking at verses 14 and 15 this morning, I want for you to read the surrounding context of these verses.

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. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

The main point of these words are easy to discern. The call here is to holiness. Peter is exhorting his readers to live pure lives. You can see this exhortation in verse 15, "be holy yourselves ... in all your behavior." You see the command coming again in verse 16, "You shall be holy." A holy life is the focus of each of these three verses.

In light of 2 Peter 3, you can clearly see the connection here with Peter's reasoning here in 1 Peter, chapter 1. The argument thus far in 1 Peter runs like this. You may be experiencing trials in your life right now (verse 6). But, in the midst of them, you can greatly rejoice (verse 6), because of the great salvation that you will inherit someday. This salvation is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and reserved in heaven for you who are protected by the power of God through faith (1 Peter 1:4-5). This salvation is so great that you should look beyond your trial for your salvation. We can suffer now, because we know that the glory is coming later. Or, as I have put it in recent weeks, "Suffer now, glory later."

When Peter comes the point of giving his first piece of practical counsel, it comes in verse 13, "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Two weeks ago, we looked at this verse and came to understand that a help in trials is to have a future hope. A future hope takes us up and out of the troubles of the world and lifts us to see the true reality of our lives. Our hope of our salvation in the future helps us to see that the trials and difficulties of life now are only temporary. And we all can endure a bit of temporary trial, if we know that the outcome is much better than the trial is hard.

This week, we see that this future hope does more than help us through trials. This future hope should also produce a present holiness in our lives, which is what Peter is calling to our minds this morning. He's calling us to live holy lives today, because of the hope that we have in the future of obtaining our great inheritance.

But, I do believe that there is something else going on in Peter's mind that has to do with the trials we face in this life. I believe that his exhortations to holiness address us right where we need to be in time of trial. When the pressure is on and you are facing difficulty in your life, that's when it is most difficult to live holy lives.

If I would take an orange and apply pressure by squeezing, what happens? The peel breaks and juice would leak out. If I would take a tomato and squeeze it, what would happen? I'd get tomato stains on my shirt as the insides would come up. If you shake a glass of water, the water will spill out. This is how it is with trials in our lives. They apply pressure to us and what's inside of us often comes out. Often, our sinfulness comes out.

I have heard it said that financial pressures are the cause of many divorces. It works like this. A man loses his job. He then has difficulty finding a job. When he finally finds a job, it doesn't quite pay what the old job used to pay. As a result, the mortgage payment can't be made. The credit card bills pile up. Husband and wife try to figure out how to get along with less. He suggests that she drop her membership at the fitness club. She thinks that's a bad plan, so she suggests that he stop drinking his Starbucks latte each morning on the way to work. But he likes his Starbucks. He wants her to cancel her weekly visits to the beauty salon to get her nails done. She wants him to cancel his weekly fishing trips. And on and on it goes. Each one likes their own particular pleasures and are unwilling to give it up. As the suggestions continue, the volume of these suggestions gets louder and louder. Pretty soon, husband and wife are engaged in full-fledged arguments, each one fighting for their own pleasures. Their behavior is far from pure, and soon, it leads down the path of divorce.

What's happening here? The pressure is being applied. As the pressure is applied, it is more and more difficult to walk in a righteous way. That's only one example of many that could be shared of the way that mounting trials pressure your walk of faith. Pressures at work cause a husband to come home grumpy, which sets off the entire household. A friend at school comes to you with a suggestion that you engage in sinful activity. After initially refusing, your friend comes again and again and again, building the peer pressure to get you to conform to his (or her ways), which may lead to making unrighteous choices. A husband is diagnosed with terminal cancer. Fear of the future causes you to worry, which causes you to lose sleep, which puts you on edge and sinful words easily flow from your mouth. You are hurt by the actions of other people. So, anger arises in your heart and you find yourself easily thinking the worst of the individual and saying slanderous things about them. I could paint many more scenarios that illustrate the same point: When pressure is applied in the day of trial, it becomes more and more difficult to walk righteously.

Personally, the struggle comes for me comes on Saturday evening. I'm not quite done with my sermon preparation, and there are only a few hours remaining for me to get it done. When someone in my household calls me away from spending my last remaining hours to finish writing my message, I find myself easily sinful in my attitudes and in my words because the pressure is on! At these moments, I find that I have very little patience with the kids.

I think that Peter understands this. And so, immediately after talking about dealing with trials, he reminds us of how we need to pay extra-

careful attention to the way in which we live our lives. We need to be holy. We need to stand firm when stressed. Thus the reason for 1 Peter 1:14-16.

Throughout his epistle, Peter makes this same point over and over and over again. Peter tells his readers to **stand firm when stressed**. For instance, in 1 Peter 2:12, we read, "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evil doers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation." When you are being slandered as evil doers, continue to do what is good. Later, Peter says, "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable." Even if you are being treated wrongly, continue to submit to your masters. Stand firm when stressed.

The theme continues in 1 Peter 2:21-23, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." When Christ was treated badly, He still walked in holiness. So, go and do likewise. Peter's counsel extends to suffering wives, "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives" (1 Peter 3:1). Even if your husband is not a believer and lives a sinful life, continue to submit to your husbands in purity. Stand firm when stressed.

The principle is clearly stated in 1 Peter 3:9, "not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead." When others do evil against you or insult you and press you respond to them in anger, overcome evil with good. The following larger section continues to say the same thing. "Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame" (1 Peter 1:14-16). When you are walking righteously, and suffering for it, continue to walk righteously. Sanctify Christ in your hearts. Keep a good conscience. Peter later adds, "It is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right, rather than for doing what is wrong." Continue to do what is right and good and pure, even if you are caused to suffer for it. Stand firm when stressed.

We could continue on into chapters four and five with other examples of this sort of thing (for instance, see 1 Peter 4:4, 12-16, 19; 5:8-10). It's Peter's message throughout his epistle: When the suffering come, rejoice because of your glory later. Let your glorious hope strengthen you to continue to live righteously now. ... even if your holiness is the very thing that's causing your suffering! And this is Peter's message in our text this morning (1 Peter 1:14-16). Now, if you look at our text, you can see three points coming clearly out of these three verses. In verse 14 comes the negative command. In verse 15 comes the positive command. And in verse 16, we see a reason given for this command. We will look at the first two points this morning and look at the third point next week.

## 1. Don't Be Conformed (verse 14)

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts [which were yours] in your ignorance" (verse 14).

Peter was writing to people who, at one time, were living unholy lives. But, now, they were different. They had been redeemed from their former lives through the blood of Christ. This can be clearly seen in verse 18, where Peter writes, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers." They used to live a "futile life." But, now, their life had changed, because they had experienced the redemption of Jesus Christ. God had changed them so that they no longer lived in these "former lusts."

We get an insight into some of the particulars in their lives in chapter 4, verse 3, "For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries." Before these people were Christians, they were engaged in various sinful activities. They were driven by sensuality, that which affects the senses. They were driven by the lusts of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. They were engaged in drunkenness and carousing. They enjoyed the party scene, which helped them to drown away the sorrows of this world. They were even involved in abominable idolatries. During the days of Peter, the Gentile lands were filled with pagan temples of all types. Much of the worship in these places was sinful and sensual. Surely this carried over into their homes, with idolatrous practices taking place there.

But, when they came to Christ, they were redeemed from these things. They were no longer to be engaged in these sinful activities that once captured their attention. In verse 3, Peter says that they had already spent enough time enjoying the passing pleasures of these sins. But, now, their lives should be different. They shouldn't return again to be engaged in these sinful activities.

At this point it would be good for you to think about your own life. What were your "former lusts" that you once pursued, but now pursue no longer? Perhaps your vocabulary changed. Perhaps your television habits changed. Perhaps you left your alcohol behind. Perhaps you dumped your music collection. Perhaps you stopped your gambling addiction. Perhaps you began to spend less time with your friends and more time with your family. You should be able to think of something, unless, of course, you grew up in a godly home, where the only desires that you inherited from your forefathers were godly desires. If you don't have some "former lusts" in your mind, you might want to think about your own salvation. Is it real or not?

I had a conversation this week with a man who was telling me about his family. He began by telling me about his father. This man had the opportunity to share the gospel with his father. His father even prayed what's often called, "The sinner's prayer." But, to this man's discouragement, his father really hasn't every changed his life. He's still involved in his old way of life. On the weekends, he still continues to work as a bartender, which compels him to stay up late into the morning. Conveniently, he's always too tired to come to church. This man has not left his "former lusts." He desires the money. He desires the sinful environment surrounding the whole bartending scene. He has no desire for church. Furthermore, he hasn't demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit in his life. "Love, joy, peace, patience and kindness" simply

aren't evident in his life.

A short while after this man talked about the situation concerning his father, his attention turned to his brother. He told me that a few months ago, his brother became a Christian. And since then, his brother's life was entirely changed. This man has detected in his brother a genuine hunger for God in his life. For the first time in his life, he felt as if they were connecting in the spiritual realm, whereas for years, they hadn't. For the past few months, his brother has been attending a church. Rather than making excuses for staying away from the people of God, he has been excited to worship the Lord and learn each week about God's saving ways. His brother has been calling him up and saying, "Hey, the pastor at my church is saying the exact same things that you have been telling me!"

What a contrast these two people are. The father is still fully engaged in his "former lusts." But, the brother has laid aside the former lusts. Should you think about this for a moment, you will realize that there is nothing "former" about this father's "lusts." For him, they are present lusts which have never gone away. I believe that such things are a demonstration that the man has never been converted to Christ at all. He may have had a religious experience, but he seemingly knows nothing of Christ.

This is a good illustration of Peter's words in chapter 2, verse 11, "Beloved, I urge you, as aliens and strangers, to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul." There's a battle that we all face. It's a battle between the physical and the spiritual. The physical lusts are fighting against the spiritual state of our souls. The physical pleasures that we face here on earth have a way of keeping our minds off of the spiritual realities that we all face.

Peter says that we should not "be conformed" to these former lusts. This Greek word translated, "be conformed" occurs twice in our Bible. It is used here in 1 Peter 1:14 and the other time in Romans 12:2. Perhaps you have even memorized Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This is the same counsel that Peter is giving. Don't let the world mold you. Rather, be molded by God and His word. Peter is saying, "There is a way that you used to live, which was in accordance with the world. You thought like the world thinks. You acted like the world acts. But, in Christ, you have a different mold. You aren't to allow the world to shape you anymore. You need to be shaped by a different influence." Particularly, you are called to ...

## 2. Be Holy (verse 15)

You can see this clear admonition in verse 15, "like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior."

This is the positive side of verse 14. When many people think of "holiness," they think in terms of what they don't do. They don't drink. They don't smoke. They don't go to movies. They don't listen to rock and roll. They don't use bad language. In doing so, they think that they have become holy. But, there is a whole other side to holiness. It's not merely what you "put off." It's also what you "put on" as well.

We are called to be holy. On a fundamental level, this means that we should be different than the world around us. Where the world is dirty and stained in sin, we should be separated from that evil. When the world would delight in wickedness, we should be dedicated to a life of righteousness. When the world would ignore the things of God, we should place our full attention upon the Lord. That's what it means to be holy.

Now, this holiness can take many different forms. You can go through the book of 1 Peter and pick out some ways in which this holiness might manifest itself. It manifests itself in a fervent love from the heart (1 Peter 1:22). It means having a longing for the word of God (2:2). Holiness means that we submit ourselves to the governmental authorities (2:13) and to anyone in authority over us (2:18). Peter describes a holy life as one that follows the example of Jesus (2:21ff). In chapter 3, verse 1, it means that wives are submissive to their husbands. Husbands also are to be sensitive to their wives if they are to live a holy life (3:7). Holiness means that we live lives of harmony and sympathy with each other. In chapter 3, verse 9, it means that we don't resort to vengeance or name-calling. A holy life will no longer live for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. A holy life will keep fervent in our love for one another. Peter points out that a holy life will abstain from murder, theft, and all evil doing (4:15) and will live a life of humility (5:5). In chapter 5, verse 9, it means that we resist the devil with all of his evil schemes.

There are many other commands in the book of 1 Peter that we could pick up as an example of what it means to be holy. I've just given you a sample of what it means to break out of the world's mold and live a holy life. This holiness ought to penetrate deep into our lives. There ought to be no area of our lives left out. You can see this in verse 15, "be holy yourselves also in **all** your behavior." You can't get away with being holy in part of your behavior.

Jerry Bridges has recently written a book entitled, "Respectable Sins." I've not read it, but I like the title, because it infers that there are certain sins in the Christian world that are "acceptable." They are tolerated. They are respectable. I believe that the following list is what the chapters in his book are entitled.

- \* Ungodliness
- \* Anxiety and Frustration
- \* Discontentment
- \* Unthankfulness
- \* Pride
- \* Selfishness
- \* Lack of Self-Control
- \* Impatience and Irritability
- \* Anger
- \* The Weeds of Anger
- \* Judgmentalism
- \* Envy, Jealousy, and Related Sins

- \* Sins of the Tongue
- \* Worldliness

There are many in the church who will come to a standard of righteousness that they are comfortable with, but want nothing to do with going further. But, Peter leaves no room for this. He presses us on further. He leaves no room for "respectable sins." We are called to be holy "in all our behavior."

Are there areas in your life where you tolerate your sin? Or, do you seek to be holy in **all** your behavior?

This word translated, "holy," (agioV) is a word that has several meanings. In one sense, it means, "pure" or "righteous" or "morally clean." That's the sense that we have already looked at. Our behavior should be upright. But, there is another sense of the word which means, "separate" or "sacred" or "set apart." This sense of the word comes especially clear when you consider the first part of verse 15, "like the Holy One who called you." In other words, we should be like God!

Certainly, God is pure and righteous and morally clean. But, there is also this aspect about God that he is entirely distinct from us. He is the creature, we are the created. He is the eternal, we are the temporal. He is the infinite, we are the finite. He is the all-knowing, we are limited in our knowledge. As God is separated from us, so also ought we to be separated from other people.

A great illustration of this came a few years ago in my life. I was ministering at Kishwaukee Bible Church, in DeKalb. I remember a family from the community who began attending our church. The husband was saved, but the wife wasn't. Eventually, the wife came to embrace Christ as she was converted. A few years later, I heard her tell her testimony. She said that when she initially came to Kishwaukee Bible Church, she thought that everyone there was "weird." That's the very word she used to describe the people there. They were "weird." When I asked her what she meant by this, she simply meant that the people of the church had a different sort of affections than other people she had encountered before. She said that the people at the church genuinely loved God and were seeking to know Him and obey Him. And thereby, they were "weird."

This is who we are called to be. We are called to be "weird," not in the sense that we are crazy or out of control or sinful or don't take care of our looks. But, we should be "weird" in the sense that we have set our hope and affections upon heavenly things, which non-Christians don't understand and cannot relate. We are "weird" because we are aren't in the world's mold.

This is how Peter described the ones to whom he was writing. He called them "aliens" in verse 1. In chapter 2, verse 11, he considered them to be "aliens and strangers." Peter considered these Christians to be foreigners in a strange land. Peter considered them to be from another world. Indeed, they were children of God, and not children of the world (verse 14). God has called us to be different than the world around us. There ought to be among us a heavenly flavor, that when people rub against us, they are directed heavenward.

I remember reading about a man named John Oxtoby. He was born in 1767 in England, into a poor family that worked in the fields. For thirty-seven years, he lived an irreligious and self-indulgent life. But, in 1804, through the words of an itinerant Wesleyan preacher, his conscience was awakened to his sin. A few months later, John Oxtoby experienced God's forgiveness through Christ. He devoted himself to the little village of Wartar, where he was living at the time. I pick up his biographer, ...

Little gospel light had penetrated [the] darkness [of the village] and men and women lived out their days largely in ignorance of the grace of God. The dramatic change in Oxtoby's way of life was, however, a factor the local people could not ignore. No single cottage or homestead, humble or grand, escaped a visit from this indefatigable evangelist. While at first many a door was slammed in his face, the situation slowly changed.

Once invited inside, John would display sincere concern for the family he was visiting -- their troubles, sicknesses and anxieties -- and always he would pray with them. So he gained the name, "Praying Johnny." And God answered the prayers of this simple and earnest soul-winner. Over the months the whole aspect of the village altered: now there were many families where the gospel of Jesus Christ was believed and loved; now every door opened gladly as "Praying Johnny" passed by. If for any reason he missed out a home, the aggrieved householder would call out, "What have we done that we must not have you pray with our family?" [\[1\]](#)

That's what it means to be holy. It means that we care for others and love others and demonstrate our graciousness to others. It means that we direct them heavenward. So, when they see us, they are immediately drawn into thinking of heaven because though we are in the world, we are not of this world.

In the early 1800's there was a Scottish pastor named Robert Murray M'Cheyne. Consider the testimony of a man who knew him well.

"Whether viewed as a son, a brother, a friend, or pastor, often has the remark been made by those who knew him most intimately, that he was the most faultless and attractive exhibition of the true Christian which they had ever seen embodied in a living form. His great study was to be Christ-like. He was a man of remarkable singleness of heart. He lived but for one object--the glory of the Redeemer in connection with the salvation of immortal souls. Hence, he carried with him a kind of hallowing influence into every company into which he entered, and his brethren were accustomed to feel as if all were well when their measures met with the sanction and approval of Mr. M'Cheyne. [\[2\]](#)

This is what it means to be holy. It means that we are different than the world. And our difference gives people a clear sense of God.

Yesterday, I attended a wedding of a good friend of mine. In their wedding bulletin, he had written some brief sentences describing those who were in his wedding. As I close my message, I thought that some of these descriptions would be good for us to read, as they reflect well what characterizes a holy person.

John - John is the most mature young Christian I know. His faith has been an encouragement and rebuke to me since I met him. I have often thought of him as David thought of Jonathan, a brother indeed. This bondservant of Christ is a model of humble Christian service and kindness. He passionately loves the Gospel of Christ crucified. God's sovereign hand is on John, so I am eager to watch how the Lord will wield him in mightily promulgating the gospel among the nations.

Philip - I met Philip at a class he taught on missions. He has been teaching me ever since then and has shaped my growing faith probably way more than he realizes. In my estimation, he is sort of a Renaissance man of the Christian Church. He is an extremely bright and gifted man and a fine teacher and story teller. There are few people as stimulating to my mind and faith as Philip, and I cherish the fellowship we have had.

Steve - Before my newly born Christian eyes and for years, Steve has modeled robust Calvinistic theology in practice as much as anyone. He lives the faith he professes as a great doer of the Word. When I was a young believer zealous for learning robust and profound theology, he always reminded me that learning was for the sake of practice. He nurtured me so patiently and often was the man I went to when perplexed and needy for wise counsel.

James - James is a pastor, and a good one. Some evidence for this is that he has not left the ministry after shepherding me. Other evidence, as all who know James will attest, is that his ministry is intentionally, intensely, and resolutely Word-centered. As much as anyone at Church, he has folded me into the life and nurture of the church. He genuinely loves and cares for people. I have learned a lot about shepherding people from his godly example.

Now, these men aren't perfect. And yet, these words to model for us what godliness looks like. It directs people heavenward.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 7, 2007 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] This quote is taken from Faith Cook's excellent book entitled, *Faith in the Fire*, pp. 93-95. This book is a compilation of fourteen godly saints who have walked through difficult times.

[2] These were the words of a fellow pastor, the Rev. J. Roxburgh, found in the book, *Memoirs and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, p. 169.