

## HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

## STUDY THREE

Hope Beyond Temptation: Staying Clean  
in a Corrupt Society*1 Peter 1:13–21*

*In God's perfect arrangement, He has deliberately left us on this earth. We live in this crooked and perverse world on purpose. Don't think for a minute that the Lord has made a mistake leaving you and me as His lights in a world that's moving in an opposite direction from Him.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**M**ILLENNIA ago, God uttered a timeless word of caution for all humanity: “Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master” (*Genesis 4:7*). Cain, the first recipient of this warning, ultimately chose to disregard God’s word about the ever-present danger of sin. Cain killed his own brother and spent the rest of his days a cursed man.

What was true for Cain then remains true for us today. Sin is everywhere. The world in which God has left His children is “crooked and perverse” (*Philippians 2:15*). And unless you set up a strong defense, this unclean world will inevitably corrupt you.

Is there any hope of us overcoming the pervasive power of sin and staying clean?

The apostle Peter answered this very pressing question in his first letter. This *Searching the Scriptures* study explores how believers living in an unclean society can overcome even the fiercest of temptations.



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1 Peter 1:13–21



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

In *1 Corinthians 10:13*, the apostle Paul wrote, “The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.” Say this prayer as you prepare your heart to search the Scriptures today.

*Father, every day I face great temptation to reject You and embrace sin, but I praise You because You always offer me a way out. Strengthen me through the truth of Your Word today so I can run from sin the next time I'm tempted. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Peter addressed his first letter to “God’s chosen people who are living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (*1 Peter 1:1*). Realities like persecution forced these early Christians to scatter from their homes and live in various regions of the Roman Empire.

When you take a smoldering coal out of a blazing furnace, it cools off quickly. Similarly, the believers to whom Peter wrote were forced out of their homes and Christian communities. Their new environment, dominated by idol-worship and filled with sex parties, posed serious threats to cool and suffocate their fiery faith. In *1:13–21*, Peter shared how these believers could resist the influence of demonic ideology and keep their faith burning for God.



### Observation: Holiness in an Unholy World

Every time Pastor Chuck Swindoll turns the page of his Bible to a new passage, one task and one task only occupies his mind: observation. Before he considers what the words might mean or how he might apply them, he simply asks, “What does this passage say?”<sup>1</sup> As you read *1 Peter 1:13–21*, note Peter’s commands. List them in the space below.



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### Living Our Lives in Holiness—1 Peter 1:13–16

In this long series of commands, *1 Peter 1:14* contains Peter’s central desire for his readers living in a corrupt society. Summarize this verse in your own words.

In short, Peter wanted his readers to be holy in an unholy world. According to *1 Peter 1:15–16*, why is it essential for Christians to be holy?

### Conducting Our Walk in Reverent Fear—1 Peter 1:17

At the end of *1 Peter 1:17*, Peter exhorted his reader to “live in reverent fear of [God].” According to the beginning of this verse, why must Christians conduct their walk in this manner?



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### Focusing Our Minds on Christ—1 Peter 1:18–21

Those who don't place their trust in Jesus are enslaved to sin (*Romans 6:20*). In *1 Peter 1:18*, Peter said that God paid the ransom to set Christians free from sin's oppressive grasp. According to *1:18–19*, how did God pay the price for His people's freedom?

According to *1 Peter 1:20–21*, for whom did Christ appear? What resulted from God raising Christ from the dead?

*Just as children pick up the nature of their parents, so also do we pick up the nature of God. We have a Father who is holy. And Peter says we're to be holy like our heavenly Father.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Interpretation: The Importance of Holiness

God's holiness is one of His most important attributes. He made His holiness evident in the very fibers of creation. He rooted the commands of the Mosaic law in His holiness. And He commands His people to live holy lives because the God they serve is holy.



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Using your Bible study tools, do some digging to uncover the meaning of the word *holy*. For the basic sense of the term, look up *hagios* in Bill Mounce’s Greek dictionary at [billmounce.com](http://billmounce.com). For a more detailed discussion, open up in the *Encyclopedia of the Bible* at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com). To see the significance of holiness for 1 Peter 1:13–21, check out *Constable’s Notes* at [netbible.org](http://netbible.org).

Now define *holiness* in your own words and express your newfound appreciation about this essential attribute of God.

Because God is holy, He is “set apart” from the rest of creation. After the fall, God’s once idyllic creation was cursed by sin and death. Now, the corrupt ways of the world are so insidious that they can deceive, tempt, and lead astray even those with the strongest faith.

Yet in Jesus’ final prayer for His disciples, He said, “I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one” (*John 17:15*). What is the difference between God removing us from the world’s sinful influence and God keeping us safe from it? Why is this difference important?

*I have often said, His plan is that we not be isolated from the world but that we be insulated. You and I are left in a world where the majority are going the wrong way. We are left as lights, as examples, as testimonies, as spiritual salmon swimming up the opposite direction from the flow of the river or the stream. And it’s on purpose.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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 **Correlation: Jesus’ Temptation**

Although Jesus was fully God, He also was fully human, which means He experienced temptation. And at the outset of Jesus’ earthly ministry, Satan put the holiness of God to the test. For forty days, Satan made offer after offer to try to break Jesus. Read an account of this scene in [Matthew 4:1–11](#), and fill in the chart below as you read.

Scripture	Satan’s Offer	Temptation	Jesus’ Response
<i>Matthew 4:3–4</i>			
<i>Matthew 4:5–7</i>			
<i>Matthew 4:8–10</i>			



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How is Jesus' example instructive for believers facing their own temptations?

The author of Hebrews likely had this scene in mind as he penned his letter. According to *Hebrews 4:15–16*, why was it important that Jesus endured these temptations?

When Satan's schemes threatened to corrupt Him, Jesus looked to God, and when temptation draws near to us, we can run to Him and find refuge in His example. He stood strong and remained holy, and He desires to see that same holiness flourish in us as well.



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### Application: A Challenge to Be Different

A slow trickle of dirty water will eventually pollute even the cleanest pond. So it is with Christians who allow the ideas, impulses, and influences of this sinful world to infiltrate their souls. Pastor Chuck Swindoll offers four challenges for believers who desire to remain clean in an unholy world:

1. *Pay closer attention to what you look at.*
2. *Give greater thought to the consequences than to the pleasures of sin.*
3. *Start each day by renewing your sense of reverence for God.*
4. *Periodically during each day, focus fully on Christ.*

In what ways are you tempted to embrace the ways of the world and reject the ways of Christ? Which of these four challenges above can you begin to apply to keep yourself clean from this world's pollution?

Have you let the temptations of the world win recently? You may feel hopeless, but the good news of Jesus Christ is that God offers forgiveness to *any* person for *any* sin. *First John 1:9* says, “But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”



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Write your own prayer of confession below. God will cleanse and forgive you. His pure path awaits.

As long as you live in this world, you will feel tempted by its ways. But that is no reason to despair! The blood of Jesus has cleansed you from your sins, and God has set you apart for His good purpose. So go! Bring the holiness of God to a polluted world and marvel as He uses you for His purpose and His glory.



### A FINAL PRAYER

Say this prayer from Pastor Chuck as you wrap up your time in God's Word today:

*Lord, hear my prayer today as I ask You to bring to my attention those things that will assist me in staying clean in a corrupt world. Give me an intense distaste for things that displease You and a renewed pleasure in things that bring You honor and magnify the truth. I pray in Jesus' holy name. Amen.*

### ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

