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An Exegesis of 1 Peter 1:16: the Meaning of “Be Holy, for i am Holy”

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Abstract

The call to “be holy” as recorded in 1Peter 1:16 is one of the controversial texts in the New Testament. This text has received different views from scholars. Some scholars Peter’s use of “be holy, for I am holy”¹ indicates that he had both God and human beings in mind. The question is, does “be holy, I am holy” or “διότι γέγραπται [ὅτι] ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιός [εἰμι]” refer to man or God alone? The paper studied and analyzed this important topic “be holy, for I am holy.” The paper did an exegetical analysis of 1 Peter 1:16 to get the correct meaning of phrase “be holy, for I am holy” or διότι γέγραπται [ὅτι] ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιός [εἰμι]. The paper will contribute to the existing understanding of the 1Peter 1:16. Analysis of the text and its key words led to the conclusion that “ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιός εἰμι” which translates as “be holy, for I am holy” does not refer to any human being but it directly links to God from this standpoint, although, it can also fit Christian believers who have accepted God as their savior and live a pious life.

Keywords: Exegesis, 1Peter 1:16, Be Holy, I am Holy

Introduction

The defenders of the theology of Christian standard do not underestimate the so called “διότι γέγραπται [ὅτι] ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιός [εἰμι]” implying “be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:16). The argument of some biblical scholars has been that Peter’s use of “be holy, for I am holy”² indicates that he had God and human beings in mind.³

The question is, does “be holy, I am holy” or “διότι γέγραπται [ὅτι] ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιός [εἰμι]” refers to man or God alone? This brings to the study and analysis of this important topic “be holy, for I am holy.”

The paper aims to do exegetical analysis of 1 Peter 1:16 to get the correct meaning of phrase “be holy, for I am holy” or διότι γέγραπται [ὅτι] ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιός [εἰμι]. The study will look at the historical background, literary context, literally analysis, literary structure, exegetical analysis, grammatical study, theological analysis, intertextuality, summary, conclusion and bibliography. However, the exegesis of the disputed phrase “be holy, for I am holy or “διότι γέγραπται [ὅτι] ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιός [εἰμι]” will also be addressed to arrive at a correct meaning.

The Historical Background of the First Epistle of Peter

The text under study 1 Peter 1:16, is addressed in the first epistle of Peter. For scholarly exegetical analysis of the text, the consideration of the author, date, genre, audience and purpose of the first epistle of peter will be tackled.

Authorship

Some critics in the first century challenged apostle Peter to be the author of the first epistle of Peter on the grounds that the believers who were persecuted were not in Peter’s era, but the time of Emperor Domitian and aspects of 1 Peter 1:1-2, 4:12 and 5:14 were later

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¹ Kurt A. Mathew, *the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: C.H. Beck, 2006), 786.

² Kurt A. Mathew, *the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: C.H. Beck, 2006), 786.

³ Earl D. Radmacher et al, *the Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2007), 1979.

additions which were not Peter's contribution.⁴ Gary M. Burge argued that first Peter is one of the first examples of Greek prose in the New Testament which could not be written by unschooled fisherman like Peter. However, the letter shows close affinities with Peter's writings especially the letter to the Romans.⁵ Against this background, the early Church fathers universally acknowledged Peter to be the authoritative and authentic author of the first epistle of Peter.⁶ According to Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary, the first epistle of Peter was written by Apostle Peter because the style and language resemble Peter's writings.⁷ Adeyemo Tokunbo in his book *African Bible Commentary* affirmed that the author identifies himself as Peter, Jesus disciple. This is because the circumstance described in the letter fit the period of Peter's life, the terminology and the themes reflect his writings.⁸ Peter wrote the first epistle of Peter when he was in suffering at Roman provinces in Asia Minor.⁹

Date

There is disagreement among scholars as to when the first epistle of Peter was written. However, many of the scholars fixed the date around AD 81-96. The basis has been that Peter used the style of Paul's writings in terms of grammar, wording, syntax and literary devices which unschooled fisherman could not have and this dated back of his epistle which had been in second century.¹⁰ Peter answered the question in Chapter 1 verse 1 in respect to the time of dating when he was in Asia Minor.¹¹ Peter wrote from Rome to Babylon.

Audience

The epistle of first Peter written by Peter was addressed to a large number of people of Christ's followers.¹² The reference to persecution suggested that it was written from Rome to Babylon (1 Pet 5:13) and used as a counsel for that city.¹³ Thus, the first epistle of Peter was again written to encourage Christians and it was a witness to the ministry and suffering of Jesus Christ, his triumphant resurrection and ascension.¹⁴ Essentially enough, Peter gave practical advice on how to live out the Christian faith of the

believers in Asia Minor who were both Jews and Gentiles.¹⁵

Purpose

Boldly speaking, a critical study of the first epistle of Peter divulges that the writer wrote with many purposes in mind. Layman Charles confirms that there are great Biblical scholars who think that Peter wrote the first epistle with several purposes.¹⁶ In the first, the major theme is to provide encouragement to the persecuted Christians. With this, Layman wrote

Even in so brief, a persecuting letter was mentioned four times (1:6-7, 3:16-17, 4:12-19, 5: 9). One element of encouragement is the promise of return of Jesus Christ. This is referred to quite vividly the purpose to keep the hope alive at any cost, but it is only God can vindicate.¹⁷

Another reason of Peter writing the first epistle of Peter based on liturgical purpose which includes baptism and Holy Communion.¹⁸ Here, Peter made it obvious that God's holiness has been extended to every mankind and not the Israelites alone. All of us are now chosen people of God. Also, there has been theological purpose with which Peter wrote the epistle.¹⁹ Thus God is a faithful Creator and, therefore His gracious care extends to all people. He is righteous in all his judgments, since His judgments rests upon His own holy character. Again, he wrote on doctrine concerning Christ's suffering and other believers' persecution.²⁰ The first epistle reveals the soldiers in Roman provinces who constantly attacked and tortured the apostles, Christ and other believers.

It is therefore crystal clear that the first epistle of Peter was not only written to counsel and encourage the persecuted Christians, but it was also documented to address liturgical and doctrinal issues.

Literary Analysis of 1 Peter 1:16

The text under study, 1 Peter 1:16, falls under the general context of the sufferings and afflictions faced by Christians in Asia Minor addressed by Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Here, Peter was also addressing Christians in Babylon of their trials and suffering they would encounter once they have become Christ's followers.²¹ Peter and other believers went to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.²² Again, Peter reminded the believers that they should stand in their faith and true grace of God (5:12).²³

More importantly, the apostle Peter was also addressing outcasts of Israel, the designation given to the Jews in their

⁴ Thomas L. Remnant *Study Bible with Ellen G White Comments* (Michigan: Remnant Publications Inc, 2009), 1478.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Garry M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill, *the Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Chuna: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 1540.

⁸ Tokunbo Adeyemo, *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: World Alive Publishers, 2006), 1516.

⁹ Carson R. T., *New Bible Commentary* (England: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 1374.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1517.

¹¹ Ibid., 1371.

¹² Bromley Geoffrey, *the International Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 1612.

¹³ Eugene Boring M., *An Introduction to New Testament: History, Literature, Theology* (Westminster, KY: John Knox Press, 2012), 879.

¹⁴ Ericksen J. Millard, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MD: Baker House, 1992), 103.

¹⁵ Wyne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 226.

¹⁶ Charles M. Layman, *The Interpreters One Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971), 924.

¹⁷ Ibid., 935.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 926.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Edward G. Farrugia and Gerald C. Collins, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 115.

²² Andrews L., *Andrews Study Bible* (Andrews University Press, 2010), 1626.

²³ Ibid.

dispersed nation throughout the world ever since the Babylonian captivity.²⁴

He also talked about the circumcision not limited to the temporal sense only but he expressed on the condition as a shadow of their spiritual calling to the strangers and pilgrims looking for the heavenly Jerusalem as their home (1 Pet 1:14, 2:10, 4:3).²⁵ This assertion specifically refers to Christian gentiles (1 Pet 1:17, 2:11).

Biblically speaking, Peter's quote "be holy, for I am holy" referred to God.²⁶ Peter's epistle in 1 Peter 1:16 was written to Israelites and gentiles. However, they have to live differently from the other nations.²⁷

Essentially enough, to be holy, for I am holy in literary sense or analysis implies "to set apart" which meant to refuse to eat certain foods, wear certain clothes, to see certain things and to be decent, modest and simple in our marriage.²⁸ It also signifies keeping God's commandments well.²⁹ God's desire for humankind was to be like Him, and He is holy.³⁰ The difference between the holiness enshrined in the Old Testament by Moses (Lev 11:44) and in New Testament by Peter (1 Pet 1:16) had been "Yahweh" not only almighty creator but "ἁριστός" the loving being, spiritual suffering, redeemer and savior.³¹

Therefore the text under study falls in the section that starts from 1 to 25 of chapter 1. Here Peter admonished the Christian believers in Asia Minor to prepare themselves spiritually (1:10, 2:3), to love each other (2:1, 3:2), to unite themselves (3:8-12), to suffer and live for God (3:13-22, 4:1-11).³²

Literary Structure of 1 Peter 1:25

Theologically speaking, a heavenly inheritance or salvation could only be attained through holiness (1 Pet 1:1-25). Here Peter addressed the Christians that they would pass through suffering and persecution and when they are able to overcome these afflictions, they would inherit His kingdom. It appears that 1 Peter 1:16 is the key to understand "be holy, for I am holy." The context of 1 Peter 1:16 can be structured as follows:

Prologue (1 Pet 1:1-2) pilgrims at Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

A (1 Pet 1:3-9) Comforts and reassurance in suffering

B (1 Pet 1:10-12) Practical Holiness

C (1 Pet 1:13-16) Spiritual significance of suffering

D (1 Pet 1:17-21) Divine love for church life

Epilogue (1 Pet 1:22-25) Choosing salutation and benediction.³³

²⁴ Harold L. Wilmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook* (Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), 768.

²⁵ Kevin Layman C., *Serendipity Bible for Groups* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 1689.

²⁶ Karl Rahner, *Encyclopedia of Theology* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1975), 635.

²⁷ *NLT Study Bible* (Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 2124.

²⁸ Zondervan D. *Handbook to the Bible* (Michigan: Lion Hudson Publication, 2009), 755.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 756.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Carol Stream, *New Living Translation* (Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 1250.

³² *Ibid.*, 1541.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1981-1983.

The structure seems to be rhetorical style. It emphasizes Christ's suffering almost in every chapter of the book. It took place in the Roman Provinces in Asia Minor.

Theologically speaking, 1 Peter has a very polished Greek literary style. With this literary and rhetorical style, that Peter showed great tenderness in his writings.³⁴

More significantly, the first epistle of Peter can be compared to second epistle of Paul written to Corinthians. Peter's writing is also similar to the writings of James since both of them addressed Christians scattered abroad.³⁵

Meanwhile, it is clear from the above analysis that the narrator after his prologue indicated that Christian believers went into persecution and suffering in Asia Minor and Roman provinces. With the analysis of the structure of 1 Peter 1, the passage in totality disclosed afflictions, suffering and persecution some believers went through. The good news here was that they were promised of practical holiness and salvation.

Exegetical Analysis of 1 Peter 1:16

As it has been disclosed, the analysis of 1 Peter 1:1-25, which the text under discussion falls, talks about the affliction, suffering and persecution of Christians. However, the parallel verses for critical study from several Bible versions are shown below:

NIV – "for it is written, be holy I am holy"

ESV – "since it is written, you shall be holy I am holy"

KJV – "because it is written, be holy I am holy"

NASB – "because it is written, you shall be holy I am holy"

NLT – "for the scripture say, you must be holy because I am holy"

HCSB – "for it is written, be holy because I am holy."³⁶

From the above Bible versions, NIV, KJV, HCSB used "be". The ESV and NASB used "shall" whereas NLT used "must". This implies that "shall" and "must" have been applied as an imperative or commanding mood while "be" has been used as exhortation or motivational mood. Here, all the versions expressed the same idea.

1 Peter 1:1-15, the key to understand verse 16 which the text under discussion talks about suffering and persecution. 1 Peter 1:16 indicated that "to God elect". The strangers in the world scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia Minor and Bithynia who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the father, through the sanctifying work of the spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood.³⁷ Hence, grace and peace be unto you in abundance. This text came about when Peter was comforting and consoling believers who were persecuting in Roman provinces in Asia Minor. Peter asserted to the "pilgrims of the dispersion" in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1 Pet 1:2).³⁸ When Peter realized their afflictions, he pitied them. After the apostle Peter's counseling, there came a question "of this salvation that was prophesized by Christ would come to

³⁴ L. O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 339.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1542.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, *Greek and English Interlinear New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publications, 2008), 890.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1981.

you through your suffering in the faith” (1 Pet 1:10-11).³⁹ Peter’s response which began from verses 13 to 15 was an answer of the believers question to become sanctified, holy, and righteous and glorified (salvation).⁴⁰

The use of “Διὸ” by Peter signified a conjunction. This context indicates that verse 13 is a continuation of verse 10 and 11.⁴¹ Here “Διὸ” is directly linked to 10 and 13. Thus, Peter’s response is directly connected to what the believers inquired their holiness. 1 Peter 1:15 states that “but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.”⁴² This verse in the Greek starts with the word “ἀλλὰ” and it is used as a conjunction coordinating in this context; it implies positive continuity of event which began at verse 15.⁴³

1 Peter 1:16, the text under study also indicates the continuity of the discourse. In other words, the use of “διότι” in verse 16 implies that the persecutors were directly connected to God’s holiness and salvation.⁴⁴ 1 Peter 1:16 shows the response from God to the believers who were persecuted and suffered as Christ experienced. Peter therefore disclosed in verse 11 that “searching for what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ testifying his sufferings and glories.”⁴⁵ This in turn was a response to the believers question “how can we be holy?” as it has been already indicated that the believers or Christians wanted to be holy because they needed salvation. There comes a question, what does the word “written” used in the text mean?⁴⁶ Theologically speaking, the analysis of the word “written” can be of an immense help in understanding the phrase “be holy, for I am holy.”⁴⁷ The assertion “be holy, for I am holy” is also used by Moses in the Old Testament in Leviticus 11:44.⁴⁸

Grammatical Study

Biblically speaking, in order to get obvious understanding of 1 Peter 1:16, there are some key words that require careful study and analysis. Hence, written (γέγραπται) be holy (ἅγιοι) I am (εἶμι) and holy (ἅγιος) will be studied.⁴⁹ The meaning of “γέγραπται” and its understanding by theologians

The Greek word γέγραπται” which is translated in the text as “written” comes from the verb “γράφω” which means to

write or record and the noun is “γραφή” which is writing.⁵⁰ “γραφή” is derived from the Latin word “scrib” which means to present with words or handwriting.⁵¹ “γραφή” therefore can be used in two ways. The first one can be used in the sense of recording the words of God (scripture). It can also be used in the angle of recording down the events in the world.⁵²

Gazer Sherd (1800-1630 BC), a Church historian and alphabetical writer defined writing as a form of communication involves a complicated feature of logical development into letters and words depicts the creativity of ancient cultures, languages and striving to preserve in concrete forms.⁵³ However, the era of first and second century BC, Paleo- Hebrew and Aramaic writers in ancient East scribed with a clay seal. Some Biblical writers believe that writing is an act of documenting historical events from one person to another.⁵⁴ It can, therefore, be understood that “γραφή” which is writing is connected to recording both secular and sacred historical events.

The Meaning of “γέγραπται” in the First Epistle of Peter “Γέγραπται”

In 1 Peter 1:16 has the idea or connotation of “ascribing the holiness” of God.⁵⁵ In this context, it is based on individual’s decision making.

“εἶμι”

The Greek word “εἶμι” has a basic meaning of “I am”, “you are”, or “he is.”⁵⁶ The use of “εἶμι” in 1 Peter 1:16 has been used as objective pronoun in singular sense.⁵⁷ A critical analysis indicates that I am “εἶμι” is related to holy ἅγιος” which is God “θεός”.

The implication here is that I am “εἶμι” is directly referred to that God “θεός” in the context word of 1 Peter 1:16. The Greek word “εἶμι” (I am) has been used about thirty times in the New Testament. These are some of the quotations in the Bible. John states that: I am the bread of life (John 6:35), I am the door of sheep (John 9:5), I am true vine (John 15:1), I say to you before Abraham was born I am (John 8:58) and Luke also says, I am the God of your father (Acts 7:32).⁵⁸ Revelations 1:8 and 1:17 indicate that; I am the alpha and omega the first and the last respectively.⁵⁹ However, none of the usage of “εἶμι” (I am) refers to prophets, priests or apostles and it is directly linked to God.⁶⁰ It is therefore obvious that “εἶμι” (I am) in Peter 1:16 can only be given to God who is the Creator, the

³⁹ Ibid.,1982.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Richard J. Godrich and Albert L. Lukaszewski, *A Reader’s Hebrew and Greek Bible, 2nd Ed.*(China: Philip Brown and Bryan W. Smith Publications, 2007), 504.

⁴² Raymond E. Brown, et al, *The New Jerome Bible Commentary* (China: Midas Publications, 1990), 1146.

⁴³ Harold J. Greenlee, *A Concise Exegetical Grammar of New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), 5.

⁴⁴ William G. Morris, *The Durham New Testament Greek Course* (United Kingdom: Guernsey Press Co., 1993), 10.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁶ Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publications, 1997), 136.

⁴⁷ Jeremy Duff, *The Elements of New Testament Greek* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 79.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 505.

⁴⁹ John H. Dobson, *Learn New Testament Greek, ed.* (United Kingdom: Baker Publishing Group, 2005), 13.

⁵⁰ Cullen I K. Story and Lyle J. Story, *Greek to Me* (San Francisco, MN: Haper and Row Publishers, 1979), 114.

⁵¹ Petter Enns and Mark Straus, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary* (China: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 1734.

⁵² Ibid., 1735.

⁵³ Ibid.,1736.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1738.

⁵⁵ Ibid.,1636.

⁵⁶ Rodney A. Whitacre, *Using and Enjoying Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 141.

⁵⁷ Ibid.,153.

⁵⁸ Fredrick W. Danker, *A Greek- English Lexicon of the New Testament and the Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University Press, 1957), 287.

⁵⁹ *New King James, The Remnant Study Bible* (USA: Remnant Publications, 2009), 1261-1299.

⁶⁰ Ibid.,1516.

almighty, the provider, the sustainer of life, the redeemer and the savior of mankind.

ἅγιός

The meaning of ἅγιός in 1 Peter 1:16. The Greek word ἅγιός translated in English as a holy.⁶¹ The word ἅγιός can be referred to as cleansing or purifying in the physical sense.⁶² Against this background, it can be related to sanctification in the spiritual sense about God's people.⁶³

The understanding of “ἅγιός” in the New Testament: In the culture of the New Testament the word “holy” was connected to only God. In some occurrences, it was related to the chosen generation that is the saints of God. This can be affirmed in 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 9 and 10, which indicates that “you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and his own special people”.⁶⁴

In the account of the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for holy is “שׁוֹרֵה”. In the Hebrew culture “שׁוֹרֵה” is specifically referred to Yahweh. In some usages holy in the Old Testament connected to the people of Israel and the typical example was illustrated by Moses in Leviticus 11:44.⁶⁵ “Therefore you shall sanctify yourself” is shown below:

שׁוֹרֵה שׁוֹרֵה

Here, Moses was particularly referring to the Israelites, God own elected people. The following are Bible quotations in the Old Testament which linked to holy (Judges 3:10-14, 1 Chronicles 12:18-20, Isaiah 53:5, Ezekiel 36:25, Genesis 41:38, Exodus 31:3, Numbers 11:17, Deuteronomy 34:9 1Samuel 10:6-7, Daniel 4 :8-9).⁶⁶

These are some Bible quotations which refer to holy in New Testament (2Corinthians 5:17, Hebrew 12:14, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Peter 2:9).

The Use of “ἅγιός”

The Greek word “ἅγιός” has been appeared 80 times in New Testament likewise in Old Testament “שׁוֹרֵה” has been occurred unambiguously 75 times.⁶⁷ In the New Testament of 1 Peter the use of “ἅγιός” is specifically refers to God and it is only few cases that it is used in reference to God's chosen people (1 Pet 2:9) in the Old Testament “שׁוֹרֵה” is ascribed to God, and it is only few times that it is alluded to Israelites (Leviticus 11:44).⁶⁸

From the above analysis, it is clear that “ ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἅγιός εἰμι”⁶⁹ which translates as “be holy, for I am holy” does not refer to any human being but it directly links to God from this standpoint, it can also fit Christian believers who have accepted God as their savior and live a pious life.

⁶¹ William D. Mounce, *Greek for the Rest of Us*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), 88.

⁶² Ibid., 91.

⁶³ Ibid., 96.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ William F. Arndt and Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University Press, 1957), 224.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 520.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 280-1011.

⁶⁸ Ben Gutierrez and Murphy L. Cara, *New Testament Greek* (Nashville, TN: B and H Publishers, 2009), 98.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 524.

Theological analysis

As it has been indicated above, 1 Peter 1:16 is one of the texts that related to suffering, persecution, sanctification, righteousness and glorification. It means that Christians should eschew sins and live a pious life. Thus, through holiness one becomes the saint of God. Spiritually speaking, the New Testament places great importance on holiness (1 Peter 2:9-10, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Hebrew 12:14) which is the most requirements for salvation.⁷⁰ Holiness is a spiritual witness to live righteous life.

Essentially enough, 1 Peter 1:16 place a great value on righteousness and holiness in the life of every Christian believer. The below underlying points are the application that can be made on 1 Peter 1:16.

It gives comfort and reassurance in suffering. Thus 1 Peter 1:11 encourages the believers to suffer in Christ since he has already paved way for them in their eternity. Therefore, Christians are charged to propagate the gospel, since this is the calling of every Christian.

It advocates for practical holiness. Biblically speaking, every believer who passed through persecution would be overcome one day. Here, after the believer has come out from troubles and afflictions God will strengthen such person to enjoy Christian's holiness. This has been indicated by Paul and Peter in Hebrew 12:14 and 1 Peter 2:9 respectively.⁷¹

Again 1 Peter 1:16 calls for Christians submissiveness. The text advises every individual to live a humble life. This presupposes that humility is the key to holiness. Here Peter states that “gird up the loins” of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of God.⁷²

It also leads to glorification. The reason is that the text in 1 Peter 1:16 guides Christian to practise good Church life and when this happens, we are able to serve God well thereby receiving salvation (1 Peter 1:10).

Summary and Conclusion

It is clear from the studies that the early believers passed through tribulation, suffering and persecutions. When they went into these afflictions God strengthened and empowered them spiritually to become conquerors.

Historically speaking, it has been established that Peter was author of the first epistles of Peter with large number of Christian believers as his audience. Many Bible scholars date the epistles of first Peter around ad 81-96AD. Thus the purpose of first epistles of Peter was to encourage the persecuted Christians, improve liturgical practices and the doctrine concerning Christ suffering and some believers who were persecuted.

The exegetical analysis of the passage and key words of the text “be holy, for I am holy” fit Christian believers who suffered and were persecuted because of God's work and later became triumphant. It has also been used in Old Testament and New Testament in reference to Israelites and saints respectively. In other words, it refers to people who have accepted God devotedly and wholeheartedly as their personal savior.

It can therefore be concluded that be holy, for I am holy specifically refer to the almighty God alone hence the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 787.

⁷¹ James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winberg, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (USA: University Press, 1997), 136.

⁷² Ibid., 1965.

attribution of holiness cannot be given to any humankind.

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