



1 Peter 1:13-21

Striving for Hope

October 3, 2021

We are going to 1 Peter chapter 1 today.

Let's read today's text to start:

1 Peter 1:13-21 “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. **14** As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, **15** but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, **16** since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” **17** 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, **18** knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. **20** He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you **21** 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.

The most important word in the text is the first word of verse 13 - “Therefore.” It's important to realize that this text builds on what Peter already said.

Peter spent the verses 3 through 12 of this chapter, which is all one sentence in the original Greek, celebrating Jesus and all God has done for us through Him.

In verse 3, he celebrated the fact that

1 Peter 1:3 “According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...”

In verse 4 he celebrated the fact that He has given Christians

1 Peter 1:4 “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.”

We have something we can't lose waiting for us.

In verses 6 and 7, he celebrated the fact that even our trials and tribulations here work for our good and will result in the honor and glory of Jesus:

1 Peter 1:6-7 “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

In verse 12 he celebrated the fact that prophets of old and angels would have loved to have what we have:

1 Peter 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Angels would pay good money for front row seats to watch the story of our salvation unfold.

It's not a small thing to know Jesus. It is an enormous privilege for Christians to have been forgiven and accepted and to know God in Christ.

And now Peter begins the next sentence in verse 13 with the word “therefore.” Peter is about to give us the first command in this book, but everything that he will tell us to do flows from the thing that he was just talking about. He unpacked the wonders of God's salvation, and is now calling us to a necessary response to those blessings we've received.

Peter wants us to know that belief always flows into life and that, as James says, faith without works is dead. He knows that if we really believe something, we will act accordingly. Orthodoxy must lead to orthopraxy. (Believing right truths leads to right practice, if we really believe them.) Believing the truths of the Gospel leads to living a very different way.

And his goal in writing to us about the gospel is first that we would believe the Gospel and have our sins forgiven and our guilt relieved, and that from there we'd begin to live out the implications of that belief. Those beliefs have to change our lives and change the cultures of our homes and our church.

So a lot of the rest of this book will be telling us what kind of people we are to be because we believe the Gospel. This won't be a disconnected list of rules, but will be an unpacking of the implications of Gospel belief.

Which is so needed for us. Because we are so good at compartmentalizing our lives and adding our faith to our lives while hermetically sealing it off so that it has no bearing on other parts of our lives. So we can call ourselves Christians, get baptized to announce it, but then the faith has very little effect on our lives.

So Peter will spend the next chapters unpacking the reality that our faith must affect our hopes, our fears, our conduct, our sex lives, our church lives, how we relate to the government, how we relate to our spouses, how we go through suffering and hard times, how we view our jobs, and how we live in relationship to one another.

It's like the Gospel has entered our lives and is now going to spread in its influence over every facet of our lives, kicking out the former gods, the former ultimates, the former hopes in every category.

We can sometimes live as practical polytheists - where we have different parts of our lives, all fenced off from one another, and each part has a different god - a different set of rules and laws.

And we can be very divided people. But the Gospel integrates us, it calls us to bring all of life under the Lordship of Christ, and to refuse to believe that there are any parts of our lives disconnected from the other parts..

Jesus said in Matthew 6:24 that nobody can serve two masters. Augustine said that either Christ is everything to us or He is nothing to us. It's like our lives are a house that Jesus bought, and He moves in, and then starts painting every room in gospel colors and changing all of the furniture. It's all His, and little by little He conforms us to His desires.

The Gospel is a life-altering, reality-altering, community altering truth. Believing the gospel is not just getting a spiritual feeling or a Christian mood that compels us to try to be nice people, it changes everything.

And that can sound daunting and overwhelming, but be encouraged. None of us start out fully grasping the implications of coming to know Jesus. The whole Christian life is one of learning more of Christ, learning more how the gospel affects every facet of our lives, integrating all of life into a whole without disconnected parts, repenting, growing, and finding grace under the patient leadership of God.

And I hope by the end of our study here that all of us will see clearly the areas of our lives unaffected by the Gospel, areas where we need to repent, sins we need to confess to God and to one another, and because He is a God of grace who gives us far better than we deserve, that we will have our living hope renewed and restored.

So in light of what God has done for us in Christ, Peter says, in verse 13:

“Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

So before the command he gives us, Peter tells us what our posture is supposed to be:

Preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded.

If you have the old King James version it translates “prepare your minds for action” as “gird up the loins of your mind.”¹

And girding up the loins was something they were all familiar with. In their day, the guys would wear long flowing robes.

¹ Men’s religion seems to hang loosely about them, as if it did not fit them: the wonder is that it does not drop off from them. Men are so little braced up as to conscientious conviction and vigorous resolve, that they easily go to pieces if assailed by error or temptation. The teaching necessary for to-day is this: “Gird up the loins of your mind,” brace yourselves up; pull yourselves together; be firm, compact, consistent, determined. Do not be like quicksilver, which keeps on dissolving and running into fractions; do not fritter away life upon trifles, but live to purpose, with undivided heart, and decided resolution. A very necessary word this in times when everybody seems excited; and some are so bewildered that they do not know their head from their heels. Crowds are prepared to follow any kind of foolery, whatever it may be, as long as it is advocated by clever men, and is made to tickle their fancy. Do but shout loudly enough, and many will answer: do but set open the door and beckon, and they will rush in, whatever the entertainment may be. Brethren, “be sober,” and judge for yourselves.” - Spurgeon

But you guys know that any time you try to run in a long, flowing robe, that is difficult. So if they were going to do something active like go into battle, they'd tuck the bottom of the robe up into their belt to liberate their legs to be more active.

So to gird up the loins of your mind is to get ready for action. We might say "roll up your sleeves," or "roll up the sleeves of your mind."

There's real mental work to be done in light of the fact that we've become Christians.

And he says "being sober-minded," or "alert." Sober is the opposite of drunk - so we aren't supposed to be actually drunk, or have minds that are drunk-seeming - sleepy, lethargic, not focused.

We need our minds to be ready to energetically focus on the major tasks of the Christian life. And the first of those tasks, the first command for what to do with this energetic, focused mind, the first command he gives here is:

I. Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus

In light of all that God has done for us in Jesus, we spend our lives as Christians actively working to set our hope fully on grace.

Peter here says, "Get your mind ready for action - here's your task - actively set your hope on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus."

We are to use our minds to maintain an expectation of grace at the Revelation of Jesus.

And the revelation of Jesus is the return of Jesus, when Jesus is revealed.

And we are called, in light of all the goodness that God has poured out on us in the gospel, in light of all the grace he just unpacked in the previous verses, to be people who are fully expecting and eagerly anticipating that when all is said and done and Jesus returns, we will receive grace.

And grace is undeserved favor. When Jesus finally returns or we see Him at our death, as Christians we don't expect wrath, we don't expect an end or just lights out. We expect immeasurable grace for all eternity.

And it is going to take work to remind our hearts of that day by day.

- We will be tempted to be distracted by other, lesser hopes. That our current trials will resolve, that we'll be rich, that we'll have the relationship we want, that all of our diseases will be healed, our pandemic will end, our losses will be restored. And then when those hopes fail, we are frustrated and angry and joyless. So we have to set our hopes on the grace to come at the revelation of Jesus.
- We also have to work to actively maintain that hope because we are constantly told the lie that Christians aren't very useful if they set their hopes on heaven. We can be too heavenly minded to be any earthly good, we're told. So we can transfer our hopes to this life, this world.
- We have to work to set our hope there because we can get to living like the future is bleak. And if our hopes are here, we have every reason to think that - our culture is rejecting Christianity, some of our kids have wandered, the future of our economy isn't bright, the career looks like it won't last. We can despair because the future looks dark in so many ways. So we have to actively set our hopes on that grace to come.

Our future as Christians is ridiculously bright.

When all feels lost and the future looks bleak, we roll up our sleeves. We remind ourselves of those truths of the previous verses: that God has sent His son to die for us, has chosen us, has given all for us, we are headed for an eternity of grace, and because of that, we are the most hopeful people there are.

We're more hopeful than a Bills fan in October because of the past grace of God that makes the future grace of God a sure thing.

So here's an encouragement for us: if we actively use our minds to dwell on the truths of the Gospel, we can often change how we feel about life, the future, and circumstances. Not usually in an instant, but the long-term use of our minds to remind ourselves of what is true about Christ and us and where we're going changes how we feel and think about

the future.

So we actively work to re-center our hope on the grace that is to be ours. Next, he says that in light of all Christ has done for us, we pursue holiness.

II. Pursue Holiness

1 Peter 1:14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

So in verse 14 he said that our former ignorance produced certain passions. We were ignorant, we didn't know Jesus. We didn't know His goodness. And that produced in us passions. We didn't know the treasure that Jesus is, so we made everything else our treasure.

This always happens - when we don't have God at the top, something goes to the top. If Jesus isn't significant, something else inflates in significance and becomes our religion. We see it all the time with politics. If our hopes are not set on Jesus, we just set them on the next most powerful thing, and our politics are an easy thing to make our god and set our hopes on.

We do this with good things like sports. I haven't been to a Bills game in years (because I work on Sundays,) but you can't go there and not see the religious element of that celebration. Hands are up in the air, people are singing and shouting, people are willing to spend a ton for the experience (if you think churches are bad in that they're after your money, try buying a cheeseburger at an NFL stadium.) We have bad days on Monday if the team loses, we feel just a little lighter if our team is winning. We encourage one another with conversations about the game (how many of us have text threads with friends about the bills?) This stuff is all good in its right place, but it's not a good ultimate hope. (Especially the Bills.)

We do this with pleasures. When we don't know the pleasure of communion with God, we pursue other pleasures as ultimate.

Our ignorance of God produces wrong passions.

But now we know Jesus.

And we are called to actively remind ourselves of the glories of the gospel and all He has done for us so that those old passions are replaced with a new and better one, allowing all other desires to either be thrown out because they're evil, or to take a lesser place in our lives because they're good but not God.

Knowing God and His goodness is the strongest weapon we have about sinful desires. So often, we convince ourselves that the best way to change our lives is with rules. If I could just try to obey more, if I was just really conscious of the things I should and shouldn't do, then I would change. I just need laws and advice.

In the 1800s, Thomas Chalmers wrote a short book or sermon called "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection." And his central argument is that the best way to drive out a bad desire is to replace it with a better one. He said that our hearts will always have something that they are laying hold of.

Every heart has a pursuit - something that has captured its attention. And we sin because we believe that what we are pursuing offers us joy and satisfaction and peace.

And we can try to make rules to keep our hearts from sinning, but those desires are too strong. So knowing that our hearts will have an object or a pursuit, the strategy for life-change is to replace those objects of our affection with a better one that we have in Jesus.

In Greek Mythology, Odysseus was a great sailor. But out there on the ocean, the great enemies of Odysseus and his crew were the Sirens (the pretty mermaid looking women, sometimes part woman part bird, who sang beautifully.) And their songs were so hypnotic that if you heard them, you usually didn't live to tell about it. The men would sail the ship and be so allured by the singing that they would stop sailing and crash the ships against the rocks or even jump into the water to swim to the Sirens. Then the sirens would eat them.

Now they could plug their ears so they didn't hear their songs, but Odysseus needed to be able to hear so the gods could speak to him to tell him which way to steer the boat. So he stuffs wax into the ears of his men, and has them tie him to the mast so he won't jump in and go after the Sirens.

So the way they avoid temptation is by sheltering themselves from it and restraint from the outside.

*Then there was **Orpheus** who was out on an expedition with Jason and the argonauts. They start to sail past the Island of the Sirens and they hear them singing.*

Orpheus was the most skilled of all musicians, so he took out his lyre and started to play more beautifully than the Sirens could sing and drown them out. So nobody needed to be restrained or sheltered, they were just allured by superior music.

And because we know Christ, we can successfully make efforts to change how we live by reminding our hearts of the superiority of Jesus. By using active minds to throw more truths about the Gospel on the fire of our hopes so that we keep our hope fully fixed on the future grace we have coming with Jesus.

This looks very different than trying hard to follow laws, but it doesn't come without effort:

D.A. Carson put it this way:

People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.

Pursuing holiness of life is not a process of legalist rule keeping, but we do need to gird up the loins of our minds to do it. It is an active process.

He quotes the Old Testament here in Peter to call us to "be holy as [God] is holy." (v.16)

What is that?

Holiness has two major facets - one is purity, and the other is otherness.

Just as God is pure, we strive to live morally pure lives by repenting of sin, striving for obedience, practicing the Christian disciplines like prayer and bible study and worship with the church. Fueling the right hopes until we are driven by them and not by the wrong hopes. He says be holy in conduct (v.15).

And the other facet of holiness is separation or otherness. We're expecting to be very different people than those who don't know the Lord. And we were there, we were just as ignorant of the Lord and driven by all the same things, so we don't look down on those we are different from. But we are different.

And we don't expect the faith we hold or the lives we lead to be popular or understood at all by those who don't claim to know Christ.

So we are called to actively set our hopes on the grace that's coming, we are called to be holy, and we are called to:

III. Live With High Regard For God

1 Peter 1:17 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, 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21 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

There's a lot to say about this section here. But there are two main reassuring truths: God is our Father (verse 17.)

And we have been ransomed with the blood of Christ (19).

Both of these things should comfort, and those two truths should be truths that we use to actively stoke our hopes in Christ. When we pray, we are praying to a Father. Remember back in verse 3 he told us we had been born again to a living hope, meaning God is now our Father. So in light of God's giving us this new birth, we pray to Him like He's our Father. That's a comfort, we are praying to someone who knew us from the beginning,

who cares, who wants our best - good Fathers want to see their kids thrive, so we are praying to someone who only wants and works good for us.

And he also says we have been ransomed. God paid a high price for us. A Higher price than silver and gold (verse 18), He paid our ransom in the death of His son (19), according to His plan from eternity past (verse 20).

So those are reasons to hope in future grace from God - He is our Father, and He has already demonstrated His heart for us by paying the price with the death of His son. So we don't need to fear, we don't need to worry about every little thing, the trials that we experience here will end in glory - the Father will take care of us.

So that's hope-stoking. But then in the center of this section he says to "conduct yourselves with fear." (17).

Which seems strange. Everything else is reassuring and hope-giving. So what does he mean by "conduct yourselves with fear?"

He says "conduct yourselves with fear...knowing you were ransomed."

This probably means to fear treating the ransom that was paid for us as a small thing.

Imagine you are a teenager who starts hanging out with bad friends. You go out with your friends, get into terrible situations with terrible people, and one thing leads to another, and you get kidnapped. You made a million bad decisions and this led you to the darkest possible place, where you are being held captive and they're demanding a ransom.

So they call your parents and ask for a million dollars. And your parents break the bank to pay your ransom. They sell everything they have, they raise money from friends and family, they take out loans, they do everything they can to pay your ransom.

So they go and drop off the money and you come home. But instead of relief and rejoicing and thankfulness, you are completely ungrateful. Dinner here is terrible. It's no fun here. And mom and dad don't want me to go out with those same friends anymore. This stinks.

He says "conduct yourselves with fear, knowing you were ransomed." Fear living in a way that disregards the high price that has been paid for you and the sacrifice that was made.

Fear going back to the same captors. Remember how desperate you were apart from God, and fear ever going back.

Here, within the faith, yes there are commands. Yes you are called to pursue holiness, at times when you don't want to be holy. Yes, there are pleasures and thrills to be had in sin and disobedience. But remember the cost that God paid to redeem you.

And don't disregard the ransom - instead set your hope fully on the Grace to come at Jesus's revealing.

One of the important tools Jesus has given us to re-center our hopes on Jesus is the Lord's supper that we will take soon.

This is an observance that preaches the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 11 23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

When we take the supper, we are proclaiming the death of Jesus.

Everyone who takes this is saying, "I had been enslaved to sin. But Jesus came and died and paid my ransom." I couldn't get myself out of it, I was trapped, I was under God's wrath and awaiting sentencing. But Jesus gave himself on the cross so that I could live and be freed.

Though I deserved to have my blood spilled for my sin, the blood of Jesus was spilled.

So in taking this supper we are saying, "I am a sinner in need of a Savior, and Jesus is that Savior." So we take this confessing our known sins, and saying that my only hope is Christ.

So if today you're not saying those things - if you are not willing to confess and renounce the sins you know about, and if you are not a believer in Christ, we ask you not to take this supper with us.

But for those who do believe, this supper preaches the gospel that stokes our hopes.

We take this bread saying, "Look what a ransom has been paid for me!" We drink the cup saying "Look what the Father provided." We remind ourselves of the grace of God given at calvary, and that stokes our hopes that in the future we will receive grace after grace for eternity.

Benediction:?

1 Peter 5:10-11 "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Questions for Discussion in Small Groups:

1. What are some ways our orthodoxy fails to lead to orthopraxy?
2. Ponder this D. A. Carson quote:
"People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated." Do any of these "drifts" resonate with you?
3. Peter once again references our existence as 'exiles' here - what kind of conduct does he encourage in us and by what motivation?
4. How can we better prepare our minds for action and stay sober-minded?
5. Peter encourages us to set our hope "fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." What does this look like in our daily lives?