

Title: Genuine Faith in an Unstable World: Hope, Holiness, Reverence, and Love

Sermon Summary: Concluding a 12-week series through 1 Peter chapter 1, this sermon presses the question of what genuine faith looks like in real, day-to-day life. The pastor argues that saving faith is not merely intellectual agreement with theological truths about Christ, but a transformed life that expresses itself through four commanded responses to all that God has done: setting one's hope fully on the grace to come, pursuing holiness, walking in reverence before God as judge, and loving one another fervently from a pure heart. The sermon emphasizes that the goal of the Christian life is not improved circumstances but increasing conformity to Christ, and that biblical hope is not optimism about circumstances but trust in God's faithfulness regardless of circumstances. Everything in 1 Peter chapter 1 is structured so that what God has accomplished in Christ drives the believer toward a reoriented, surrendered, and love-filled life.

Key Points:

- Peter structures 1 Peter chapter 1 deliberately: verses 1-12 detail what God has done for believers, and verses 13-25 present the commanded response of genuine faith
- The word "therefore" in verse 13 serves as the hinge connecting God's work to the believer's required response
- Real faith sets its hope fully on the grace that is to come rather than remaining fixed on present circumstances
- Biblical hope is not optimism expecting circumstances to improve, but trust in God's faithfulness even when circumstances worsen
- The mature believer learns to live from eternity backward rather than from the present forward
- Pursuing holiness is not primarily about fighting sin but about desiring to be like Christ, with sin falling away as a natural result
- God foreknew believers not so they would remain as they were, but so they would be conformed to the image of His Son
- Reverence and fear of God is not terror but a recognition that God is holy, that He judges impartially, and that the believer's life now belongs to Him

- Those in Scripture who knew God best, such as David, Isaiah, Moses, and Peter himself, stood before Him with the greatest awe
- Love is not merely one Christian virtue among many; it is both the goal of all other Christian virtues and the catalyst that empowers them
- Genuine Christlike love is the clearest evidence that God is accomplishing His desired transformation in a believer's life
- Faith is not measured by what one says about Christ but is proven genuine by surrender, repentance, and a reoriented life
- Saving faith does not merely rescue from hell but transforms the believer into one who longs to resemble Christ
- The greatest sign of God's blessing in an unstable world is not improved circumstances but increasing resemblance to God's Son regardless of circumstances

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Peter 1:1-25, serving as the primary passage throughout the entire sermon
- Romans 8:29, addressing God's predestining believers to be conformed to the image of His Son
- Romans 8:24-25, where Paul describes hope as eagerly waiting with perseverance for what is not yet seen
- Hebrews 12, where the writer calls believers to serve God with reverence and awe, describing God as a consuming fire
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, where Paul declares that the believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and that believers are to glorify God in their bodies
- John 13, where Jesus gives the new commandment to love one another as He has loved, identifying love as the mark of His disciples

Stories:

- The account of the father bringing his demon-possessed son to Jesus is referenced, highlighting the man's cry that he believed but needed help in his unbelief, illustrating that it is not the quantity or depth of faith that matters but the object of faith, who is Christ

- The apostle Paul's experience with his thorn in the flesh is referenced, in which God declined to remove it but declared that His grace was sufficient and His power made perfect in weakness, illustrating that genuine faith trusts God even when He does not change difficult circumstances
- A brief reference is made to Jonathan Edwards and his role in the First Great Awakening, used to introduce his statement that sincere gratitude toward God for the dying love of Christ will inevitably lead a person to holy living
- A personal anecdote about a congregation member named Daniel is referenced, with the pastor asking where Daniel would be today had he continued living based on his circumstances from approximately 11 years prior rather than placing his faith in Christ
- A reference is made to Zig Ziglar's habit of asking people how they are doing, with most responding that they are doing well "under the circumstances," to which Ziglar would reply asking what they were doing under there in the first place, illustrating that believers are not meant to live beneath the weight of their circumstances
- The pastor references a comment heard in a sermon about pastors needing to stop trying to be the rock star of their church, love the people, preach the Word, and be forgotten, with only Christ being remembered