

Set All Your Hope on Grace

1 Peter 1:13-21

Introduction

I love to travel. My wife and I usually plan one big vacation for the family each year, along with some smaller outings. We do our research since we need to be as frugal as we can. But eventually, we decide on what we're going to do, and many times, we'll have to put down a deposit.

And once we've decided and put down that deposit, we have a SURE hope that we are indeed going on that vacation. So what do we do at that point? Nothing? No! Now we go about doing a number of things that are in line with that hope of going on the vacation. We research the area and decide what things we're going to do. We save some money for food and outings. Sometimes we buy some new clothes. And when it's really near, we start pack. When you have a sure hope of something in the future, you live in THAT hope. You act in accordance to that hope that you have.

Well, today in our passage in 1 Peter, we're going to be looking at this theme of hope and what that means for our lives today. So are you ready?

As we begin to read in verse 13, it starts with, "Therefore..." And you know the saying, right? We always need to ask the question, "What is the "therefore" there for?"

The "therefore" is there because the passage we are going to look at today is integrally connected to what came before. Peter has been proclaiming the beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ, through which we have a living hope which was achieved by the merciful sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His glorious resurrection. We have a sure inheritance which will be kept for us. The prophets, and even the angels, long to understand this salvation more fully. So now, we too should show that same kind of longing regarding the way to live within this new paradigm of God's kingdom.

So as we enter into verse 13, Peter is saying that since you have this living hope, then you must actually LIVE in that HOPE. The main imperative, the central command of verse 13, is that you are to *"set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

This is the hinge from the first 12 verses of Peter's epistle to the rest of the letter. Today, and in the coming weeks, we need to get it clear in our minds that you must...

Throughout your life, in good times and in bad, set all your hope on the grace of God.

That's the main idea I want you to leave with today. So let's think about that main idea for a moment. What exactly is Christian HOPE anyway? Well, it certainly is NOT a kind of obscure desire that we wish a particular thing would come true! Christian hope is not like saying, "I hope I win the lottery."

NO! Christian hope is the blessed assurance that what we hope for will indeed come to pass. And the reason we have *this* kind of hope is because the *object* of our hope is the grace of God, which is something that has already happened in the past. Our inheritance has already been paid for and secured, and this has been given to us through the grace of God. It is totally a gift and cannot be earned. And because this inheritance has been secured for us, we should live our lives like that hope really IS going to happen. Our Christian conduct is shaped by the secure and sure future that *is* ours.

ILLUS: Remember the plan of a vacation. Once you put down the deposit and decide to go, you act upon that future hope of going on that vacation.

In the same way, since we do have a living hope, we should live *today* in such a way that shows that our hope is for real. So now let's look at the rest of our passage for today, because it does give us some guidance in how to live today in the hope of God's grace.

So remember, the main idea is in verse 13 when Peter writes to set our hope fully on grace. The help to do that *first* comes right before that phrase at the beginning of verse 13, and the rest of the help comes in verses 14-21. So let's begin at the beginning of verse 13 where we learn that...

1. In order to set all your hope on grace, you must get your mind right! (v. 13a)

And there are two phrases at the beginning of verse 13 that tell us about that. The first is...

- ***Prepare your mind for action.***

Literally the phrase reads, "gird up the loins of your mind." The image here is of a time when it was customary to wear long robes. If you needed to run or do some sort of strenuous activity, you would have to gather up the long robe, pull it between your legs and then usually tuck into your belt. This imagery is used often in the Old Testament to encourage people to be ready to see God work and respond with instant obedience.

This is so important for us, because too many people just completely rest in their future hope. God has done everything to secure our future hope (which is true), but that doesn't mean we have nothing to do. We're going on a trip, so let's make sure we get ready for it!

So...how do we prepare our minds for action? That leads us to the second phrase which tells us that we must...

- ***Be sober-minded.***

When we think of being "sober" we often think of sobriety as opposed to being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. But when we use sober in reference to thinking with our mind, it has to do with avoiding excess in passion or rashness. In other words, being "sober-minded" is about being "self-controlled."

Peter wants to make sure we are mentally focused on our hope and not being intoxicated with the things of this world. And that's hard to do, especially when even "good" things can derail us.

- Do you get distracted by entertainment and your possessions?
- Are you so focused on your career the you forget about your ultimate calling?
- Do your relationships to friends, or spouses, or your kids to consume you that you have little energy for your relationship with God?

To sum up here, with these two opening phrases in verse 13, Peter instructs us to set all our hope on God's grace by always being prepared to think and act on the basis of the reality that we are in Christ, and are for Christ in every aspect of our lives.

And this commitment of mind needs to be sure despite any hostility our society might bring our way. For Peter is clear in the letter...our lives are gonna get hard sometimes. We are gonna encounter all sorts of trials and tribulations. So *that's* why Peter exhorts us to set all our hope on the grace of God. And in order to do that, we must get our minds right.

And as we go about our lives, the world is going to be watching us to see how we live in response to trials. Some of the suffering we encounter may even be a direct result of others persecuting and ridiculing us. How are we to set our hope fully on the grace of God in that type of environment? The answer to that is in the rest of the passage. The overarching theme in verses 14-21 is that...

2. The outcome of our hope must produce holy lives! (vv. 14-21)

And as we talk about living holy as God is holy, I see Peter giving us four helps with this. I'm going to break them down into 4 directions we "look." The first, actually is a negative, that we "DON'T look back." The second is about "looking UP." The third direction is "looking INWARD." And finally Peter gives a positive way that we should "look BACK." So...let's start in verse 14 with the negative command. Peter writes to...

- ***Don't look back to your old way of life (v. 14).***

Verse 14 begin with the words, "As obedient children..." This concept of being holy is all bound up in the fact that we are part of a holy family – we are part of God's family. And as obedient children, Peter writes to "*not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.*"

Do not look back to your old way of living! Don't react to the world in the same way you did before you came to Christ. Peter says that before Christ we were "*ignorant.*" We didn't know God or his ways. So do NOT look back to your old way of life for cues for how to live *now*.

But, oh yes, I realize that those desires from our past are still there. They creep up in our lives.

ILLUS: Just this past week, when we were packing up from one of our performances, Cynthia called in to the bathroom where I was changing and said that she was taking my water and my clothes hanger to the car. At the moment I

thought I wish she wouldn't do that—that I would get it and know where I put it. But I didn't say anything.

When we got back to where we were staying, I was so tired and just wanted to take a little nap. I went to get the hanger to hang up my clothes nicely, but it wasn't there. So I huffed and puffed as I looked around. I asked Cynthia...she didn't know. I went back to the car, it wasn't there. I came back in and huffed and puffed, because I wanted to make sure she knew I was upset, and it was her fault. I went back to the car again to look, but not there. And as I came back in, I was struck how I was reverting back to an old habit of selfishness, and even vindictiveness. And it took me awhile to get my emotions in check.

But that is how we can be sometimes, isn't it? We do revert back to our old ways and forget that we are part of a new family. We can't look back to our old ways of living anymore. So what's the answer? Well that leads to the next direction we need to look...

- ***Look up to the Holy God (vv. 15-16).***

If we are to set our hope fully on God's grace and lead holy lives, we have to look *up* to the one who truly is holy. Verse 15 is clear, *"but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct."*

Notice that Peter mentions that God has *called* us. This should remind us that it is God who has initiated our salvation. God is the actor in calling us out of darkness and into his glorious light. You cannot be holy without the power of the Holy God calling you and the Holy Spirit empowering you. This is part of the grace which we are setting our hope upon.

As we look up to God, we should quickly realize that one of His most primary attributes is holiness. To say that God is holy means that he is something totally "other." He is completely separate from sin and full of honor and glory.

And in verse 16, Peter grounds this call to holiness in the Old Testament law when he quotes Leviticus: *"since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"*

For us to be holy means that our minds and actions are conformed to God's very character. Living like the holy God means that we will be set apart from the ungodly society around us. Peter is going to write more about this in the rest of the letter. He'll appeal to us to let our holy living be such that the people around us take notice. Our holy conduct should be a witness to the gospel and ultimately be an incentive for others to believe and embrace Christ for themselves.

And this holiness that we are called to does not just pertain to religious activities. No! Listen to this: True godly holiness permeates *every* aspect of our lives. To be holy in all our conduct means that it transforms every moment, every thought, and every action.

And if you hear this today and think, "I can't do that," then good! You can't! That is why Peter is calling us to put our hope fully on God's GRACE! Our holiness can only be possible through a divine work of God which all starts with us looking UP to him as the author and perfecter of our faith.

So, as we are discussing how our hope should produce holy lives, we've seen that we cannot look BACK to our old life, instead we must look UP to our holy God so that we can mirror his holiness in the world. The next direction we look is found in verse 17 (let's read that...)—*"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."* I believe that this teaches us that you need to...

- ***Look inward to your own motivations to why you serve and obey God (v. 17).***

This verse is telling us that God indeed is our judge, and his judgments are impartial. So if you call God your Father, don't think for a minute that that special relationship means you can just act anyway you want because God will just forgive you. Don't let familiarity with God be an excuse to do evil.

God does indeed judge impartially according to our deeds. Now this could be a troubling thought to some of you. Is Peter saying that in the final judgment, our promised inheritance might not actually be secure? No! I don't think this impartial judging is referring to the final judgment. For one thing, the verb here is in the present tense.

So I believe what Peter is talking about here is not the *final* judgment, but more of a *present* judgment. When a child disobeys, the father judges that disobedience by punishing the child in some way. God too will correct us when we sin. The writer of the book of Hebrews expands this idea as he writes in Hebrews 12:10 that God *"disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness."* Isn't that beautiful? On this Father's Day, remember the perfect Father that we have in heaven. Fathers this morning, look to your perfect Father as you strive to love your families.

So...we must look *inward* to our motivations. This involves our character and our reasons for living (or not living) for God and His purposes. We must not think that membership in God's family means that our disobedience will pass unnoticed. Instead, Peter entreats us to conduct ourselves with fear. In this context, this is fear of God's discipline.

Many in the church may argue that fear of God has no place in the Christian's heart. But I've always thought that fear of God along with loving and knowing God are not incompatible. God is 100% holy and demands our lives to be holy as well. When we stray, he is completely right in disciplining us, and that can sting! But the difference we need to remember is that the New Testament is clear that this holy, disciplining, judging God is also our loving *Father*. And he is a *perfect* Father who is always molding and transforming us for good.

So we've seen that to live holy lives set on the hope of God's grace, we don't look back to our old ways, we do look up to our holy God, and we look inward to our inner motivations. Finally, there is an aspect of looking back that is positive in producing holiness. We...

- ***Do look back to the precious sacrifice of Christ that provides your hope in the first place (vv. 18-21).***

Don't look back to your old life but DO look back to the cross! As Peter has called us to set all our hope on the grace of God, he now calls us to look back to the richness of Christ's atonement. As we ponder and understand fully all that God has done on our behalf, the natural byproduct will be holy lives.

And don't you just love how Peter expounds upon the beauty of Christ's work? I mean, he's already said quite a bit about this in verses 1-12. But now as he gets to this point in our passage, he just cannot help himself to glory in the beauty and riches of the salvation that was secured for us through the gospel of Christ. So he spends the next 4 verses exalting this gospel. Let's just quickly look at some of these truths that should transform us.

Verse 18 says that we have been "*ransomed*." This is the idea of someone paying money to buy back a slave's freedom. We have been bought back from slavery to sin into life everlasting. But in verse 18, Peter doesn't focus so much on the *reason* for being ransomed, but rather the *cost* of that ransom. He writes that we were ransomed, "*not with perishable things such as silver or gold*," but (verse 19), "*but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot*."

Silver and gold are viewed as the most precious and lasting metals on earth. Yet Peter contrasts these to the preciousness of Christ's shed blood. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life, so that he did not have to die for his own sin. Therefore, he could die for my sins, and for your sins. And because Jesus is indeed God incarnate, his death has infinite worth and can be applied to all the sins of the world. Christ's blood is precious indeed.

Verse 20 goes on to share that this sacrifice was the plan of God from the very beginning. Christ "*was foreknown before the foundation of the world*." The ransom that Christ paid for us was not some sort of afterthought. This plan was set in motion before God even created the world.

And now this plan has been "*made manifest*" to us who "*are believers in God*." And verse 21 glories in the fact that Christ didn't just die, but he was also raised from the dead and given glory. Words cannot even begin to do justice to the beauty of God's plan for our redemption.

And then the final phrase of our passage in verse 21 brings us full circle, doesn't it? The truths of the gospel result in faith and HOPE – a living hope! Just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too will be raised from the dead as well.

Conclusion

So as we close today, in this passage Peter has called us to do one thing:

Throughout your life, in good times and in bad, set all your hope on the grace of God.

He has shown us that to do this we must get our minds right which means we need to be prepared for action and self-controlled. But also, our living hope should produce holy lives. This

means we don't look back to our old ways, we look up to the holy God as our model, we look inward to our motivations, and we do look back to the riches of Christ's sacrifice for us.

Living Hope Church, you have been born again to a living hope. And your faith and hope are in God. Therefore, set all your hope on the grace of God. Let's pray...

O Lord, help us to set our hope not on what we can do, but on what Christ has already done in redeeming us by his blood; not on our own agendas but on your plans for us; not on what we think we deserve but on your grace, your unmerited kindness to us. And as we set all our hope on you, transform our minds to be more in line with yours, and transform our actions into holy actions that mirror your goodness in this world, so that your kingdom would expand on the earth. This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.