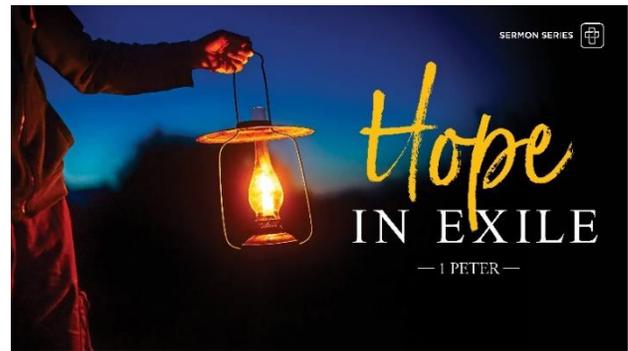


Hope Fully & Be Holy

1 Peter 1:13-21

David Sunday May 17, 2020



Let's read together the text of Scripture I'll be preaching on from 1 Peter 1:13-21.

Worship God as we hear His Word.

¹³ Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance. ¹⁵ But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; ¹⁶ for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy. ¹⁷ If you appeal to the Father who judges impartially according to each one's work, you are to conduct yourselves in reverence during your time living as strangers. ¹⁸ For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was revealed in these last times for you. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank You that the grass withers and the flower fades, but Your Word, O God, abides forever. We pray that You would take this living and active Word and plant it somewhere in our hearts where it will not be lost or forgotten, but will bear fruit for Your glory, 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Imagine suffering amnesia and waking up some morning not knowing who you are. You don't know your name, your address, your phone number. You can't remember where you work. You don't recognize any of your family. You go out on a walk along the Fox River and end up in downtown St. Charles at the corner of Main Street and Route 31, but you have no idea where you are. How disorienting would that be?

Mike Bullmore says, "If losing your identity is profoundly disabling, then remembering your identity is profoundly enabling." That's why Peter spent the first 12 verses of 1 Peter simply

telling us about who we are in Christ and what God has done for us. We do not find a single command in the first 12 verses of 1 Peter—just continual reminders of our identity.

Now in verse 13, Peter begins to give us some commands, but he begins with that crucial word “therefore” to teach us not to forget what he has just told us, to continually remember our identity in Christ. God never asks us to do something for Him without first telling us what He has done for us. His commands are always planted in the fertile soil of His grace which is so important to remember as we start looking at these commands today. We’re going to see two commands and then three motivating values that help us keep those commands.

1. The command to hope fully – verse 13.

Look at the middle of verse 13: *“Set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* Isn’t it beautiful that this is actually the first command of this letter? It’s a command to believe the promises of the gospel, to confidently expect that there will be future grace that will come to us from God, setting our hopes completely on that grace that’s going to be revealed.

This is what Peter has been talking about throughout his letter. Already in verse seven, he talked about praise, glory and honor coming to believers at the revelation of Jesus Christ. In verse five he said, *“You are being guarded by God’s power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”* And in verses three and four he gives praise to *“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has caused us to be born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.”*

If we are putting our trust in Who God is and in what God has done for us in Christ, Peter wants us to know there is more grace on the way for us. “When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart” (from “How Great Thou Art” by Carl Boberg). The joy that shall fill my heart is because of the eternally satisfying grace that will be brought to me at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Peter is saying to us, “Set your hope on that completely.” Not moderately or tepidly—we are not to be half-hearted hoppers. How could we be, when we consider all God has done for us already and what God has prepared for those who love Him? Hope is so crucial in getting through life.

Victor Frankl suffered exilic-like conditions when he was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. After he got out of that camp, he wrote some of his

memoirs in a book called Man's Search for Meaning. He told the tragic story of a fellow prisoner, a well-known composer and singer, who confided in him one day about a dream he had. In that dream, a voice told him he could wish for something, that he could ask for anything, and that all his questions would be answered. He responded that he would like to know when the war would be over. He said, "I want to know when our camp will be liberated and our suffering will come to an end." "What did your dream voice answer you?" inquired Frankl. Furtively, the man whispered to him, "March 30. It will come to an end on March 30." Frankl wrote:

When he told about his dream, he was still full of hope. But as the promised day drew nearer, the war news which reached our camp made it appear very unlikely that we would be freed on the promised date. On March 29, he suddenly became ill. On March 30 he became delirious and lost consciousness. On March 31, he was dead. To all outward appearances he had died of typhus, but those who know how close the connection is between a state of mind of a man and the state of immunity of his body will understand that the sudden loss of hope can have a deadly affect. Any attempt to restore a man's inner strength has first to succeed in showing him some future hope.

That's what the Holy Spirit is doing for us through Peter. He is showing us some future goal that is not a flimsy wish, but a certain hope. The enemy has been defeated. The war will soon be over. Jesus, our triumphant Savior, is going to be revealed. And when He returns, praise, glory and honor will be lavished on Him—and on all those who have loved His appearing. We will enter into this imperishable, undefiled, unfading inheritance in heaven. Peter is saying, "Set your hopeful weight on that. Let your hope be riveted on that."

How do you do that? It involves your mind. Peter says in 1 Peter 1:13, "*With your minds ready for action...*" That's actually a translation of a metaphor that says, "Gird up the loins of your mind." Picture a first-century man wearing a long flowing robe. He's called upon suddenly to run somewhere quickly, so he takes that long flowing robe, bundles it up and ties it up in a belt so he can now run unhindered.

That's what Peter is saying we need to do with our minds. We need to discipline our thinking. We need to exert effort and concentration, be alert, so that we're always thinking about what we're experiencing in this life, always evaluating our life and experiences in this world through the lens of God's Word and thinking with clarity. We need to have our minds ready for action, ready to be on a pilgrimage for the hope that has been revealed to us in Christ, not letting anything distract us from that hope.

That brings us to the second aspect of the mind we need to cultivate in order to hope fully in this grace—being sober-minded. We see that in verse 13. In other words, don't let your mind be numbed or inebriated by this-world type thinking. Don't be numbed or inebriated by your career, possessions, recreation, reputation, accomplishments or your financial security, just as you would not want your mind to be inebriated by things like alcohol or drugs.

These things can distort your thinking. They can desensitize you to what matters most. If you let your mind become intoxicated with these things, your hope will get blurry. And if your hope is blurry, you need to ask yourself, before God, "What kind of substances have I been abusing? What kind of false hopes have I been drinking in or partaking of?" Sober up your mind, Peter is saying, because Christ is coming and when He comes, more grace is going to come with Him.

That's the first command: set your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

2. The command to be holy – verses 13-16

Hope fully and be holy. In verse 14, this command to holiness is stated negatively. He begins, "*As obedient children...*"—even better, as children of obedience, children whose lives are now characterized by obedience to their heavenly Father —"*do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance.*"

Peter is very clearly implying here that those who have new life in Christ still battle with wrong desires. He's saying, "Don't live you lived when you were not children of God, when you were walking in the darkness of ignorance. Recognize those desires that are waging war within you for what they really are. They are ways of ignorance that will lead to death. And don't let your life be characterized by and controlled by lust, greed, anger, sloth, envy, resentment and gluttony." That's the negative.

But the positive is in verses 15 and 16: "*But as the one who called you...*" The call here is not just a mere invitation; it's a transformative call. It's what Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9, we've been called "*out of darkness into his marvelous light.*" So as He Who called you and transformed your life, Who brought you out of darkness into light, as He is holy, holy, holy—like we saw in Isaiah 6 earlier—as He is completely perfect and without stain, so are you to be holy in all your conduct.

Mrs. Holloway described beautifully in the children's worksheet today what it means for God to be a holy God:

It's hard for us to imagine that something could be absolutely perfect because nothing in this world is like that. Even a brand-new game or a new toy that seems perfect the first time you get it will get dirty or broken pretty quickly. But God is not like that. He is totally different from us. He doesn't lie or sin. He can't. He didn't start out shiny and new and then slowly fall apart. He never says or does anything wrong. He never will say or do anything that is not perfect. He will always be without stain. He is holy.

Then Mrs. Holloway asks this wonderful question, "Are you starting to see why we love Him and want to please Him?" Yes, I hope you're starting to see that.

A writer I like to read talked about getting together with an old friend of his, an elderly woman who had walked with Jesus for over 70 years. She was full of wisdom, insight and knowledge of God's Word. He knew that when he asked her this particular question, her response would be insightful, but he was not prepared for how impactful it would be on his own life. He asked this woman, "What is your greatest regret in life?" Her answer was this: "Pursue holiness. If I would have known that God wanted me to pursue holiness when I was in my 20s, that would have changed the trajectory of my life and saved me a lot of heartache. Young people need to learn how to pursue holiness."

Peter is not going into practical detail in our verses today on how to pursue holiness. He's just whetting our appetites for what is going to follow in the rest of his letter, because in a sense, the rest of this letter is all about pursuing holiness in every sphere of life. For now, Peter is just saying, "Don't you want this? Don't you desire this because your Father in heaven is holy? Like Father, like son. As your Father is, so should His children be."

This holiness to which He calls us is driven by grace. It will touch every aspect of our lives. We see that at the end of verse 15. You are to be "*holy in all your conduct.*" In other words, you are to be holy when you walk into a room and a family member has just left it a mess, so righteous indignation starts to rise in your heart. You are about to confront this egregious crime of leaving the room a mess. That's when you are to be holy in all your conduct.

It means I'm to be holy when I'm scrolling Amazon, looking for one thing, but suddenly I notice another thing I hadn't even been thinking about buying. Maybe it's a really nice leather briefcase. It's not something I need—I already have a nice leather briefcase—and it's not something I can afford. But suddenly, that captures my heart and I want it. That's when I'm called to be holy in all my conduct, as He Who called me is holy.

When there's a moment of lust and sexual craving rises up in our hearts, when we are tempted to cross boundaries we know our heavenly Father would not be pleased if we crossed, that's when we are called to be holy as our heavenly Father is holy.

Or when we're in a conversation with other people and we just want to be right; we want them to acknowledge that we're right. Instead of being motivated by unity and love, we're motivated by a desire to win which then becomes way more important than the relationship, so we're willing to damage a lot just to be seen as the one who's right. That's when you're called to be holy in all your conduct.

In all your ways remember your identity in Christ or else this call to be holy as God our heavenly Father is holy will become crushing. For it is written in the book of Leviticus, over and over again, "Be holy, because I am holy." You need to remember that this is grounded in God's grace to you in Christ, that in Christ you have been made righteous, that in Christ you have been given holiness, that the Spirit of holiness now dwells in you.

So now Peter wants to motivate us to pursue these two commands: to hope fully and to be holy, then he motives us with three values that he presents to us.

1. The value of accountability to your Father Who is your judge – verse 17

The first value is in verse 17: the value of accountability to our heavenly Father. He says, *"If you appeal to the Father who judges impartially according to each one's work, you are to conduct yourselves in reverence"*—or fear— *"during your time living as strangers."*

When Isaiah was in the temple and saw the holiness of God, what was his response? It was a response of fear, of awesome reverence in the presence of a holy God, a sense of his own sinfulness and his understanding of how much he needed to be cleansed by God in order to be in service to God. Peter is saying, "Remember this: you belong to a holy God. You live for God; you are accountable to this God Who is your Father in heaven."

I love how J.I. Packer says this in Knowing God:

If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that is distinctively Christian...is summed up in the knowledge of the fatherhood of God. 'Father' is the Christian name for God.

If we call upon that name, if we appeal to this Father, thinking that means whenever we're just wanting to sin a little bit, we can say, "Well, God is my Father and my Friend, so God will not care"—if that's our attitude, we are treading on thin ice. Because the Father we call upon is a God Who is holy and a Father Who judges impartially, Peter says.

This is family language here. He's not talking about ultimate judgment. He's not talking about heaven or hell. He is talking about the fact that all my ways are known to my Father in heaven. There is not anything I think or say or do that He is not completely aware of and I will one day give an account to Him.

So the enemy might whisper in your ear, "You can be harsh with your wife; it won't make a difference. You can look at porn; it won't make a difference. You can indulge in gossip; it won't make a difference. You can keep all your money to yourself and spend it however you please; it won't make a difference." When the enemy whispers that in your ear, the Holy Spirit is instead shouting through 1 Peter, "That's a lie! Don't believe it. You are to live your life in reverential awe of this God Who is your Father." The dread of displeasing your heavenly Father should be greater than anything else you fear.

2. The value of the preciousness of Christ's blood – verses 18-19

Then Peter brings us to the second value: the preciousness of the blood of Christ. Notice the connection between verse 17 and verse 18. Verse 17 says, "*You are to conduct yourselves in reverence during your time living as strangers...*"—as exiles here "*...for you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb.*"

This is a reminder of the Passover in Egypt with the blood of the lamb over the doorposts of each Jewish household and how that brought them their freedom. They were redeemed, they were ransomed from slavery in Egypt, to go into freedom in the Promised Land through the blood of the Lamb. Peter is telling us here that there is no truth more valuable in helping us cultivate this reverential, humble fear of God our Father than the cross of Jesus Christ.

An old theologian by the name of John Brown says:

Nothing is so well-fitted to put the fear of God—which will preserve men from offending Him—into the heart, as an enlightened view of the cross of Christ. There shines spotless holiness, inflexible justice, incomprehensible wisdom, omnipotent power, holy love. None of these excellencies darken or eclipse the other, but every one of them rather gives luster to the rest. They mingle their beams and shine with united, eternal splendor: the just

Judge, the merciful Father, the wise Governor. Nowhere does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound.

The Holy Spirit is saying to us through Peter, “Don’t live or behave in a way that makes the blood of Jesus look cheap.” Silver and gold are cheap. They perish. But the blood of Christ, the blood of an unblemished and spotless Lamb, is inestimable in its value. Don’t squander the life God has ransomed at such tremendous cost through living as if obedience is of little consequence. Be motivated by the preciousness of the blood of Christ to fear your heavenly Father and walk in obedience to Him.

3. The value of God’s eternal, personal commitment to you – verses 20-21

Then finally, in verses 20 and 21, Peter invites us to follow this unbreakable chain in the plan of God to make you and me heirs of this everlasting hope on which He’s calling us to fix our attention.

This plan of God started before the foundation of the world, he tells us in verse 20. “*He*”—the Lamb, Jesus Christ— “*was foreknown before the foundation of the world.*” In other words, the infinitely powerful, majestic, mighty, holy God of the universe and His one and holy divine Son, entered into eternal divine counsel before the world began. In love they decided to send Christ, the Son of God, to redeem us from our sins. They did this to save sinners like you and me.

I love the words, “*He was revealed in these last times for you...*” He came for you. He did not come just for the sins of the world; He came for you personally. He loves you. He gave Himself for you. Every believer personalizes this and our hearts are melted by this. “For me, He died. For me, He rose. And everlasting life and light He freely gives” (from *My Hope is in the Lord* by Norman J. Clayton).

Then, in time, the Spirit of Christ opened our eyes to see the value of the person and work of Jesus Christ, so that “*through Him you believe in God*” (verse 21). Your hope and belief in this God are rock solid, because God “*raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*” Peter never stops at the sufferings of Christ. He always moves on to the glories that will follow, because he wants these suffering Christians—and he wants you and me—to know that glory is going to follow for us as well.

I had the privilege of visiting Karen Haldeman last Saturday. I wanted to go and see her in her home, because I was told she would be moving this week into a care facility. While I was there, she had a nurse in the room with her. We read 1 John 3 about when we will see Christ

face to face and how we will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. We talked about that transformation that's going to take place. Karen said, "It's hard to imagine what that will be like." We sang "Amazing Grace" together and prayed the Lord's Prayer together.

As I was preparing to leave, I wanted her to know her identity as a child of God. I wanted her to know who she was and how she was loved. I told her, "Karen, you are loved by God and you are loved by God's church at New Covenant." She said, with peace and confidence, "I know." That was the last I saw Karen. She was moved into the facility on Tuesday, then was called into glory Friday about noon.

Church family, you loved Karen very well. So many of you demonstrated through your visits, cards and prayers what it is to be a child of God, what it means to be loved by God. On Friday Karen entered into this glory, this hope of which we've been speaking. She experienced what C.S. Lewis talks about when he says this:

Our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honor beyond all our merits, and also the healing of that old ache.

That's what Karen experienced on Friday. She was brought inside the door she could only see from the outside last Saturday. She was at last summoned inside, where there was for her glory and honor beyond all her merits, and also the healing of that old ache that every believer carries this side of glory inside our hearts.

We are homesick for our heavenly home and that longing is a pledge that will be fulfilled. Blessed are the homesick, for they shall soon come home. Peter wants us to know that you also, just like Karen, are chosen by God. You're exiles in this world, but you're destined for a glorious hope. So set your hope fully on that grace that is going to be revealed to you when Christ comes, when you will be summoned inside, when you will experience glory and honor beyond all your merits, as well as the healing of that old ache.

Because of this hope, may you be motivated to be holy in all your conduct, knowing that you have a Father in heaven Who loves you and Who also will judge you, to Whom you are accountable. You have a Savior Who bled for you and you will one day see the One Who bled for you. And your God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—are committed to finishing the work they've begun in you, until you also share fully in the glory that God has destined for you by grace.

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we pray that by Your grace and merit, You would cause us to not look to ourselves as the source of our hope, but to Christ alone. As we remember the ransom price that was paid for us, help us now live a life that's dependent on Your grace. Keep our hearts and guard our souls from the evil we face, because You are worthy to be praised with our every thought and deed. O great God of highest heaven, we ask, holy God, glorify Your name through us. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the Christian Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

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