

1 Peter-What Does Hope Look Like?-1 Peter 1:13-21  
College Baptist Church  
February 28, 2021

I invite you to turn with me to the book of 1 Peter, chapter 1. 1 Peter can be found toward the end of the New Testament, just after the book of James. If you didn't bring a Bible, there are Bibles in the pew racks; I believe you will find 1 Peter 1 on p. 1014. Today's sermon text is also printed in the bulletin along with space for taking notes.

Before coming to today's sermon text, we need to start with a little grammar lesson. We need to make sure that we understand the difference between two types of verb—indicative and imperative. An indicative verb is a statement of reality. An imperative verb is a command. For example, I could make this indicative statement, "*It is raining outside.*" Then I could follow that statement with an imperative, "*Therefore, you should get your umbrella.*" Indicatives precede imperatives. Imperatives follow indicatives.

This grammatical lesson is true in the letter we call "First Peter." To this point in our study, we have only encountered indicatives—statements of reality. There have been no imperatives, no commands, thus far. And you could summarize the indicatives in this way: God the Father is blessed because he has mercifully chosen to bring us into his family and has given us living hope of future salvation and eternal inheritance. That is the foundational reality for any Christian—whether you are living as an exile in Northern Asia Minor in the first century OR you are living as a spiritual sojourner in the increasingly secular United States of America in the twenty-first century. God is praised—because no matter how difficult it gets, we know that we are his children, who have a living hope of future salvation and eternal inheritance. These are the indicative realities of the Christian life. And out of these indicatives flow imperatives.

Today's passage begins with the word, "Therefore." "Therefore" is a transitional word. It marks a turning point in a piece of writing—usually a transition from indicative to imperative. And so, our ears ought to be ready to hear some commands, some exhortations, some imperatives in today's passage. Listen with me to 1 Peter 1:13-21.

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

Now there are a lot of verbs in that passage—a lot of actions words. But there are actually only three imperatives: In verse 13, “set your hope fully.” In verse 15, “be holy.” And in verse 17, “conduct yourselves with fear.” I’d like to summarize those imperatives this morning with these three points: (1) Hope Fully. (2) Be Holy. (3) Behave Fearfully.

### **Hope Fully**

According to verse 13, as children of God, Christians are called to hope fully, that is hope completely or hope perfectly. Now, as I have said multiple times over the past couple weeks, hope is not wishful thinking. Biblical hope is certain, because it is based upon the rock-solid promises of God. And so hope isn’t so much about us as it is about the object of our hope. And Peter tells his readers—and us today—to hope fully on “*the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” So, the object of our hope is grace. And grace is a gift. So, we are called to hope fully on a gracious gift. And the gift will be revealed in the future—specifically at the revelation of Jesus Christ—which is a description of the second coming of Jesus. When he returns and is revealed as the Christ, the Messiah, God’s only chosen King, who has come to bring that gracious gift of salvation and inheritance that we talked about a couple weeks ago.

Peter calls us to set our hope perfectly on the grace that is yet to come. He is telling us to set our sights on eternity. To set their sights on the revelation of Jesus—who will certainly return to rescue his people finally and forever. Now, that’s a fairly difficult command—it is a command that requires readiness and clarity. Because hoping fully on something in the future means we must not be lazy and distracted by the things in the present.

There are two phrases at the beginning of v. 13 that Peter uses to describe the readiness and clarity of those who hope fully. The first phrase is translated in the ESV as “*preparing your minds for action.*” Notice that there is a footnote to that phrase—and the footnote reads “Greek *girding up the loins of your mind.*” Now, I will admit “*girding up the loins of your mind*” sounds a little strange to our 21<sup>st</sup> century ears—but it is a more literal translation of the original Greek text. And it is an important clue to the Old Testament backdrop in Peter’s mind.

You see, girding up the loins—is a way to describe putting on a belt, binding something around your waist. And in the ancient world, a belt was used to keep loose clothing—like a long flowing robe close to the body—especially when travelling. Can you recall a time with God’s people in the Old Testament needed to put on a belt to be ready for a journey? There was a time when the LORD commanded his people to put on their belts, so that they were ready to depart at a moment’s notice. I’m talking about the First Passover—which was the last meal the Israelites ate in Egypt before the final plague and their Exodus out of slavery. Listen to Exodus 12:11—“*In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in hand. And you shall eat it in haste.*”

The first Passover was more like “fast food” than a “dine-in banquet.” They were *ready* to travel. “Belt fastened”—that is the phrase “gird up your loins” that Peter uses in 1 Peter 1:13. “Sandals on...staff in hand...[eating] in haste.” This is a picture of sojourners ready for a journey. And that is the picture that Peter is painting for New Testament Christians—sojourners in this world—not with belts around their waists, but with belts around their minds. Thinking intentionally about the hope to come. Mentally focused with full hope that Jesus is returning for his sojourning people. Hope takes mental readiness...and it also takes sobriety—or clarity.

The second phrase used to describe those who hope fully is “*being sober-minded.*” Sober is the opposite of drunk, right? Someone who is drunk with alcohol—which is a sin, by the way—is clouded and foggy and out of control. His speech is slurred. His vision is blurry. His defenses are down. He can’t think clearly. And Peter is saying that you can’t hope fully on the grace to come if your mind is drunk. There needs to be a sharpness and clarity about the Christian mind—drinking in the truth of Scripture and being drunk on the Spirit, rather than binging on the lies of Satan and the pagan world.

In order to hope fully on the grace to come, we must possess a mental readiness and clarity as we sojourn through life on earth. Now that sounds good theoretically—to hope fully. But what does hope look like, practically-speaking? I think the remaining two imperatives in the passage show us what hope looks like. And first, we see that hope looks like holiness.

### **Be Holy**

Verses 15-16 say, “*as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,*”<sup>16</sup> *since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”* Be holy—that is the imperative. Peter is saying that future hope drives present holiness. Eschatology informs ethics. Eschatology—that is, the things of the end/last times—informs ethics in the now-time. So, if Christians have certain hope that Jesus is returning to bring the gift of salvation and inheritance to them as God’s children, they ought to act like God’s children in the present. Future hope drives present holiness. Those who hope fully will be holy.

Now back on January 17, I preached from this passage on “Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.” And I explained that our holiness is meant to reflect and imitate the holiness of God our Father—who is the creator of all human lives. And it is, therefore, our duty to defend and protect all human lives, which are inherently holy because they are made in his image. We are to be holy, because God is holy. We are to imitate God the Father because we are his children. And that is not a new idea that Peter came up with on his own. Remember, he is quoting in verse 16 from the book of Leviticus.

The call to be holy because God is holy is found in Leviticus 11:44-45, Leviticus 19:2, Leviticus 20:7-8, and Leviticus 20:26. Listen to Leviticus 20:26, “*You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.*” The first recipients of this message were the same people who had fastened their belts and left Egypt. They were no longer slaves...they were a nation. The LORD had separated them from all the pagan peoples of the world and called them his holy people.

So, they needed to leave behind any pagan practices they might have picked up while living in Egypt. And they would need to beware of the idolatrous ways of the Canaanites—who worshipped false gods and lived sinful lives. The call to be holy is a call to “separate” from the pagan world and our association with its ignorant ideas.

And Peter picks up on this in verse 14, “*As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.*” Like the ancient Israelites were to separate themselves from the beliefs and practices of the pagan nations around them, Christians are called to avoid conformity to the “*passions of [our] former ignorance.*”

In other words, *before* we were born again into God’s family, we were ignorant. We didn’t know God—in fact, we were estranged from him. And in our ignorance, we lived according to our own passions, that is, our own desires. We did what we thought was best for ourselves. But now that we are children of God, we ought to flee from those ignorant passions and live obedient lives of holiness.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, my fellow children of God—we must not fall back into our former ignorance of selfish passion. We must be who we are, not who we were.

So, when you are faced with the temptation of lust—the temptation to look at someone who is NOT your spouse with sexual intention—whether that person be on a screen or in the flesh—remember who you are. Children of God ought not look at other people as objects for the benefit of their own sexual fantasy. Be who you are, a holy child of God.

And when you are tempted to slander or gossip about someone—remember Paul’s words to Titus in chapter 3, verses 2-5. “*Speak evil of no one, ...avoid quarreling, ...be gentle, and ... show perfect courtesy toward all people.* <sup>3</sup> *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.* <sup>4</sup> *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,* <sup>5</sup> *he saved us.*” We have been saved from those ignorant ways. Why go back to those selfish passions, when we are children of God?! We are quite literally better than that. Be who you are, not who you were.

We are children with certain hope of an eternal inheritance, why would we dabble in the ignorance of our past and the passions of pagan culture around us? As people of hope, may we be people of holiness. And as we wait for that hope, may we behave fearfully.

### **Behave Fearfully**

According to verse 17, hope looks like fearful behavior. Listen to the third imperative in the passage again. “*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,*” To “*conduct yourselves with fear*” is to behave fearfully. So, who or what are we to fear? What does fearful conduct or behavior look like? Well, I mentioned a couple weeks ago that Psalm 34 seems to have been in the back of Peter’s mind while writing this letter. And if we look at Psalm 34:4-7—we see that this language of fear. And we see that there are two kinds of fear—fear of judgment and fear of faith. Listen to Psalm 34:4-7.

*I sought the Lord, and he answered me  
and delivered me from all my fears.*  
<sup>5</sup> *Those who look to him are radiant,  
and their faces shall never be ashamed.*  
<sup>6</sup> *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him  
and saved him out of all his troubles.*  
<sup>7</sup> *The angel of the Lord encamps  
around those who **fear** him, and delivers them.*

David says in Psalm 34 that the LORD delivered him “*from all [his] fears.*” That sounds like fear is a bad thing, right? David is fearing things that can hurt him or destroy him—most notably the fear of being estranged from God or judged by God. David knew what it was to fear the judgement of God. After committing adultery with Bathsheba and then arranging for the murder of Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah, he famously said in Psalm 51,  
*For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.*

<sup>4</sup> *Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you may be justified in your words  
and blameless in your judgment.*

David rightly feared the impartial judgment of God, because he knew he was guilty.

But David writes in Psalm 34 that the LORD delivered him from those fears of judgment. Why did the LORD deliver David from the fear of judgment? Because David looked to the LORD to wipe away his shame. Because David cried out to the LORD for mercy. Because David feared the LORD himself with the fear of faith. What is the fear of faith?

Pastor and scholar, Doug O’Donnell describes the fear of faith as “trembling trust.” To fear the LORD is to tremble at the thought of life without God. Fear is the expression of trust. And those who exhibit the fear of faith in the Fatherly Judge receive pardon, rather than judgment. Mercy rather than justice. As people who call on God as Father, we behave fearfully—with trembling trust in our time of exile—our time of sojourning.

And this language of sojourning is meant to make us think of the Passover and Exodus. Just as the children of Israel were sojourners on their way to Canaan, the New Testament children of God are sojourners on their way to their eternal home. And as verses 18-21 tell us, just as the children of Israel were ransomed—bought out slavery to the Egyptians, the New Testament children of God were ransomed—bought out of slavery to sin.

Blood was shed in order to free the Israelites from slavery. You might remember that according to Exodus 12:5, the passover lamb was killed—and the blood of that lamb without blemish or spot was painted on the doorposts of the home of those who feared the LORD in faith. And as a result of this act of trembling trust the angel of death passed over those homes—sparing judgment on the firstborn son and initiating the act of freedom from slavery. Their ransom was purchased with the blood of a lamb without blemish or spot.

In an even greater act of redemption, the blood of Jesus Christ was poured out as the ransom payment for people like us, enslaved to sin. Jesus is the ultimate Passover lamb—unblemished by sin, spotlessly perfect. His precious blood was the payment to buy us out of slavery to sin, so that we could behave fearfully as God’s children.

And according to verse 20, this was all part of the eternal plan of God. Jesus was “*foreknown*”—that is, this plan for redemption was known and planned in eternity past. Before the foundation of the world, God planned the redemption of his people by the blood of his son even though the ransom payment would not be made until a later date. Peter says that the ransom payment was made in the “*last times*”—that is, within recent memory for Peter and those reading his letter in the 60s AD. The event that Peter is referring to in the “*last times*” was obviously the death of Jesus on the cross of Calvary—an event which Peter witnessed with his own eyes.

And since we have been purchased out of slavery to sin by the precious blood of Jesus, we need no longer fear judgment for living in the futile ways of our sinful forefathers. Instead, we now behave fearfully in obedience to our holy father God. To behave or conduct oneself is to describe a way of life. The fear of faith is more than a one-time decision. The fear of faith is a way of life—a behavior of abiding trust in God.

To behave fearfully is to exhibit trembling trust and full hope in God our Father, who raised Jesus from the dead and gave him glory—a glory that will one day dawn on us when Jesus returns to bring us that gift of future grace—that ultimate salvation for which we are all waiting. And as we wait, may we hope fully, be holy, and behave fearfully.

**Benediction—1 Peter 5:10-11**

[May] the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, ...restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. <sup>11</sup> To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.