



Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God (1 Peter 1:13–21).

We are in the third week of our study in a book of the New Testament called 1 Peter. It was originally a letter written over 2000 years ago to a group of early followers of Jesus scattered all over Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. Peter, the Apostle and one of the original 12 disciples wrote this letter from Rome, which he called Babylon. Peter is addressing a tension that you and I feel every day. If you are a follower of Jesus we have a double calling in this life. On the one hand we're called to live in the world and on the other not to conform to the world. We are **in** the world but not **of** the world. But how do we do that? How do Christians live in a post-Christian society? Do we accommodate to culture and take it all in without question? Do we completely separate from culture, stay in our holy huddles and do our best to keep the world out? Or do we protest culture and speak out loudly about all that is wrong with it?

Here's what so interesting about Peter's teaching: he weaves in and out of all three options. All of them are wrong and right depending on the situation. In these verses, Peter begins teaching us how to live in a world that thinks we are irrelevant and extreme. He's writing to all of us who feel lost, afraid and marginalized by a culture that says there is no right or wrong, where tolerance is the highest virtue, and where Christians are told to stay silent and unengaged from society.

Remember, he's already told us that we are foreigners, strangers and exiles in this world and he reminds us again here. As

followers of Jesus we have new values, new allegiances, and a different way of seeing the world. And because of that, the world doesn't get us. So what Peter does in these verses is he gives us three imperatives, three commands, three exhortations about how to live as exiles. Up until this point, there has not been one single command to do anything, but here, in verses 13–21, we see three. Peter says, if you are going to live in the world but not of the world, live in hope, live in holiness and live in holy fear. Hope, holiness and fear are three words that should guide your life. Everything else Peter says in this passage is an explanation of these three commands. Let's start with the first.

First Command: Set Your Hope Fully on God's Grace

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming (v. 13).

The word “therefore” reaches all the way back to verses 1–2 and transitions us into a new line of thinking. Last Sunday Mark gave us five reasons why praise should always be on our lips:

- God has given us new birth into a living hope
- We have a glorious inheritance waiting for us in heaven
- We are being shielded/guarded by God's power
- Our trials prove the genuineness of our faith
- We know what the prophets and angels longed for

In light of all that, therefore, “set your hope”—other translations say, “set your hope fully”—on the grace that is coming. The hope that Peter looks forward to is not simply a wish for a brighter future. It's not blind optimism. This hope was based on the assurance that what is hoped for will happen. It is guaranteed. This hope reminded me about all I had to do for the past month in order to begin riding my Harley Davidson. Awhile back, I mentioned how after my uncle passed away, he left me his Harley in his will. And on December 1, it was trailered down from Portland and has been sitting in my garage, tempting me ever since. But, in order for me to have any hope of riding it I needed a whole list of things: gear, an M1 license, I took the motorcycle safety class, I had to spend a few hours at the DMV to take the test and register the bike. I had to buy insurance and even charge the battery. But, I did all of that because I had hope to one day ride the bike for my joy and in honor of my uncle. Ever since I was 16, I wanted a Harley. But, it was just wishful thinking. The assurance of it only came after my uncle gave it to me as a gift. Hope became real.

The future hope Peter talks about is grounded in what happened in the past. Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have the assurance, the hope, he will come again. In fact, he is already here, but on that day he will reveal himself. Peter called this earlier a living hope. And this hope is connected to grace. When Jesus comes again and reveals himself, all those who trust in him will fully experience his grace. Grace, not wrath, is coming. Peter doesn't just want us to know something, to know a fact; he wants us to feel this. He wants us to feel confident in the final outcome of our lives—heaven is coming to earth, Jesus is returning and will make all things new and right again. The Apostle Paul wanted us to experience this same hope, *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory"* (Col. 3:1-4).

Here's the problem: many of us are not living in this world with unshakable hope. We live in a world of fear. Fear of economic collapse. Fear of world events. Fear of disease. We are not optimistic about the future. If you are a parent, deep down you're afraid of the kind of world our kids are coming into. They are living in a world that is increasingly becoming more evil and blatantly immoral. But, the truth is, there have been many cultures in the past much more evil and immoral than ours. Peter wrote this letter in a Roman culture marked by paganism, perverse sexual practices, and immorality. So Peter has commanded us not to fall into that trap and backward way of thinking. We have hope beyond this world. But, how do we get there? How do we fight back the fears that extinguish our hope? Peter tells us the way to experience this hope starts with our minds.

"With minds that are alert and fully sober." Other translations say, "prepare your mind for action." The KJV says, "gird up the loins of your mind." The image comes from a Jewish man's attire. In that day, they wore a robe, a tunic that flowed all the way down to the ankles. So, if you needed to run, or do hard work, you would wrap your tunic into your belt; you girded your loins. Today we say, "roll up your shirt sleeves and get to work." Peter is saying, roll up the shirt sleeves of your mind. Prepare your mind for action. Prepare your mind to run. Set your mind fully on hope. Peter is teaching us a secret to lasting change; it all starts in the mind. The mind controls the heart. Did you know that? The real fight for hope begins up here. Apostle Paul said the same thing, *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Rom. 12:2a). So again, hope is not wishful thinking. Peter wants us to set our minds on it. We do that by being sober. You don't run drunk, you run sober. The idea here is to live a self-controlled life.

Peter wants us to live with unshakable hope. He then tells us how to maintain hope. We stay awake and nimble on our mental feet. We search for and pounce on every reason we have for hope. And we destroy every hopeless untruth. The mind is a means of hope. This is not just knowing facts about God. Peter is talking about a deep passion and love for God that flows from the mind and into your heart.

Do you have a strategy to fill your heart with hope? Feeling hopeful is not easy and not natural. I don't wake up every day filled with hope, do you? This is why we must immerse ourselves in the Bible—the word of God, the source of hope—every morning. Peter will address that later. This is why we cry out to God in prayer, asking him to fill us with this hope. This is why we remind ourselves of who we are in Christ, we remind ourselves of what Jesus did for us, we remind ourselves of the Gospel, we preach to ourselves about this living hope. One of the things I've been doing this year in the morning is reading out loud a list of daily affirmations. I prayerfully created this list as a way for me to renew my mind. I say:

- I'm no longer a slave to fear, I am a child of God!
- I will fight for my marriage today by loving and serving Missy.
- I will fight for the hearts of my children by loving, disciplining and praying for them.
- I will pursue holiness by running from sin and clinging to God.
- I will walk in the power of the Holy Spirit today.
- I will love God and love my neighbor well today.
- I will do something today that takes great faith and trust in a big God.
- I will serve someone today with no strings attached.
- I will take care of my soul, body, spirit and mind by feeding them with good things.
- I will do ministry out of the overflow of my relationship with God.

That's what I'm doing to start the day with hope. What about you? Set your hope fully on God's grace.

Second Command: Be Holy as God is Holy

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy" (verses 14-16).

Peter moves from hope to holiness. Holiness is a term we don't know what to do with anymore. The word scares us or reminds us of how far we fall short. The holiness of God is a way of talking about God's complete otherness. He is very different from us. He

is set apart. He is in a class all by himself. In the Old Testament, Hannah prayed, *"No one is holy like the Lord, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God"* (1 Sam. 2:2). Here Peter quotes from Leviticus, *"Be holy, because I am holy."* So, to be holy doesn't mean to be perfect or sinless. That's impossible. The holiness of God is both the pattern and the ground for the command to be holy. To be holy means that we, empowered by the Spirit of God, conform our thinking and behavior to God's character. We seek to live like Jesus. How do we do this? How do we become more holy? Peter outlines five areas in verses 14-16 that will help fan the flame of holiness in our lives. Each of these is like throwing a log on the fire of our pursuit of holiness.

Call

In verse 15 he says God has called you. That means God has chosen you, given you a new birth and brought you into his family. Remember how God called you, wooed you, and brought you near. God has his hand on your life.

Obedient children

You become more holy by remembering who you are. You are a child of God. That means we have a Father in heaven who calls us his children. We are part of God's family. We are his. He loves us. He cares for us. He is with us. And as his children, we have a new responsibility to live in obedience to our Father.

New sight

Peter then reminds us how we see things radically different now. We are not blind and foolish any longer. We are not "ignorant." As the holy people of God he has given you a new reality, a new way to see the world. We no longer believe false things. We no longer walk in ignorance. We are holy.

New desires

This new sight leads to new desires. We are no longer conformed and shaped by our evil desires. We no longer pattern our life after the passions we once had. Not any more. We have new desires to know God, to know the truth, and to walk with him. Our passions have been changed. Money, power, comfort, and success no longer drive us. The renewing of our mind leads to new passions, which leads to holy living.

Holy living

So holiness comes from God's call, God's family, new sight, new desires which result in holy living. Be holy in all your conduct, in your way of life. He's saying, strive to live a holy life. Commentator Karen Jobes says, "In other words, to be holy requires a change in one's way of life from before, when one's behavior was determined by unrestrained impulses to sin, even in ways accepted by society... The call is to live differently, not just practice religion differently."

John Newton, author of the beloved hymn "Amazing Grace," said to his friend William Cowper (also a great hymn writer): "I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. I am not what I will be. But thank God I am not what I used to be." That's what holiness is all about. It doesn't happen overnight. It's a process. There have been times in my life where I've seen great steps towards holiness and other times I've fallen flat on my face. I think that's normal. The progress may be slow, but if we keep our eyes on Jesus we will become more and more like him and can encourage others to do the same. Live in hope. Live in holiness. And finally live in holy fear.

Third Command: Live in Reverent Fear of God

Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God (verses 17-21).

Peter tees up a paradox. He calls God our Judge and our Father at the same time. He also connects the dots to the blood of Jesus. What's he doing? God as a judge is a scary thing. He will judge each of us impartially according to the work of our lives. He also calls God our father. Peter then compares valuable treasures with the blood of Jesus. He's making the point that the blood of Jesus is more valuable. So, if I understand his line of thinking, he's saying, the fear of God, the judge, should drive you to the place that casts out all fear—the blood of Jesus. Peter is saying, fear God because you were redeemed (bought with a price) with someone that is much more valuable than silver and gold. It will never perish. It's the blood of Jesus. So, live with a holy fear because Jesus Christ paid your ransom and set you free from eternal death with his own blood. His point is, if you and I continue to live in our old way of life, we are denying the value of Christ's death. Peter says, don't do that.

Let me give you an illustration that should help. Imagine an 18-year-old girl got kidnapped and her dad gets a ransom note for \$1 million. The dad sells everything he could to get the money. He doesn't go to the cops, and instead goes to the meeting point at the right time. He then drops the suitcase and they release the girl, but suddenly, instead of running to her father, she grabs the briefcase and says, "Sucker!" and runs back to the kidnapers. Can you imagine how heartbroken the father would be? Peter is saying, don't treat Jesus that way. Be afraid of doing that! Don't ever treat the ransom of Jesus like that!

The truth is, we all are constantly prone to scorn the blood of Jesus. To treat his work on the cross with disdain. To take it for granted by how we live our lives. Fear that. Don't take the work of Jesus for granted. Let holy fear keep you in a relationship that casts out all fear. Scot McNight says, "Knowing that God is judge and that he judges with absolute fairness drives us to live in a healthy fear and awe of him."

The fear of God drives you to God as Father, not God as judge. But, God is holy. That is something to be feared. But, it's his holiness that drives us to him. As we hope fully in his grace and walk with him, he will lead, protect and be your friend and Father all the way home. But, if you run away from him or run against him, we'll suffer. Oswald Chambers said, "It is the most natural thing in the world to be scared, and the clearest evidence that God's

grace is at work in our hearts is when we do not get into panics.... The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else."

Peter gives us three commands: set your hope fully on God's grace, be holy as God is holy, and live in reverent fear of God. This is my big idea: As exiles live in hope, holiness and holy fear. If you truly want to live as exiles in this world, live in hope, live in holiness and live with holy fear.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

© 2017 Central Peninsula Church North, San Bruno, CA
Catalog No. 1427-3N