

Hopeful Holiness

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[0 : 00] Emily, would you please come and serve us? This is 1 Peter chapter 1, and Emily is going to read starting at verse number 13 down through verse number 21.

This will be our portion from chapter 1 of 1 Peter. 1 Peter chapter 1, 13 down through verse 21. 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.

1 Peter chapter 1, 13 down through verse 22.

And with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot, he was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you, 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.

Father, we are grateful for your word this morning. We're grateful for the privilege of gathering together with our brothers and sisters, those of like precious faith.

[1 : 31] Would you please help us as we spend time together now in your word, help us to listen and to hear the things that you have to say to us, help us to believe and obey the things that your word, that we see revealed to us in your word.

Father, would you please help us to see our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, more clearly and to more fully trust him? Would you please help us to obey as we encounter various commands that Peter directs us to in this text?

We look forward to what you will do in our hearts and ask, blessed Holy Spirit, that you would please come and be among us as we continue in our time of worship.

We ask all of this in Jesus' name, giving thanks. Amen. I so enjoyed our last 10 weeks together in the book of Esther.

I learned an awful lot. And I hope that you were blessed by the reminder that God is at work, even when he seems hidden.

[2 : 39] And as we turn our attention to Peter's letters, I want to note two key differences. For starters, Esther is an Old Testament narrative.

That's a fancy way of saying it's a story. You can test this out tonight if you want, kids. You can say something like this to your dad. Father, would you please tell us another narrative before we retire for the evening?

It's just a fancy way of saying a story. In narratives, in narratives, that was terrible, wasn't it? In narratives, the application is typically implied.

What I mean is, just because Esther hosts two banquets, that doesn't mean that we're supposed to go out and host two banquets. When we read narratives, we look for what are the timeless truths, the eternal principles in this text, and then we build our application out of those timeless truths.

Now, in New Testament epistles, in the letters in particular, we do not learn by implication alone.

[3 : 58] So, when you see a command in the text today, you can just be sure that's for you and that's for me. We don't have to just learn by implication. They're just all right there for the taking, or the obeying, depending on how you're looking at it.

There's a second thing for us to notice, a second difference between Esther and 1 Peter. Esther is written, first of all, to Jews living in exile, those who have been displaced from their homeland.

They are in Persia. And that's who the book of Esther was written to. Now, Peter is not primarily writing to Jews, and he is not primarily writing to those who are scattered from their homeland.

Peter writes to spiritual exiles. His letters are addressed to Christians who are enduring persecution.

They are suffering because of their faith. They may have had to flee their homeland. Because of what they believe about Jesus.

[5 : 16] I like to walk outside. And there's a particular challenge that I have walking outside, because I tend to walk fairly quickly. It's not that I'm that in shape.

I just am in such a hurry all the time, it seems like. So, here's my challenge. I have to pass people as I am walking. And I don't like passing people because it makes them uncomfortable when you just sort of appear out of their peripheral vision.

And they're doing their thing, minding their own business, probably listening to a really great podcast or something like that. And then all of a sudden, there you are, and you're walking quickly, and you make them jump. I don't like that.

And so, I try to let them know that I am there. Now, this is also a bit of a challenge. Because if you're too far back when you try to alert them to your presence, it's just awkward, right?

And if you wait until you're almost on top of them anyway, it's like you're basically a stalker. And so, this is my challenge. I think somebody needs to write some rules of engagement or something like this for how you deal with this.

[6 : 22] So, imagine that you are outside walking, minding your own business, listening to your podcast, and you hear someone behind you say, hey, hey, what are you going to do?

You're going to turn, and you're going to look back and see what is going on back there. The word therefore in verse 13 is like that.

It's like someone saying, hey, hey. And when you read a therefore in scripture, you need to turn around and try to figure out what is it that came before this?

What is supposed to catch my attention that the author is now saying, hey, hey about? So, let's do that. 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse number 1.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. This is important. Peter's letters, and the other letters for that matter, these are not good ideas or suggestions.

[7 : 18] These are not Peter's opinions. His letters carry apostolic authority. Peter spent time with Jesus.

He saw the risen Jesus, and he was personally commissioned for this work by Jesus. So, when we read these letters, we need to take them seriously, and we need to believe and obey what we read.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion. Christians. Christians who are displaced because of persecution against their faith in Jesus.

What does Peter mean by this word elect? Do you see that there? This can be a bit of a buzzword among Christians. I want you to notice that Peter gives us the answer to this in verse number 2.

Elect exiles. Verse 2. According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ, for sprinkling with his blood.

[8 : 41] Now, in the Old Testament, being elect meant that you were a Jew. You were one of God's chosen people, the Jews.

But in the New Testament, the word elect takes on a richer, more fuller meaning. Before he created everything, God the Father knew you, loved you, and chose you.

He chose you on the basis of his love, and not on the basis of your goodness, or your future faith in him.

That's what it means to be an elect exile. But not only that, the Holy Spirit also sanctified you. You were spiritually dead.

You were cut off, disconnected from God. But the Holy Spirit set you apart. That's what it means to sanctify. He set you apart. He gave you life.

[9 : 42] He plugged you into Jesus, like plugging a vacuum into the outlet. And now all of the resurrection power of Jesus, all of his life is flowing in to you.

That's what it means to be elect. But not only that, because of the Father's choice, and because of the Spirit's sanctification, you obeyed the command to repent and believe the gospel.

The gospel that says, Christ died for sinners like you. Being elect means you enjoy a relationship with God by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.

No wonder then, that only two verses into his letter, Peter is already bursting forth with this beautiful benediction in verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[10 : 53] Next, Peter reminds us of our imperishable inheritance. And he acknowledges that our faith is often tested.

That life is hard. Sometimes our faith is tested severely. But he assures his readers of this, trial-tested faith glorifies Jesus.

And so he says, verse 13, therefore, hey, hey, and you turn around and you see all of these beautiful truths that came before.

God has done all of this. Therefore, this is how you should believe and obey. new you, new do.

Peter's original readers faced plenty of challenges. Physical persecution, psychological pressure, social suspicion, and marginalization.

[12 : 05] They were tempted to revert back to their old ways of thinking and speaking and acting because, frankly, it's just easier. There is a pervasive and seductive anti-Christian worldview, tensions, and inconsistent behavior within the small C church, small little churches like ours, and within the big C church, all of the other Christians who are truly following Jesus.

They also face doubts about the reliability of God's promises as they see their brothers and sisters being murdered for their faith.

Are God's promises really true? And then, to top this all off, there is the antagonizing activity of our adversary, the devil. You hear these things, and it sounds like the challenges that we face right now, doesn't it?

I mean, really close to the very things that we are facing right now. How kind, then, how kind, of the Holy Spirit by way of the Apostle Peter to command us to be hopeful.

Look at verse 13. 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.

[13 : 38] Set your hope fully. Now, you might think, well, that's easy for you to say. Have you seen the world? I mean, have you seen this world that we're living in?

Do you know my struggles? Have you heard about the gross sin going on inside of the church at large? Haven't you experienced how awful the behaviors of other Christians can be to say nothing of those who don't yet know Jesus?

How? How can you say, be hopeful? How am I supposed to set my hope fully on the grace that will be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ?

Well, I want you to notice that Peter answers this question, how for us? It's in these two phrases that come before the imperative. The imperative there is set your hope fully, but there are two phrases that come before this.

Preparing your minds for action, and then secondly, being sober-minded. This is the how we set our hope fully.

[14 : 48] Prepare your minds for action. In other words, be disciplined about what you fill your mind with. Be selective. Be choosy about what goes in here to your mind.

Why? Because we need to be sober-minded. If you get drunk on fear-inducing headlines, or celebrity gossip, or godless voices coming from books, or podcasts, or social media feeds, that is all going to make you angry, bitter, jealous, and afraid.

If you get drunk on those intoxications, then don't be surprised when your pride is all puffed up, your behavior becomes reckless, and your decisions are hasty instead of wise.

When you fill your mind with junk, then you will be drug around by wildly swinging emotions rather than being led by the Holy Spirit.

Now, I am not suggesting that we ought to isolate ourselves off in a mountain cave somewhere or form our own commune, although I will say that the idea of a commune occasionally sounds very attractive, and if there were a commune, I can't imagine a greater, more loving, gracious group of people to be with than you all.

[16 : 24] But I am not suggesting that we should isolate ourselves in a cave or a commune. I am not asking you to put blinders on and be ignorant of the things happening in the world or in culture at large.

And we should enjoy the good things in this life. The book of Ecclesiastes teaches us that. But it's just that as elect exiles, we have something better than all of those fear-inducing, anger-inducing, bitterness-inducing, jealousy-inducing, insecurity-inducing things that we might be tempted to fill our minds with.

What do we have? Well, we have God's promises. Jesus will return. New you, new do, so set your hope fully on God's promises.

Hope, hope is like bubble wrap on our faith. I don't know if you order a lot of books on Amazon. I suspect I order more than my fair share of books on Amazon.

Lydia also has suffered from this particular malady of ordering a book on Amazon and finding out that it was not properly bubble-wrapped or it was put in a box that was too big and now that poor book has been bouncing around inside of the box and now you open that box expecting this fresh new book and it is already tattered.

[17 : 55] So frustrating. hope, hope is like bubble wrap on faith. If you lose hope because of persecution or if you lose hope because you're being drug around by your emotions or if you lose hope because of shame caused by the church, then you should expect that your faith will be damaged like a poorly shipped book from Amazon.

But if you set your hope fully on God's promises then by grace you will persevere as an elect exile.

Hope is like bubble wrap on our faith. And your perseverance, your perseverance will take on a particular shape and that shape Peter tells us is holiness.

What does it mean to be holy? It sounds so very spiritual doesn't it? We sing about it in a lot of our songs. What does it mean to be holy? Well at its very core the word holiness has to do with being different.

That's why we say that God is holy. He is different from us. He is pure. We are often impure.

[19 : 31] He is infinite. We are often finite all the time. Finite. He is eternal and we are bound by time.

So we rightly say that our God is holy, holy, holy because he is different from us. That's what it means to be holy, set apart, distinct from the world, different from what culture expects, different from what culture says, different from what the devil will tempt you to be like, chasing every selfish desire that comes your way.

Look at verse number 14. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct since it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy.

Do you see that there? As Peter starts this, he writes, do not be conformed. Don't revert back to your old way of living.

Why? Well, because back then, you were ignorant of God's grace. You were indifferent to the gospel.

[21 : 09] You were rebellious against God's commands. and since now you are a child of God, don't try to squeeze back into your old ways of life like a pair of jeans that have mysteriously shrunk over the winter.

Don't try to squeeze back into that old way of life. Don't be conformed to your old desires. Instead, be holy in all your conduct.

Do you see that? This is holistic holiness. All your conduct. Peter's not looking for holy hypocrites who show up to church on Sunday and put on their best behavior when they're around other Christians and then live like the devil every other day of the week.

New you, new do, as obedient children. Since God is your father and since God is holy, you must be holy.

Does that holistic holiness feel a little heavy? Overwhelming? I think that Peter intends for this command to feel heavy.

[22 : 34] Let me show you why. Look at the beginning of verse number 17. And if you call on him as father.

Now your Bible may say since there, since you call on him, but I think grammatically and contextually the if is a superior translation here.

Having just called us to holiness in all of our conduct with the word if, Peter invites us to consider this holiness hypothesis.

Is God really my father? If you call on him as father, then what follows is a holy life, a holistically holy life.

if you have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, then you will grow in godliness. This does not mean that you will be perfect.

[23 : 44] This does not mean that you won't have bad days. This does not mean that you won't need to seek forgiveness. But this is the beauty of the gospel, isn't it?

Where our thoughts or our speech or our attitude or our actions have been less than holy? What do we do? We repent and we ask God for forgiveness and there's good news here for us because the God who extends forgiveness is your father.

That's good news. Set your hope fully on God's promises. Second command, be holy in all your conduct.

And third, live with God always on your mind. Look at verse 17 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.

Let's talk about these two words with fear. If your mom ever said, go to your room until your dad gets home, then you probably know a little bit of fear.

[25 : 19] You are expecting some sort of discipline when your dad arrives home and opens the door to your room. What about if you're at work? What about if you're at work and you're hanging around the water cooler or the coffee pot, wherever it is that people tend to gather, the lunchroom, something like that, and you're joking around with some of your fellow co-workers and you realize it's been 20 minutes, but you're having a great time and laughing and so on, and your supervisor walks into the lunchroom.

Now, you may feel a certain amount of fear, right? And rightly so. You may not be doing the right thing in that moment. What about if you are doing 40 miles an hour in a 25 mile an hour zone?

And as you pass the police officer, you glance up into your rearview mirror and you, and I see them turn around and come in behind you.

Now, even before the lights went on, I had reason to fear. I was not doing what I should have been doing. Are these the examples of the type of fear that we are supposed to have towards God?

Well, no and yes. So, let's start with a no. No, because we remember that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[26 : 55] Since God is our Father, His forgiveness and His grace and His mercy, it flows freely to us. We don't have to be scared or anxious of judgment, waiting like a child anxiously in their room for dad to return, or like someone who just ran a red light in front of a police officer.

We don't need to have that kind of fear. But, yes, because mindfulness of God and His infinite, intimate knowledge of my thoughts and my attitudes and my actions and my speech, like we sang about this morning, His knowledge of that, His intimate, infinite knowledge of who I am should affect the way I live.

Like employees who know what their manager expects and does what is right, what their manager expects, without their manager having to be in the room.

Conduct yourselves with fear, throughout your exile. Do you see that word throughout? In other words, live with God always on your mind.

I wonder how that would change how we live. If we lived with God always on our mind, if we lived like God really has intimate, infinite knowledge of everything we think and say and do.

[28 : 41] He is worthy of that kind of respect. He is worthy of that kind of awe, that kind of reverence.

After all, God is holy and He will judge fairly and He went to such great lengths to save you.

Look at verse 18. knowing that you were ransomed from the feudal ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

Like that of a lamb without blemish or spot, He, Jesus Christ, was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you, 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.

God, what is the most valuable thing in the world? Hit me. What do we got? Owen.

[30 : 15] Yes, God, what is the most valuable thing that you can see and touch in this world? Huh?

Oh, very good. Family. Man, so good. How about another idea? Like if you wanted to be really wealthy, you can't just have a hundred kids, right?

That's not going to be helpful for you. That's probably going to make you poorer rather than wealthy. But that is true. Very valuable. What is the most valuable thing you can have if you want to be wealthy?

Owen. Huh? Yes. Love. Yes. So good. So good.

Such a spiritual group of kids. Diamonds. Or maybe gold. Or maybe silver. Right? These are precious things here in this world.

[31 : 22] Those are such great suggestions that you kids had. I love all of those things. Gold or silver. These are valuable things in this world.

Consider this and consider it well especially if you are not yet a Christian. The most valuable thing you could offer God is silver and gold.

Imagine standing before God and trying to buy your way into heaven by offering him a bunch of precious metals that were dug out of the earth.

It sounds kind of foolish when you say it that way doesn't it? Brothers and sisters God spared no expense in saving you.

He ransomed you. He redeemed you. He paid the price for you and that price was the precious blood of his son the Lord Jesus Christ.

[32 : 30] Before the foundation of the world even before God created he chose to save sinners and at just the right time he sent Jesus into the world.

That's what it means when it says he was manifested. You see that there in verse 20? He was manifested in the last times for the sake of you. At just the right time God sent Jesus.

God sent Jesus to the cross to be a sinless substitute and Jesus suffered and died but God raised him from the dead and highly exalted Jesus and gave him the name above every name and promised to send Jesus back.

To profess faith to say I am a Christian and then continue unchanged in sinful attitudes or sinful words or sinful thoughts or sinful actions this denies the value of Jesus death Jesus resurrection and Jesus return.

And when we follow these commands when we obey these commands we are proving something we are proving that our faith and hope are not in this world.

[33 : 58] We're proving that our faith and hope are not in status not in peace not in wealth not in the world's acceptance not in safety, not in comfort.

No, we prove that our faith and hope, as Peter writes, are in God. And so, follower of Jesus, my fellow exiles, my fellow elect exiles, set your hope fully on God's promises.

Be holy in all your conduct. Live with God always on your mind.

If you are not yet a follower of Jesus, what are you waiting for? What are you waiting for? Look what God has done. Look what God has done in sending his Son to redeem and reconcile and restore sinners to himself.

Consider what God has done. Don't stay distant from God. Come to know him as your Father through faith in Jesus.

[35 : 14] You don't need to be drug around by your unhealthy emotions. You don't need to let your anger or your fear or your insecurity or jealousy drag you around.

Don't let your spiritually deadly desires tell you what to do. You too can be led by the Holy Spirit. Your life, apart from Jesus, may feel full.

You may even think, you know what, I don't really think that I need Jesus in my life. I think I'm doing pretty good on my own. But I promise you, if your hope is in anything other than the Lord Jesus Christ, one day you will look back and you will realize that your life, in light of eternity, was, as Peter says, futile, empty, meaningless.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Followers of Jesus, live where life is hard.

We experience various trials with varying degrees of suffering. It's tempting to doubt God's promises, especially, especially when we are criticized, discriminated against, slandered, and persecuted.

[36 : 48] But we remember, don't we? We remember trial-tested faith is the kind of faith that glorifies Jesus. And then we believe, because of Jesus' resurrection, we have living hope.

To joyfully persevere in a new way of life. New you. New do. And so, in loving community with our brothers and sisters, and even when our circumstances don't get better, God sustains us by his sufficient grace and for his glory.

Let's pray. Father, we are grateful for your word again. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for being with us and helping us.

Thank you for guiding us. Would you please, as you have been so kind to us so far this morning, would you please take away anything that I have said in these moments together that has been unhelpful and distracting, anything that would in any way take away from what you wanted to say to us this morning?

Would you just cause that to be just drained out of our minds right now so that we are left with exactly those things that you want us to hear? Those things that you want us to remember and reflect on?

[38 : 22] Holy Spirit, as you have been so kind, would you also now come and do work in our hearts? We hear these three commands and they feel very weighty to us.

And yet we do want to be the kind of people who set our hope fully on God's command. We do want to be holy in all of our conduct. We do want to live with you, Father, always on our mind.

And so we ask, Holy Spirit, that where we have sinned, where we have failed to follow these commands, that as we take a few moments to be quiet, that you would soften our hearts and we would repent.

We would acknowledge the forgiveness that is ours and we would again receive your grace. Father, thank you for the letter of 1 Peter and thank you that it was written to elect exiles, people like us, facing challenges, difficulty, suffering, trials of various kinds.

Would you please keep us faithful to you? Help us to wrap our faith in hope. Father, would you please reorient us and remind us again of all that we have in our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[39 : 55] We're grateful to be your people. Thank you for calling us. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.