

FIX YOUR HOPE ON GRACE

1 Peter 1:13

Introduction:

Hope – Emily Dickinson said, “Hope is the thing with feathers That perches in the soul And sings the tune without the words And never stops at all.”

On the other hand hopelessness can quickly lead to emptiness and despair. A couple more quotes:

“In an age of hope men looked up at the night sky and saw “the heavens.” In an age of hopelessness they call it simply “space.” — Peter Kreeft.

“The whole thing is quite hopeless, so it's no good worrying about tomorrow. It probably won't come.” — (Frodo) J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*.

We live in an age when many people live without hope, on the edge of despair. As we look around us at the problems in our world—drugs, AIDS, war, terrorism, racism, hatred—it is no wonder that people seem to have no hope. It is no wonder that the attitude of many people is simply to live for today, because tomorrow doesn't hold any hope of anything better.

However, as Christians, we do have hope. Peter letter is really a letter of hope. In spite of all that may be happening around us, and whatever the struggles we may be facing daily, Peter's message is that there is more to look forward to than what you can see.

The major theme of his letter is suffering, but hope is his main emphasis. His message is that hope gives the Christian encouragement in the midst of the trials and tribulations of this life because it focuses our affection on the blessings which await us for all eternity.

This morning we are only going to be looking at one verse, but it is an important one – *read v. 13*. We need to begin with a look at the context, because this verse starts with a very important word – therefore...

Very often, in the Scriptures, the word *therefore* follows a passage of important doctrinal or theological teaching, and leads into a section exhorting readers to consider their lives in the light of the preceding truths. That is exactly what we have here in 1 Peter 1:13. In order to properly focus on Peter's exhortation in this verse, we need to review the truths of the previous verses because they form the foundation for his appeal in this verse.

- vv. 1-2 – introductory, identifying the writer and the recipients.
- vv. 3-12 – focussed on the Christian's hope
 - v. 3 – by God's mercy we have been born again to a living hope
 - v. 4 – we are promised an inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us.
 - v. 5 – we are being protected (guarded, shielded) by God's power for the final salvation that God has planned.
 - vv. 6-7 – our trials and suffering now are temporary and are designed to test, prove and strengthen our faith, so that Jesus Christ will be glorified when he is revealed.
 - vv. 8-9 – our trials are keeping our focus on Jesus Christ, even though we cannot see him with our physical eyes, so that in the end we will receive the end goal of our faith – complete and eternal salvation of our souls.
 - vv. 10-12 – a bit of a digression as Peter looks back to the past at the ministry of the prophets as they foretold a future salvation, which is so wonderful that even the angels are fascinated as they wait to see this salvation revealed to the world.

Verse 13 is a transition verse. Based on the splendour and the security of our salvation which even yet has not been fully revealed, Peter calls on us to think and to conduct ourselves in a way that befits our calling. In the following verses, he spells out the impact our future hope should have on our conduct. But first he wants to make sure that hope is fixed, or set in our minds as it should be.

There is, however, one more thing we need to examine before we get into the content of this verse—the structure of the verse. I don't want to get bogged down in a discussion of grammar, but I believe it is important to understand the structure of this statement.

There are really three commands in this verse, but they are not all given in the same way. One of the phrases is given as an imperative (command), the other two are participles, which form the foundation or the prerequisites for the command.

The command is *“Set your hope full on the grace that is to be brought...”* In order for that to happen you must:

- have your mind prepared for action (Past tense) – literally, *“...having girded up the loins of your mind...”*
- be sober-minded (Present tense)

Young’s Literal Translation – *“Wherefore having girded up the loins of your mind, being sober, hope perfectly upon the grace that is being brought to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ,”*

So, the primary thrust of verse 13 is that believers in Jesus Christ are to fix their hope completely, fully on the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. But in order to do that we must have our minds prepared and clear. With all of that background, let’s look for a few moments at each of these commands...

Gird up the Loins of Your Mind (Prepare your minds for action)

The word picture that Peter uses here is something that is seems rather strange to us, but it would have been very familiar to the hearers of his day. The New International Commentary gives us this description:

“In Israel, an ordinary person wore as the basic garment a long, sleeveless shirt of linen or wool that reached to the knees or ankles. Over this a mantle something like a poncho might be worn, although the mantle was laid aside for work. The shirt was worn long for ceremonial occasions or when at relative rest, such as talking in the market, but for active service, such as work or war, it was tucked up into a belt at the waist to leave the legs free. Thus, Peter’s allusion pictures a mind prepared for active work.”

This idea is common in the Scriptures. We find this phrase more than once in the OT, although newer translations tend to not use the wording of girding up the loins. A couple of examples:

- Ex. 12:11 – the Passover – eat with your loins girded, and your sandals on your feet...
- 1 Kings 18:46 – Elijah girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.
- Acts 12:8 – the angel told Peter in prison to gird himself – to get his robes tied together to be ready to move.

Here Peter tells us to gird up the loins of our minds. In other words, get your mind together. We are to have our thinking in order with no entangling doubts, fears, or reservations. Our mind should be prepared to act without hesitation.

The whole thrust of this verse and passage is to be focussed on the hope of our Lord’s return, and that requires an expectancy and readiness. Our minds must be prepared for action.

Be Sober-Minded (Self-controlled)

The KJV simply says, Be sober... Soberness carries two ideas or meanings. The literal meaning – to stay sober is to not become drunk. But metaphorically, it means to be in your right mind—to be clear-minded, straight in our thinking.

It is clear thinking, a sober-minded approach that enables us to act prudently when faced with difficult situations, trials, and persecution. Clear thinking is what enables us to make right choices and decisions in the midst of fiery opposition.

Two other times in this epistle, Peter tells us to be sober:

- 4:7 – so that we can pray effectively
- 5:8 – so that we can stand against the devil who is out to destroy us

We find Paul using the same thought as he writes to the young preacher, Timothy – *read 2 Timothy 4:1-5*. Paul is warning Timothy, and us, that the time will come—and I believe it is here today—when people will be confused and muddled in their thinking and will embrace wicked and false teaching that will justify ungodly living. But, in contrast to that, he reminds us that we need to be clear in our thinking and in our living.

Robert Deffinbaugh suggests that in the context of fixing our hope on the coming of our Lord, these two commands give us an interesting perspective. He says that...

"...we see Peter dealing with two opposite extremes concerning the hope of the kingdom of God. Girding up the loins of the mind corrects a too casual attitude toward the return of our Lord and prevents us from being caught unaware and unprepared at the Lord's second coming. The second instruction, "keep sober" prevents the kind of mindless enthusiasm which has characterized too many professing saints over the years."

How often do we see people setting dates for Christ's return and doing all kinds of foolish things because of muddled thinking. Our waiting for the Lord's return should be characterized by clear thinking and prayer.

Set Your Hope on Christ's Return

We have now come to the third command and the real heart of what Peter is saying – *"...set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

What is hope? One writer put it this way: *"Hope is what we want but cannot see and what we will not have until sometime in the future."*

In the Bible, there is a close connection between hope and faith and love. Paul often linked those three things together in his epistles. We see this in the way he refers to them as indicators of a growing church – *"...remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Th. 1:3)

Even though hope is what we desire, but do not have, yet we trust, by faith, that we will have it in the future. Love is the evidence of our faith and hope.

So what does Peter mean when he tells us to set our hope on the grace that is coming when Jesus returns? I believe that his intention is that we ought to set our desires and affections on heavenly things rather than earthly things. This is what Jesus told us in Matthew 6.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust

destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Mt 6:19-21 ESV)

Paul also reminded us of the importance of getting our eyes and our hearts off the things of earth and onto heavenly things.

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Col 3:1-3 ESV)

When our affection is fixed on heavenly things and our hope is set on the return of our Lord, it changes our whole perspective toward the trials and difficulties of this life. Remember the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 4:16-18 - "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

That is hope – and we are to fix our hope on the sure promises of God. Go back to 1 Peter 1:13 – what is that grace upon which we are to focus? It is the grace of God which is working to bring about the completion of our salvation. God begins His saving, gracious work in you the moment you come to faith in Him. He will continue that until the day Jesus Christ returns. *cf* Philippians 1:6 – *"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."*

When that day comes we know that He is going to finish his work of purifying us and making us perfect. 1 John 3:2-3 – *"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."*

So, Peter calls us to set our hope on that day when God's work in us will be completed. In order for us to do that, we need to understand

that our devotion and desire for heavenly things must not be diluted with desires for earthly things.

Conclusion

Peter's purpose in writing this letter is to comfort and encourage suffering believers. His focus is suffering. But in the midst of suffering, he is very clear that the future hope of the believer is what enables them to press on and even to "...rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and full of glory." (v. 8) What we look forward to is the grace that our Lord is bringing with Him at His revelation. When we have our hope fixed on that grace, which is yet to come, then any suffering we experience now pales in comparison to the glory that lies ahead.

Again I take you back to the words of Paul that I closed with a couple of weeks ago:

"For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." (2 Cor. 4:17-18 ESV)

My question to you this morning is this: Do you have this hope in you? Having prepared your mind for action, and coming to a sober spirit, clear-minded and focused, are you able to set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ? Do you know him as your Saviour and Lord today?