

Part 3: Securing our Hope

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If you've ever traveled before you may have heard the bit of advice: do as the locals do.

When my wife and I go places we typically always ask the locals where they would go to eat, and what they would eat when they get there?

As we look at our passage today in 1 Peter, Peter is going to make it very clear that while doing what the locals do might be a great tip when it comes to being a tourist, it's a lousy piece of information when it comes to being a Christian. Peter's point today is that we should act not as the world acts, but in accordance to our identity as Christians.

Peter has already called believers "elect exiles." Meaning they belong to God through salvation and they don't belong to this world. They are strangers in a foreign land. And starting in our text today is the beginning of a larger section where Peter is going to show Christians the ways in which they are culturally distinct from those who are around them.

If you're not a Christian, you might be wondering why is it that Christians are so different? I know many people who have come to faith because they witnessed distinctions inside of Christian marriages. They noticed how Christians spoke of their hope differently than the world does, or processed tragedy in a way the world didn't. Why is that? Well to answer your question, it has to do with our hope and the effect it has on us.

If you are a Christian, perhaps you've felt the weight of Christian distinctions and maybe you've wondered, why do I have to be different? Because there will certainly be times where faithfully following Jesus in a specific context means that you are going to look odd by the world's standards. This could be in the workplace, in relationships, or even in our entertainment.

And in those moments each of us, like a tourist standing in a foreign world will feel the pressure to "do as the locals do." We hope that in acting like the world, looking like the world, and loving like the world the anxiety of belonging would resolve itself.

We would still think Christianly and believe Christianly, but externally we would try to minimize the signs of our strangeness. But Peter today actually holds out a better option, and a greater hope. In the face of a world which might find us to be strange, Peter tells us to not hide our distinction as elect exiles. Why? Because Christians have a distinct hope.

Christian conduct is driven by Christian hope. And it's only when we understand this that we can actually find comfort in uncomfortable times. What we are going to see today is this: **Christians are to be hopeful, Christians are to be holy** and lastly **Christians are to be hopeful in their holiness.**

Let's read our text today together: **1 Peter 1:13-21.**

Peter first starts by commanding Christians to be hopeful (**Christians are to be hopeful**). The call is not just to be hopeful, but to set your hope fully on our grace in we have in Jesus at the end of all things.

Now the actual words being used here in the Greek are, "Therefore, girding up the loins of your mind, being sober minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be yours at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

I love how Peter puts this because he communicates the substantive value of a Christian hope. The mind picture Peter gives is that of a man who whether to fight or run a race, is binding up his tunic between his legs so that he might move unencumbered by them.

In the text preceding this passage Peter just outlined the wonderful hope and immense value we have in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and now he says, in light of that, set your hope fully on the grace that will be yours at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Peter is equipping believers with a future mindset. One of the biggest mistakes a Christian can make is to forget that our reward is still in the future. Yes we can have confidence in our salvation in the present, yes we receive a wonderful union with the Father in the present, yes there is immense joy to be had in the present, but it's nothing compared to what it will be like when Jesus brings us home to be forever with him.

And here he says because your hope is there, lace up your shoes, hike up your shorts, and get ready to get from here to there at all costs. The author of Hebrews says it this way: **Hebrews 12:1-2**.

We cannot fully set our hope in Jesus unless our actions are willing to follow suit. And here Peter says, be ready to act in the immediate, and be sober minded that it's not going to be easy. But in light of that hope, let's move forward.

It's so important for us to see what Peter is doing here, because if we miss what Peter is doing we are going to be increasingly frustrated when we feel the weight of our exile pressing in on our hearts.

Peter gives three imperatives in our text today. He is going to command us to be holy, he is going to command Christians to conduct themselves with fear of God, but the first command he gives Christians is to fully set your hope on Jesus.

Meaning this, if Jesus isn't your hope, the calls to follow him will always be unbearable.

For Peter, hope is not a byproduct of our salvation, hope is at the heart of it.

And I think that's a really fresh and revealing perspective for us to consider today. If you were to ask us if we believe in Jesus as our savior most of us would say yes. If we were to ask you if you believed that anything else was your savior, you would probably say no. We would pass the doctrinal exam.

But here Peter provides an emotional exam: Is your hope set fully on Jesus? Hope occupies our hearts. Is your hope fully on Jesus in that what will come in glory will be enough to make this life worth it? Or is your hope partially on Jesus, but partially on finding love? Partially on Jesus, or partially on a good economy? Partially on Jesus or partially on meeting Instagram's standards of adventure and family?

These days we are in right now provide a unique perspective into Peter's message here because most of us would probably say that our current crisis doesn't test our faith, but I'm sure all of us would say that it has tested our hope.

Sometimes we can wrongly think that faith and belief are merely mental affirmations, but hope, hope shapes our actions. Hope is faith revealed.

And for the fourth time already in this letter, Peter reminds us that our hope is already secure, it's just waiting for us according to God's timing. That hope is that Jesus has done everything required to save us from our sin and restore us to God, and that one day not only will he spiritually restore us, but he will physically do so as well. And if we have such a hope, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:12, we get to be very bold.

We don't have to look like the world because we have a better hope than this world. And what does this boldness look like? Holiness. Here is our second point today: **Christians are to be holy.**

Read with me **1 Peter 1:14-17.**

So Peter is using this word, "holy" a lot in this text, and I don't want to assume that all of us know what that means. For many of us the word holy means perfect. So calls to holiness are heard as calls to some standard that we know we won't meet. Maybe you've heard people say, "Well I'll never be perfect" or "I'll always be a sinner." And in light of that we diminish God's call to holiness.

But while the word holy can in some senses communicate the idea of perfection, the primary meaning of it is to be "consecrated" or to be "set apart." To be holy is to be set apart for God. To be distinct from what is unholy. I'm not a perfect husband, but just because I'm not perfect doesn't mean I'm not a husband. Just because I'm not perfect doesn't mean it's ok for me to go looking for another woman.

Why? Because I've been set apart in marriage for Sarah. I've been consecrated in all my weakness for sacrificial service towards her and her alone. And when God covenants himself to his people through the blood of Jesus we become set apart too.

And Peter makes two statements clarifying why God calls us to be holy and we'll look at both in a moment. First he makes the case that God himself is holy. Then he makes the case that God himself is judge.

Because God is holy, we should be holy. And because God is judge, we should conduct ourselves in light of his verdict. But we need to remember that this is not all Peter says about us and holiness.

This is important because this is what separates God's call to holiness from man centered legalism. Legalism says that if I want to be saved, I need to look like God so that he can accept me. I need to produce my own good works in such a quantity that when the judge looks at me he can declare me good.

But the problem is that judges don't declare people "good," they don't judge goodness. They judge guilt or innocence. And even if you do all the good things, you are not righteous, not innocent according to God's law. Our sin breaks the law, and unless you have a time machine good works doesn't un-break the law. The Bible says we are born as sinners.

But this is why we must notice where holiness, and a gospel understanding of works, actually starts. Look at how Peter starts in verse 14 with the affirmation, "as obedient children," and then he goes on to say in verse 17, "if you call on him as Father."

Peter here assumes not that we have been made holy by our own actions, but that for the believer, God has already called you into his holiness through salvation. Just as we saw in Deuteronomy, God didn't say to Israel, "Obey my laws and then I'll save you from Egypt." He said, "I am the God who saved you from Egypt, now obey my laws."

So too for the Christian the calls to holiness start with God's call to adopt us through Jesus Christ. And because of this adoption we act Christianly, we act according to our family name: **1 Peter 1:14-16**.

If we are really preparing our minds for action and thinking soberly on the Christian walk, we should expect that our old sin nature and our world will always call for our affection.

Peter says that those influences of who you once were will try to conform you to old passions. That word conform implies that of a mold or a model. There are real temptations in this world which want to promise to shape us into something special.

It promises to shape us into a model of contentment, success and satisfaction. And we know how hard those calls can be, we know how attractive and how comfortable those restraints can seem.

But Peter says those calls stem from ignorance. We didn't know any better. Like children our sin causes us to operate according to our own understanding of the world which is limited at best. But God as a good father calls out to his people with the knowledge of a better way. We sin because we think it will work, but it's only when we hear the call of the Father that we see a better way.

We aren't ignorant anymore, God has called out to us. In fact the word for church, "ekklesia," means gathering. But it is taken from the Greek prefix "ek" which means out, and the root "kaleo" which means called. The church is the called out ones.

In the ancient world ekklesias would exist when a Governor or politician would summon his constituents to him. And the church is a gathering of those whom God has called to himself through Jesus Christ. The only way that we can resist the conforming urges of the world is to more clearly understand the calling of God to us in Jesus.

When the world says, "Look like this," the gospel says, "Look at who your God is, look at what he has done to make you his children!" As our Father is holy, so too are his children to walk in light of his nature.

He is a holy God who through faith has called us to himself so that we too might be like him. And this calling is so pervasive that Peter says we should be holy in all our conduct. As the letter goes on Peter is going to show how this holiness shapes our love for others, our goals in life, our public engagement and our service and benevolence.

But before we move on I want to give one point of application in our COVID-19 world.

Many of us are working from home during this season. As Christians, our working from home should be distinctly Christian. Meaning that just because our bosses cannot see us, just because Netflix and Twitter are clicks away, we know that we are called to be holy as God is holy. And that means when on the clock we work as if working for the Lord and not for men.

Just as our God is incredibly distinct from anything else in this world, so too should our employers see God's people as distinct from others in this world. God is holy so we should be holy.

This is underscored all the more when Peter talks about God as a judge. Look again at his words in **1 Peter 1:17**.

How essential is holiness to God? It would seem extremely essential. Look at **Hebrews 12:14, Luke 12:2-3**. To use Peter's hypothetical here, if you claim to be a child of this Father, you must also realize that your actions do matter.

That even in your exile, you must conduct yourselves in a reverent fear of God meaning you learn to put off what is sinful and put on what pleases God.

Here is another practical application in our current state. For many of us this isolation from gathering is a breeding ground for the bacteria of sin. There is security, there is secrecy, and there is a limited amount of people to provide physical encouragement to you.

But do not forget that God has called you to something better, do not forget that he has purchased you so that you might no longer be conformed to your former ignorance in sin.

And I promise you, there will be times, in however many weeks which lay ahead of us, that the temptation to look at pornography, the temptation to lose your temper with your children, the temptation to anger and frustration might seem so incredibly strong that it would appear you cannot resist. But in that moment consider how Peter closes this passage: **1 Peter 1:17-21**.

Yes, we will be judged for every work that we do. But for the believer, Jesus' deeds on the cross have effectively and finally ransomed us from the false needs of sin. This is our last point today: **Christians are to be hopeful in their holiness**. In other words living as holy people is living as hopeful people. Holiness always reminds us of the real hope we have in Jesus.

When Peter begins to talk about God as judge there is a weight but also a relief. Peter says we will be judged for our deeds, but by God's grace you have been ransomed from the futile ways of the world.

You see the truth is everyone feels the weight of exile in this world. And our world is filled with deeds in an attempt to solve their own exile. In order to have hope you need to be sexually liberated. In order to have hope you need to have a house. In order to have hope you need to be affirmed. In order to have hope you need to have all the toilet paper.

Why do we go to sin? Why do we listen to the ignorance of the world? Because we hope it can help. But this world can provide no hope. It is a rat-race doomed to fail before it starts. It can't fix our greatest problem.

Look at how the Psalmist put in **Psalm 49:10-12**. His point is that we've seen time and time again that those who spend all their efforts finding fame and wealth still all die and we see that their hope does nothing for them while they rot in their grave. And yet look at what he says next: **Psalm 49:13**.

We see it, we see their foolish confidence, and yet we ourselves end up approving of their boast. Where in your life do you approve of the boasts of worldly things? Don't misunderstand, it's not wrong to want comfort, it's not wrong to want a house, it's not wrong to want to be married. But it becomes wrong when we think that any of those things are needed things when it comes to reaching the finish line of faith. That's a false hope which will at best frustrate you and at worse crush you.

But this is where the wonderful news of Jesus comes in: **Psalm 49:14-15**.

God ransoms us from the foolish hopes of the world. Our world will always tell us to "do as the locals do" and will find us odd and even mock us when we do not frantically find hope in the foolish hopes they share.

But this is because we have been ransomed from fruitless hopes by what? By the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Our sin demanded death, and it would have been satisfied and happy with yours. But Jesus in his mercy came and died for you, so that you might be ransomed from the futile ways of this world and instead see the wonder of God's hope.

It is in light of this wonderful substitutionary ransom in Jesus Christ that Peter now sings the praises of Jesus: **1 Peter 1:20-21**.

This Jesus shows us the hope of holiness. By his blood we have been ransomed. His perfect and spotless sacrifice is counted to our broken and sinful record. But more than that we can see that he didn't stay dead. He rose from the dead. He has received glory. And all of this is for what? For the sake of you.

What staggering beauty! That Jesus in his infinite beauty came to save us from the curse of sin and show us that in purchasing us for holiness that everything we ever wanted comes from that act. It is the holiness of God and the work of Jesus which resulted in new life and glory. All the things we want in conforming to the world, Jesus has provided as a guarantee for those who live in him.

Not in this momentary life, but in the blissful depth of eternity.

Why did Jesus do all of this? So that we might see his beauty and in seeing his beauty we might put our faith and hope in God. This text begins and ends with hope, and it's the gospel of Jesus which takes us even in our brokenness and fixes our eyes on hope.

Now here's a real catch for where we are at right now. Living as hopeful and holy people was always God's designed plan. This is why we are to gather every week as a church. Look at what is at the heart of our gatherings: **Hebrews 10:24-25**.

This can be unfortunate and really trying in times when we don't have access to this kind of encouragement. But take heart, because while the church is a wonderful and essential gift given to you, the church is not Jesus.

If you were to survey scientific and technological innovations, you would notice that breakthroughs always followed a new way to measure something. The pendulum clock allowed us to measure time in a way which revolutionized factories and labor across the globe. A system to measure heat led to air-conditioning which shapes our modern mega cities. Whether measuring light, or sound, or pressure, one scholar says that, "New ways of measuring almost always imply new ways of making."

And in this passage we just read, Peter provided the measurement of grace which sets us up for breakthroughs in holiness: we were redeemed by the precious and perfect blood of Jesus.

This wonderful gift gives you in the chaos of a quarantined family home, or the isolation of a secluded apartment all the grace for the innovation you need to live as hopeful and holy in this time.

It might just take a little more intentionality to get there. There is much we lack when the body is not able to gather, but we don't lack Jesus.

Charles Spurgeon says it this way: **"I pray we will seek after a spiritual life that is never dependent on outward ordinances. It is a great comfort to be able to hear the Word faithfully preached. But suppose we are placed where there is no preaching of the Word? Then it will be a happy circumstance if our godliness can survive such a deprivation. It would be a grand thing to be able to go to our Bible and to our knees and draw near to God alone, and so go grow strong enough to send our branches over the walls by blessing others and beginning to teach or preach Christ. The Lord's Supper is a sacred ordinance, and I would have us come to the Lord's table as often as we can. But where we are where no Christian person is near with whom we could break bread, may we have divine grace to feed on Jesus himself. Spiritual life loves outward ordinances but if it is deprived of them, it survives in their absence."**

So during this time, don't neglect the power of Jesus which promises hope and action in this unique time. Let us together think of unique ways in which we might be able to stir each other up and remind them of this hope: call, text, email, smoke signal, video chat.

And let us together realize that at the heart of who we are is the call of God and the sin crushing ransom of Jesus which makes us new for all things.