

Hope in Future Grace

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[0 : 00] 1 Peter 1, verses 13-21 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, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile 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 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.

The 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio is just over two months away, and I don't know what your favorite Olympic event is, but mine has always been the 100-meter dash.

There's so much tension and anticipation leading up to one explosive 9-10 second race. The sprinters are meticulous in their preparation before the start of the race, their leading foot placed just behind the starting line, their knee bent at a 45-degree angle, their back foot placed firmly on the starting block, and their arms fully extended to keep their torso straight.

And then when the announcer says, ready, they raise their butts, set, and their focus is razor-sharp, fully aware that their failure to be alert in this moment could cost them the race.

[2 : 05] And as soon as they hear the gunfire, they propel themselves powerfully to run the 100-meter dash. This is the kind of readiness and preparation that Peter has in mind when he says in 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.

The word for preparing literally means to gird up the loins, which was a familiar metaphor in the ancient world where men wore long robes, and therefore had to pull up their robes and tuck them into their belt before any rigorous physical activity, like running.

Jesus uses the expression in Luke 12, 35-36, The idea that Peter is getting at here is that God's final vindication of his people is imminent.

Though our salvation has already begun, it has not yet been consummated. And though the kingdom of God is already here, its fullness is yet to come.

So Christians, therefore, are marginalized and persecuted in this world because their beliefs and values are not of this world, but of the world to come. And because their ultimate allegiance does not belong to any authority here on earth, but to God, and they will be delivered and vindicated when Christ returns.

[3 : 48] This is why we ought to wait expectantly. This is why we must be ready and keep our loins girded up. The exhortation to be sober-minded conveys a similar idea.

The literal meaning, of course, means to be sober and not drunk, but this too is a metaphor for readiness and attentiveness. An inebriated person is unprepared for action in many ways.

Their inhibitions and sense of caution are lowered. There is loss of balance and fine motor coordination, so they can't drive or do complex things. Their speech is slurred, and sometimes they speak too loudly or quickly.

Their muscle tones are loosed, and their reaction times are slowed. And often, their reasoning ability is also compromised, so that they are frequently confused. And when the intoxication is quite severe, the person can even lose consciousness.

This is a graphic portrayal of what it means not to be sober-minded. And the sober-minded person, in contrast, is ready for action. He is in full possession of himself, his body and mind, and is alert.

[4 : 56] That is what Peter enjoins us to. To set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. He wants us to be prepared and committed to his future grace, to God's future grace, to set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Not partially or haphazardly, but fully set your hope on the grace of Christ. And this is important because hope in God's future grace enables our present obedience.

Like a sprinter who readies himself for the race at the starting line, Christians ought to always have their hope set on their future grace. Because it is this hope in future grace that enables us to obey God.

This passage teaches us about three things that should make us hope in God's future grace. First is God's holiness. And then second is God's judgment.

And third is God's ransom. And my prayer for you this morning is that your understanding and appreciation for future grace will be renewed and strengthened so that you wake each morning and spend each waking moment with the readiness of hope.

[6 : 13] So first, Peter tells us that God's holiness should make us hope in God's future grace. He says in verses 14 to 16, 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. Peter calls believers obedient children. This is picking up the theme from earlier in verse 3 where it says that God the Father has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Christians are those who have been born again into the family of God. Because we now have God as our Father, we should, therefore, be obedient children. The Roman and Jewish cultures of the time highly valued and legally required the obedience of minors to their parents.

So Peter is simply saying that just as it is right for children to obey their earthly parents, we, the children of God, should obey God, our Father. And disobedience involves not being conformed to the passions of our former ignorance.

In our former ignorance, we devoted our lives to accumulating material possessions here on earth and saw wealth and prestige as the measure of our success. Blindly climbing the corporate ladder and working long hours for no meaningful reason, but now, we ought not to be confirmed to those passions.

[7 : 49] In our former ignorance, we indulged in all kinds of sensual pleasures, thinking that those temporary highs were all that we had to live for, hopping from one sexual partner to another, both virtual and real, but now, we ought not to be conformed to those passions.

In our former ignorance, we feared men rather than God, groveling for their approval, devastated by the slightest hint of disrespect or disapproval, but now, we ought not to be conformed to those passions.

Instead, Peter says, We have been called by the Holy One, so we ought to be holy.

This is not an example of divine fayette, a unilateral decree, I am this way, so you should be this way, I am such and such, so you should like such and such, but rather, this is an appeal to another feature of paternal relationships that was highly prized in antiquity, imitation.

You see a vestige of this in some of the common surnames of today. For example, those with the last name Baker have ancestors who are bakers that worked in the communal kitchen. Those with the last name Smith have ancestors who are blacksmiths who created objects from iron and steel.

[9 : 13] The last name Bauer is from the German word meaning peasant or farmer. Until recently, children were usually expected to imitate their parents and follow their respective professions. So God says to His children, You shall be holy for I am holy.

At an even more basic level, we simply expect children to be like their parents. So we have a saying, like father, like son. When we meet a particularly attractive couple, we assume that they will have very good looking children.

When we meet a particularly intelligent couple, we assume that they will have very intelligent children. Using the same logic, Christians are the children of God, the Holy One. Therefore, they should also be holy.

Earlier in verse 2 of chapter 1, Peter had said that Christians are elect exiles of God in the sanctification of the Spirit. Christians are, by definition, those who are holy because they have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Yes, it is true that we are broken and sinful and must become more and more holy as well, but we are also already, in a real and definitive way, holy people. It says in chapter 2, verse 5, that we are a holy nation.

[10 : 30] The command here is not in the present tense, but in the aorist tense, which means that it's not referring to present ongoing action, become holy, but decisive, one-time action, show yourself holy once and for all.

It's telling us, you are a holy people, so be holy. You are the children of the Holy One, so be holy. It's only when we are secure in our new identity as the children of God, only when our hope is fully set on the reality that the Holy One is our Father, that we will be holy in all our conduct as obedient children.

No matter how those around us live, no matter what anyone might say to us, talk this way, dress this way, believe these things, love these things, and hate those things, we must not be shaken or caught off guard.

Rather, we must always set our hope fully on the holiness of our Heavenly Father. This is the first way in which our hope in future grace enables our present obedience.

The second aspect of our hope lies in God's impartial judgment. It says in verse 17, 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.

[11 : 57] It might seem odd at first to think of God's judgment as a source of hope, but if you reflect on it, it is true that there is no hope when there is no impartial judgment. When bribes blind the eyes of the judge, when the rich can hire expensive lawyers to find legal loopholes, when false witnesses rise up against the weak and the few to side with the strong and the many, when judgment is partial and justice is perverted, the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, the guilty are acquitted and the innocent are punished.

There can be no hope in this kind of environment. But on the final judgment day, God will judge impartially according to each one's deeds.

His judgment will not be swayed by money, power, fame, or public opinion. His judgment will be accurate and exacting. This is a wonderful future grace that inspires Christian hope.

Our obedience will not be for nothing. We will be vindicated for all unjust suffering. Our faith will be proven right. Our hope in this future grace will lead us to conduct ourselves with fear throughout the time of our exile.

The prospect of God's impartial judgment should leave our knees knocking. But more than a simple terror, it should also inspire awe that leads to obedience. To conduct ourselves with fear is to think, feel, say, and do everything before the face of God, knowing that God sees everything.

[13 : 39] The illusion of a private, secret life incubates sin, but a recognition that our Heavenly Father always has us under His watchful eye promotes holiness.

When you fudge some of the numbers while filling out your taxes, God sees. God sees. When you gossip with your friend over the phone or on Facebook, God sees. When you are browsing through lewd websites at wee hours of the night, God sees.

When you flirt with illicit relations while no one else is around, God sees. And when you say hurtful things to your friends or family in the privacy of your home, God sees. And this should strike holy fear of God in our hearts.

And what is more, the God who judges impartially is our Father. The fact that God is our Father becomes the linchpin of Peter's second exhortation as well.

He says in verse 17, 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. And why is this significant?

[14 : 48] In the same way that we'd expect children who have a police officer as their father to show greater respect for the law, or in the same way we'd expect children who have a pastor as their father to show greater regard for spiritual things, Christians who have God who judges impartially as their father should conduct themselves all the more with fear because we know our Father.

We have an intimate, familial knowledge of Him. We know that He is an impartial judge. And this should make us all the more reverent toward Him and make us conduct ourselves with fear.

This is the second way in which our hope in God's future grace enables our present obedience. Now, at this point, many of us should be feeling a bit uneasy because if God truly is the Holy One, perfect in His holiness and demanding of the same holiness from us, and if God truly judges impartially and we will each be held accountable for every single one of our deeds, if God sees everything, not only what we do, but also what we say, feel, and think, then we will not fare well in the judgment.

So then, how can we set our hope fully on God's future grace when the future holds for us the impartial judgment of the Holy God?

This is why Peter reminds us of the basis for our hope in future grace, God's ransom. It says in verse 19 that Christians were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from their 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.

[16 : 51] Mark 10, 45, similarly says, The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. A ransom is a price paid for the manumission of a slave.

It's the price for freedom. And God ransomed us from the futile ways inherited from our forefathers, so that we might have God as our Father. We have been ransomed from the futile ways inherited from our forefathers, so that we now have, as it says in verse 4 of chapter 1, an inheritance kept for us by our Heavenly Father.

We are no longer enslaved to this sinful world. We have been ransomed by God. And with what price? 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.

This verse alludes to Exodus 12, the Passover, when before the Exodus from their slavery in Egypt, the Israelites are instructed to take a lamb without blemish, kill it, and then to take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintels of the houses in which they eat it.

Then God promised the Israelites that the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.

[18 : 24] The night of the Passover, the destroyer sent by God killed all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. But the Israelites were spared because they had the blood of the lamb on their doorposts.

As a result, Israel was delivered from their slavery in Egypt. And not a single one of these Israelites deserved to be saved from the destroyer.

Each one deserved God's judgment, but they were saved because God mercifully provided a substitute, this Passover lamb whose shed blood in death saves Israel.

This Passover lamb represents and points to Jesus Christ, who was the blameless Son of God who bled and died to save sinners. And those who believe in Jesus have been covered by the blood of Christ.

And it's because the righteous one died for sinners that we are now holy in God's sight. It's because the Son of God died in our place that we are now the children of God.

[19 : 25] Because God paid this most precious ransom price, we can now set our hope fully on the future grace of God. If you're with us today and you're not a believer, you must come to terms with your desperate need for redemption.

No one can redeem himself. God alone can rescue. He alone can save. And He has provided the only means by which we might be saved, the ransom price of His own Son.

Reckon with this reality, please, before you leave the service. What hope do you have for eternity? If you have placed your trust in Jesus Christ, then you have good reason to gird up your loins and set your hope fully on the grace of God.

In fact, this command to gird up the loins was first given during the Passover as well. In Exodus 12, 11, the Israelites are instructed to eat the Lord's Passover with their loins girded up and with sandals on their feet.

Because their exodus from Egypt was imminent, because God's deliverance was at hand. The message of the Passover is true for believers today.

[20 : 40] Your sins have been covered by the blood of the Lamb, by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. So now, gird up your loins and be prepared and sober-minded because your redemption is at hand.

This is why we can set our hope fully in God's holiness because we are now His children and called to holiness as well. This is why we can set our hope in God's judgment because we have been ransomed from the futile ways inherited from our forefathers.

We do not obey God in order to earn His favor. We obey God because we are already His children. It says in verse 21, Through Christ, we are believers in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory so that our faith and hope are in God.

We can have faith and hope because God has ransomed us. We can have faith and hope because Christ died in our place. This is how our hope in God's future grace enables our present obedience.

Gabriel Marcel was a French philosopher, a drama critic, playwright, and musician. I guess something of a Renaissance man.

[21 : 57] And he writes in his book, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, that speaking metaphysically, the only genuine hope is hope in what does not depend on ourselves. Hope springing from humility and not from pride.

And he adds in another one of his books that hope provides us with the foundation that allows humans who are radically contingent, frequently fickle, and generally weak to make a commitment that is unconditional.

This is what he means. He said, If our hope is in our contingent, fickle, and weak selves, we will despair and be unfaithful to God. If our hope is in our contingent, fickle, and temporal world, we will despair and be unfaithful to God.

It's only when our hope is in the future grace of our unchanging, eternal God, guaranteed to us by the precious blood of Christ, that we will, then we will be faithful to God.

The hope in God's future grace enables our present obedience. So gird up your loins today. This past week, my parents were visiting from Seattle, and my father told me a story that his father, that his father, my grandfather, had told him.

[23 : 23] And my great-grandfather and grandfather were sold into household servitude due to poverty. And they lived at the house of their masters and worked for food. One of their regular chores was cutting up food, walking 20 miles into the commercial area carrying the lumber to sell the wood and come back.

When they got to the commercial area, my great-grandfather would buy lunch for my grandfather, but would say that he is not hungry and buy a small piece of candy for himself. At the time, my grandfather didn't know any better, so he believed him.

But when he relayed the story to my father, he was crying as he thought about how hungry his father must have been. The lunch that my great-grandfather always purchased for him became that much more precious and meaningful to him because he now understood how costly and sacrificial it was.

Brothers and sisters, do you know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers? Not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

The grace that is freely extended to us comes at an infinite cost to our Heavenly Father. And he gave that which is more valuable than all of creation for our redemption.

[24 : 48] He gave his only beloved Son for us. Oh, remember that what you were ransomed with. Then set your hope fully on the grace that enables your obedience.