

HOLY PEOPLE IN UNHOLY TIMES

1 Peter 1:13-21

Pray

Introduction

In the midst of persecution and trials, the churches Peter writes to in this first letter are called to **live lives marked by their faith and hope in Christ no matter what the circumstances**. In the 60's AD (when Peter writes this letter, 5:12) The churches in Asia Minor, what is now modern-day Turkey, were persecuted by the tyrant ruler Nero merely for their faith in God and their living out the Christian life. It is this backdrop that Peter reorients their focus on **the risen Christ and the promises that come with being a believer**. This is a reminder for the Christians in Asia Minor to not fear the emperor but to **fear God and to set their hope on him**.

This message is helpful though we are not under persecution from a tyrant emperor, **we must always reorient our affections and allegiances to Christ as our King**. Our hearts always seek secondary saviors and we need each day to be reminded of the sacrifice of Christ as seen in the Gospel. This is precisely what Peter does in 1 Peter 1:13-21

The Gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ, descended from heaven, lived a perfect and holy life, was crucified dead and buried, and three days later rose again purchasing the redemption of sinners who were destined for an eternity in hell. As the Apostle Paul says,

“but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)”

Context

Verses 1 through 12 Peter is reminding his readers, and us, that nothing is of greater value than our salvation. Even in the midst of persecution. We will one day fill the heavenly choir with worship to our king, but often our earthly sojourn is filled with opposition. This is where we find ourselves. Wandering through this life but longing for heaven.

Key themes throughout 1 Peter are: **holiness, obedience, eternal vs. temporary, Kingdom citizenship, Christ and his atoning work, and much more.**

In our passage this morning the apostle Peter reminds us of **call to holiness no matter the circumstances.**

He does this primarily through four imperative commands:

- 1. Set your hope on Christ (13)**
- 2. Set your aim on Christ (14-16)**
- 3. Set your fears on Christ (17-19)**
- 4. Set your faith on Christ. (20-21)**

Text

1 Peter 1:13-21

¹³Therefore, 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. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵but as he who called you is

holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” ¹⁷And 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, ¹⁸knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹who 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.

1. Set your Hope in Christ (v. 13)

Persecution for these 1st century Christians **was a reality**. We know through the missionary journeys of Paul and the other Apostles, *including Peter*, they encountered imprisonments, beatings, and daily ridicule.

Peter, not neglecting this reality, encourages these believers to set their hopes not on material things, governing rulers, or any other means. He encourages their hope to be on **the revealing of Christ**. This eternal mindset then is met with requirements, **it will not come passively**. So, Peter calls them to action, to **prepare their minds and to be sober-minded**.

As Paul instructs Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:4,

⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

We have a task, to prepare our minds and to be sober minded. This allows us to see clearly. As Paul in Ephesians encourages believers “be filled with the

Spirit.(Eph 5:18)” The implicit command is to not be filled with anything else. We are to be singular focused Christians, and that is **the glory of God**. Therefore, prepare your minds, and be sober-minded he says.

The support of this glory of God is rooted in Peter’s instruction to place their focus on **the revelation of Jesus Christ and the grace that is to come to believers on that day**. The Apostle Paul expands this revealing and the grace which is to come,

*¹⁹ If in Christ we [**have hope**] in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Cor 15:19-22).*

We will be made alive in Christ on that day. Therefore, persecutions, imprisonments, and scourging will be a glimmer of affliction in comparison to the surpassing riches of salvation for these believers. **AND TO US**. It will be as though our salvation, very real and true now, is yet a foretaste of what will be. Theologians refer to this as the “already but not yet.” We have a very real substantive salvation, but as Paul summarizes in Ephesians 1:14, the Spirit “is **the guarantee** of our inheritance **until we acquire possession of it**, to the praise of his glory.” And we will, **those who have trusted Christ**, attain such a great salvation.

Further, Paul describes this grace at the revelation of Christ as **the perishable putting on the imperishable**. We will no longer think in material terms nor be relegated to the perishable world. **He states in 1 Corinthians 15:51-57...**

*⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed**. ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last*

trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ *For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.* ⁵⁴ *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ ***But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***
(1 Cor. 15:51-57)

Our salvation both present and future gives us hope in the midst of any circumstance.

? What circumstance causes you to lose hope in Christ? Drill the Gospel truths so deep into your soul that it would be an anchor to any drifting or doubt.

But we are not only to Set our hope in Christ. We are also to set our aim on Christ.

2. Set your Aim on Christ. (v. 14-16)

In these four verses Peter uses a negative positive relationship: ***not this but this***. He uses the term “obedient children.” In their persecutions Peter reminds them that they can (and should) be **a witnesses to the excellencies of God to the watching world**, and be **hopeful and holy Christians**.

His negative example was that of the previous state of a non-believer; one who has not trusted Christ. Peter says that we “**were conformed to the passions of former ignorance.**” Paul goes further in **Ephesians 2:1-3** saying,

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Eph 2:1-3)

That is not the way Peter is instructing them to live. He is calling them to obedience. To holiness in their every action and conduct. Because, as Paul goes on to say, we are not stuck in our ignorant passions, but rather, we have been made alive in Christ as Paul says:

*⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places **in Christ Jesus**, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph 2:4-7)*

So then, being made alive as obedient children, Peter's standard of holy conduct is of God himself. He says, "as He who called you is holy be holy in all your conduct. (v. 15)" From the beginning of Scripture God has shown himself to be many things; a deeper study of the attributes of God may be fitting but for this sermon I will simply uphold God's holiness as shown throughout Scripture.

God is holy. So much so that when he delivers his people from slavery they cannot even look at him. In Exodus, Moses recounts this interaction, ²⁰ But," he [God] said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live. (Ex. 33:20)" **it continues in chapter 34 verse 34 and 35,**

³⁴ Whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he

*would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded, ³⁵ the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was **shining**. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him."*

This theme is continued through the presence of the Lord through the ark of the covenant, the laws, and ceremonies all point to an unholy people needing forgiveness from a holy God.

As an early Christian Confessions summarizes:

He [God] is most holy in all His counsels, in all His works, and in all His commands. To Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience He is pleased to require of them.¹

Christ is perfectly holy. Through his life, death, and resurrection he has shown us this standard. Peter has recalled this standard for us.

? Do you struggle with personal holiness? Confess your sins to God. Look to Jesus as the source and perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2-5). You do not save yourself. His blood will make you white as snow and will present you blameless on that day.

First) We Set our hope in Christ Second) We set our aim on Christ, and thirdly) we set our fears on Christ.

¹ Westminster confession II.II *Of God and of the Holy Trinity.* (1646)

3. Set your Fears on Christ. (v. 17-19)

Again, we have an exhortation, this time to Fear God grounded in the truth of what Christ has done for us. Peter seems to be setting up an important clause, “*if you...call on him as father.*” There is need to fear God both as a believer or as an unbeliever. One is a child of God held to his holy standard as mentioned earlier, and the other is held responsible for all sin committed and will be judged by God’s wrath. This book though was written to believers in the Churches in what is now Turkey. So we will focus our time on the implications for believers.

He says, “conduct yourselves with fear. (v. 17)” Undoubtedly they feared the Roman emperor **Nero**, who was in power at the time of writing. They had seen persecutions and potentially the pinnacle of Roman torture, crucifixion. Fearing the emperor would have been natural, but Peter reminds them of the past grace of God in our salvation as the means to fear God.

Because we have been bought with a price (we have been ransomed) not perishable wealth or goods, but as Peter says, “the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without spot or blemish. (v. 19)” This image would have certainly cast their minds on the Hebrew sacrifice of “Passover” where the blood of the spotless lamb was put on the doorways of their homes to spare them from death. Similarly, God has looked over former sins through his son Jesus Christ. This was not by means of animal sacrifices as would have been custom in the OT, but rather, it was through the perfect blood of the perfect son of God. As the writer of Hebrews says **in Hebrews 9:12-14,**

*¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, **not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.** ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls,*

and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh,¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

This was the ultimate sacrifice. **As Paul says in Romans 8:32a**, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all..”

This price was not merely God or silver of our God and king but **was his only begotten son.** This purchased price now makes us sons of God and shows that we are not our own. **1 Corinthians 6:19b-20** says,

You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

There is no need to fear when we glorify God with our bodies As Paul says to the Philippians in **chapter 2 verse 12**,

*Therefore, my beloved, **as you have always obeyed**, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...***

It has to do with obedience, and striving for holiness. We should fear God when we are not obedient to his word.

A healthy fear is described as “fearing the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” If you are trusting Christ as the only means for salvation he is your mediator between God, approach the throne boldly.

If you are not trusting Christ, you should be filled with reverent fear knowing you sit this morning in your trespasses and sins. You need a savior. Trust Christ and he will save you.

We have seen that we First) Set our hope in Christ Second) We set our aim

on Christ, and thirdly) we set our fears on Christ, and finally, We Set our Faith on Christ.

4. Set your Faith on Christ (v. 20-21)

The last and final exhortation of the Apostle Peter is a familiar one. Peter, like he starts the section concludes with **pointing these believers to Jesus; to trust in Him.**

He concludes his section talking about Jesus. He says, “he was foreknown before the foundation of the world.” This lets us know that Jesus is **not** an emergency plan for God, **He was the only plan.** Through Jesus God is reconciling **all things to himself.** It is cosmological, or to put it another way, there is not an atom or molecule that will not be reconciled to God. As Paul tells the **Colossians in chapter 1 verses 15 through 20,**

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Not only is Jesus reconciling all things, he has been made known to us through the Word of God, but primarily through his incarnation. Through this we are able to believe and place our faith in Christ. He was raised from the dead and then given glory by God. As **Paul says to the Philippians in chapter**

2 verses 6-11 that Jesus,

did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

All this happened was planned **so that God would receive glory** and **so that...your faith and hope are in God.**

Trust Christ. *If you are a non-believer. If you are a believer. Trust Christ. As the only means of salvation.*

Conclusion

In our modern society so many things pull at our attentions and affections, we must reorient our focus on **the risen Christ, the promises that come with being a believer, and strive for holiness.** This is a reminder for **us to set our hope on him. Set our aim on him. Set our fear on him. And to set our faith in him.**

Invitation

First John 1:9 tells us of God's faithfulness to save the wicked, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." **Confess your sins and trust Christ.**