

Well you can see I got new glasses this last week. These are the kind you are supposed to wear all the time. I went alone on this appointment but texted my wife a couple of pictures from the eye doctors office. I thought I might share those with you.

Dr. Viktor Frankl was a prisoner in Auschwitz for 3 years. He has written powerfully on the importance of maintaining hope. After enduring this terrible concentration camp during WWII, he shared the following story in his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*. It's the story of a fellow prisoner who lost all hope.

He writes "I once had a dramatic demonstration of the close link between the loss of faith in the future and this dangerous giving up"...my senior block warden, a fairly well-known composer and librettist, confided in me one day " I would like to tell you something Doctor. I had a strange dream. A voice told me that I could wish for something. That I should only say what I wanted to know and all my questions would be answered.

What do you think I asked? That I would like to know when the war would be over for me. You know what I mean, Doctor-for me! I wanted to know when we, when our camp would be liberated and our sufferings come to an end"

"And when did you have this dream?" I asked. "In February" (1945), he answered. It was then the beginning of March. "What did your dream voice answer?" He whispered to me, "March 30th". When he told me about his dream he was still full of hope and convinced that the voice of his dream would be right. But as the promised day drew nearer, the war news which reached our camp made it appear very unlikely that we would be free on the promised date.

On March 29th, he suddenly became ill and ran a high temperature. On March 30th, the day his prophecy had told him that the war and suffering would be over for him, he became delirious and lost consciousness. On March 31st, he was dead. To all outward appearances, he had died of typhus.

"Those who know how close the connection is between the state of mind of a man, his courage and hope or lack of them and the state of immunity of his body, will understand that sudden loss of hope and courage can have a deadly effect."

" The ultimate cause of my friend's death was that the expected liberation did not come and he was severely disappointed. This suddenly lowered his body's resistance against the latent typhus infection. His faith in the future and his will to live had become paralyzed and his body fell victim to illness-and thus the voice of his dream was right after all . . . any attempt to restore a man's inner strength . . . had first to succeed in showing him some future goal."

What we will discover today in the writings of Peter is that he had a grasp of this concept long before Frankl wrote his book. Peter's hope was a "living hope." (1:3) It is a living hope because it is grounded in the resurrection of Christ.

For the last two weeks we have looked at the fact that our situations no matter how challenging they may be are not hopeless. Today I want to give you a simple biblical foundation for believing and living that way.

There is the hope of a real heaven. For the first century Christians receiving this letter it could not have come at a better time. Their early euphoria about the soon return of Christ had waned and they had been relegated to lives of challenge, persecution and even death. They had lost their homes, their families and incomes. All because they followed the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Like a sailor from bygone days perched high above the deck, Peter sees the distant land and calls for those he is writing to get their heads up! The future goal is real! 1 Peter 1:3-12 are words of admonition to look up and not give up.

What we are going to look at today is his words found in 1 Peter 1:13-21. There is hope! There is always hope when you are a disciple of Jesus Christ.

¹³ So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. ¹⁴ So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. ¹⁵ But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. ¹⁶ For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."^[c]

¹⁷ And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time as "foreigners in the land." ¹⁸ For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. ¹⁹ It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. ²⁰ God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but he has now revealed him to you in these last days.

²¹ Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory. 1 Peter 1:13-21 NLT

For the next few minutes I want to dig a little deeper into these verses and unpack three observations that we can build out hope and faith on. Verses 3-12 must have felt like the warmth of a summer sun after a long cold winter. I didn't read them but you really need to do that to understand better the words we are looking at today.

1. A call to hope: Future hope

Peter's intention appears to be enabling his readers to live obedient lives for Christ.

¹³ So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. 1 Peter 1:13 NLT

This call to hope is expressed in the phrase “look forward to.” Another translation says it this way, “set you hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you.” Our hope is found in the grace that will come on the day that Jesus Christ returns to this earth.

In other words, if you are struggling set your hope on the future coming of Jesus Christ. If we are to move beyond melancholy endurance and into positive engagement with the world, we must become a people who know what it is to comprehend a fixed hope in our eternal future.

Christians have done this for centuries. C.S. Lewis, *“Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honor beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache.”*

The question then is not can this be done but how? How can we live this way especially in a world like ours? Fortunately Peter did not leave us without an answer. We find it in the next section of this passage of scripture.

2. A commitment to hope: Faithful hope

For us to live with a sense of victory over life’s trials we must do it God’s way. If there is a message you will hear over and over as long as I am here it will be this one because it is the message of the entire Bible. I want you to look at these verses for a few moments and let them really sink in.

¹³ So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. ¹⁴ So you must live as God’s obedient children. Don’t slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn’t know any better then. ¹⁵ But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. 1 Peter 1:13-15 NLT

There are two distinct and very practical ways to measure our progress and commitment to the process of faithful Christianity. Somewhere in the last several decades authentic Christianity began to die. It is time that some of heard the call back to the Bible and back to things that matter most.

Two signs of a committed and faithful hope:

A. Healthy mind (ver. 13a) “Think clearly and exercise self-control.”

Another translation of this verse says, “. . .preparing your minds for action, and being sober minded.” It means literally, ‘gird up the loins of your mind.’ Not most of us hearing that phrase would wonder what in the world it is talking about. It is the oriental custom of gathering up one’s long robes by pulling them between the legs and then wrapping and tying them around the waist, so as to prepare for running, fast walking, or another strenuous activity.

Those of us that distinguish ourselves with a set and future hope are those who have learned to cultivate a healthy mind. If God is to have your heart He must have your mind first.

Peter calls us to think clearly and exercise self-control. We must strip away everything that would hinder us in our efforts to be like Christ. I just wish that we all would make this our goal. Can you imagine the difference it would make in our lives if we truly could think clearly and at the same time exercise self-control? We would control our thoughts, our actions and our reactions.

B. **Holy living** (ver.14-15) “So you must live as God’s obedient children. . .”

Holy conduct is the second measure of having a committed and faithful hope. When we live lives that are modeled on God’s holy character, we demonstrate that we have internalized the call. Whenever you find yourself trapped and enslaved to sin or when all you can do is continue to grasp for the pleasures of the world we reveal to the world and to God that we place very little value on the grace that is to be ours when Christ returns.

Peter uses the phrase holy living or conduct seven times. What we will find out in the rest of this letter is that he explains in more detail what this looks like.

We will also find out that this measure of holiness is the mark of being a member of God’s family. In verse 14, he says we are to live as *obedient children*. In verse 17 he says, “if you call Him Father.” God puts His mark of holiness into the lives of His children.

Here is what this means: If God is not your Father, living a holy life will be impossible because holy conduct is the fruit of being a member of His family. We do not possess the power to live this way on our own.

That’s why in verse 18 Paul says, ¹⁸ *For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors.* Understanding that God is your Father will be pivotal to your ability to live as a worthy member of the family of God.

J.I. Packer wrote, “If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he (or she) does not understand Christianity very well at all.”

No matter who you are or what your earthly father is or was like this ought to be an incredible revelation. You may or may not wish to be like your earthly father but if you are a Christian you will desire with all your heart to be like your Heavenly Father. You will long for it. You will pray for it. You will focus your mind and center your thoughts on the idea of being as much like Him as is possible.

Lastly I want to give you a biblical foundation for our hope.

3. A conviction to hope: Firm hope

We find three motivating convictions in this passage that should motivate us to keep our hope alive and live as though we really truly believe. These three should get us up and out of our easy chairs and moving in the right direction.

A. God's Character

¹⁵ But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. ¹⁶ For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15-16 NLT

Peter uses an ancient text from the Old Testament (Leviticus 11:44) to motivate us toward a life of hope and holiness. God has always commanded His people to be different from the average person controlled by their carnal nature and human traits. God's people were to be distinct. His family will act differently from unbelieving nations. God character of holiness should motivate us by the opportunity to reflect God's character. We should be filled with desire all the days of our lives.

B. God's Judgment

¹⁷ And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time as "foreigners in the land." 1 Peter 1:17 NLT

The bottom line is really simple. Each of us in God's family should be careful how we live because all have a Father who is absolutely impartial in His judgments. This truth alone should keep us away from presumptuous sins. (Psalm 19) Let me all of us a warning in here. This comes from David Helm who writes the following: "Whenever we begin thinking, Oh I can do this and get away with it. God will forgive me. After all, God is my Father, and therefore my friend," we are on dangerous ground.

Peter's call here should lead us to the absolute opposite conclusion. God is impartial. The fact that we are His children should testify to that very fact. Instead of presumptuous sin which is always the result of taking God's grace for granted, we should live our days with a healthy and godly fear. We should live like "foreigners in the land." We are merely immigrants without green cards for this world. We are just passing through and while there may be days of joy and even happiness following Christ may lead you to death in certain cultures. Our own country with it's politically correct agendas of tolerance and diversity threatens the peace of biblical Christians even today. Take a stand for the biblical view of marriage being between a man and a woman and see what happens. It may take much more courage in the days that are ahead to follow Christ then it ever has in the recent past.

C. Christ's Sacrifice

If God's character doesn't capture us for holiness and if God's impartial judgment won't scare us into holiness perhaps a reflection on the preciousness of Jesus Christ sacrifice will be compelling enough to cause us to live our lives worthy of our calling.

¹⁸ For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. ¹⁹ It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. 1 Peter 1:18-19 NLT

I love how Peter elevates the work of Christ. In other translations instead of “mere gold or silver” it says, “not with perishable things such as silver or gold.” He chooses to use the terms mere and perishable to describe the things we hold dear in comparison to the work of Christ. Gold and silver are earth’s most precious metals, the most lasting and valuable but Peter makes them look like little more than fruit left too long on a table.

“It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.”

Peter’s cry from the top of the sail now falls silent. It is time for us to consider his words and allow them to motivate us to move forward in Christ. All is not lost. Your life no matter how painful it might be presently is not without hope. Set your heart on Christ. Make Him the desire of your heart and throw off the sin and junk you have gathered round you. There is a destination but you will only get there by allowing the Father to shape your life to reflect His holiness.

In C.S. Lewis’s *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, a mouse named Reepicheep sailed the seas of life in pursuit of Heaven’s shore. The narrative of his arrival in heaven should encourage us to continue setting our hope on the distant horizon of heaven.

And when the third day dawned — with a brightness you or I could not bear even if we had dark glasses on — they saw a wonder ahead. It was as if a wall stood up between them and the sky, a greenish-grey, trembling, shimmering wall. Then up came the sun, and at its first rising they saw it through the wall and it turned into wonderful rainbow colors. Then they knew that the wall was really a long, tall wave — a wave endlessly fixed in one place as you may often see at the edge of a waterfall. It seemed to be about thirty feet high, and the current was gliding them swiftly toward it. You might have supposed they would have thought of their danger. They didn’t. I don’t think anyone could have in their position. For now they saw something not only behind the wave but behind the sun.

They could not have seen even the sun if their eyes had not been strengthened by the water of the Last Sea. But now they could look at the rising sun and see it clearly and see things beyond it. What they saw — eastward, beyond the sun — was a range of mountains. It was so high that either they never saw the top of it or they forgot it. None of them remembers seeing any sky in that direction. And the mountains must really have been outside the world. For any mountains even a quarter of a twentieth of that height ought to have had ice and snow on them. But these were warm and green and full of forests and waterfalls however high you looked. And suddenly there came a breeze from the east, tossing the top of the wave into foamy shapes and ruffling the smooth water all round them.

No one in that boat doubted that they were seeing beyond the End of the World into Aslan’s country.

At that moment, with a crunch, the boat ran aground. The water was too shallow now for it. “This,” said Reepicheep, “is where I go on alone.”

They did not even try to stop him, for everything now felt as if it had been fated or had happened before. They helped him to lower his little coracle. Then he took off his sword (“I shall need it no more,” he said) and flung it far away across the lilled sea. Where it fell it stood upright with the hilt above the surface. Then he bade them good-bye, trying to be sad for their sakes; but he was quivering with happiness. Lucy, for the first and last time, did what she had always wanted to do, taking him in her arms and caressing him. Then hastily he got into his coracle and took his paddle, and the current caught it and away he went, very black against the lilies. But no lilies grew on the wave; it was a smooth green slope. The coracle went more and more quickly, and beautifully it rushed up the wave’s side. For one split second they saw its shape and Reepicheep’s on the very top. Then it vanished, and since that moment no one can truly claim to have seen Reepicheep the Mouse. But my belief is that he came safe to Aslan’s country and is alive there to this day.”

Now I know that that is an allegorical and poetic view meant to make us think about heaven. But may I remind you today that there is coming a day when what we behold as Christians will make anything on this earth, any temptation, any sin, any desire outside of the will of God, any trial or tribulation, sickness or death, look as though it is a mere speck of worthless dust.

“Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.² It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.

³ *No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him.* ⁴ *And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.* ⁵ *And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.*

⁶ *Then the angel said to me, “Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true. The Lord God, who inspires his prophets, has sent his angel to tell his servants what will happen soon.”*

⁷ *“Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book.”*

⁸ *I, John, am the one who heard and saw all these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me.* ⁹ *But he said, “No, don’t worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers the prophets, as well as all who obey what is written in this book. Worship only God!”*

¹⁶ *“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne.^[e] I am the bright morning star.”*¹⁰ *Then he instructed me, “Do not seal up the prophetic words in this book, for the time is near.”*¹¹ *Let the one who is doing harm continue to do harm; let the one who is vile continue to be vile; let the one who is righteous continue to live righteously; let the one who is holy continue to be holy.”*

¹² “Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes. They will be permitted to enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit from the tree of life. ¹⁵ Outside the city are the dogs—the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idol worshipers, and all who love to live a lie

¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” Let anyone who hears this say, “Come.” Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life. Revelation 22:3-17 NLT