

God's People Live With Hope and Obedience

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[0 : 00] Now, let's read in our Bibles together. Firstly, from the Old Testament, our Old Testament reading is the first 19 verses of Deuteronomy 6, and then we'll be again in 1 Peter.

So let's read Deuteronomy 6. These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you, to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them, may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you, and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.

Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

[1 : 23] Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates. When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give you, a land with large flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant, then, when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you, for the Lord your God who is among you is a jealous God, and his anger will burn against you and he will destroy you from the face of the land.

Do not put the Lord your God to the test as you did at Massa. Be sure to keep the commands of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight so that it may go well with you, and you may go in and take over the good land that the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors, thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the Lord said.

And then over in 1 Peter, to continue our studies there, verse 13. Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

[3 : 04] For it is written, be holy, because I am holy. Since you call on a father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

For you know that it was not with perishable things, such as silver or gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him, you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him.

And so your faith and hope are in God. So if you have your Bibles, maybe have them open at the book of 1 Peter.

As we continue to think about this letter with its message to a suffering church, to stand firm and to stay joyful in the Lord Jesus. Today, we move to a section about commands.

[4 : 08] And we see three commands and three priorities for God's family. I use the word family because I want us to think about the theme of home and home as a shaping influence in our lives.

It has an impact on our heart and our will and our actions. Like me, you may have grown somewhat weary of lockdown icebreakers, but one helpful icebreaker question from last week was this one.

When restrictions end, what's the first thing you want to do? Maybe you have an answer to that.

The top answer in the group that I was in was the person, in my opinion.

Anyway, the person who said, I want to go home. Because I feel that, I'm sure perhaps many of us feel that. I want to go home to Sky and to see home and see family.

Home has a pull on our heart, doesn't it? And that shapes our priorities at the same time. And to think a little further about that, I was thinking too about those popular signs that you find in people's houses.

[5 : 15] And maybe you have one of these, in this house or in this family we do. And then there's a list of qualities or values. Because home, it serves that purpose.

It provides a set of values, beliefs, rules that we seek to live by. Now, if we take that into our letter here, Peter in the first 12 verses has been saying to them, remember, heaven is your true home.

He said to them, you've been saved by God's grace. So you're able to suffer with joy because you have this spiritual inheritance. You have a treasure in heaven that God is keeping for his people.

And heaven is to have a pull on our heart because it's our true home. And now in verse 13 to 21, we see a change. He says, And I think, again, Peter's message is so relevant for us today.

Perhaps, like the church in that day, we find ourselves suffering. We find ourselves discouraged.

Perhaps we find ourselves stressed. So if you're a Christian today and that's your situation, Peter wants to, the Spirit using this word, wants to remind you of your certain future when you're in Jesus.

[6 : 48] He wants to bring to our minds again, our relationship to God through the Lord Jesus, to give us reasons to persevere with hope and with joy because of the gospel.

And again, if you're not a Christian, but you feel that you're suffering and struggling, this is a chance again to see what hope Jesus offers and how that's greater than any other hope.

To hear a message of love that is bigger than any trial that we will go through, pandemic or anything else, so that you might taste for yourself God's grace in your own life.

So what family values can we expect to see in these verses? We see Peter talk about hope. We see Peter talk about obedience.

And we also see him talk about reverent fear. So those are the values, those are the priorities, and all the while motivated by the reality that heaven is our true home.

[7 : 56] So let's begin in verse 13, recognising that in God's family, we do hope. So the command is to build our hope on a solid foundation, which is, according to our text, future grace, grace that will come when Jesus is revealed.

And this is a reminder that the return of Jesus, the second coming of Jesus, when Jesus is revealed in his glory, that's key to our good news. Now, why is that so important? Well, for us as Christians, that means it's going to be the end of our suffering.

It's the end of facing opposition. It's the end of misery and sin and loss. It's going to be the entry into true life and love and joy that never ends.

And all of that is going to centre around the Lord Jesus. So he's really important to our future and to our message. So that's the command, build your hope on future grace.

And to help with the command, he gives us a picture of how to be obedient to that. And that's there at the beginning of verse 13, with minds that are alert and fully sober.

[9 : 17] To be alert, to be sober-minded. Imagine a soldier on high alert. We can perhaps think of the security personnel at the Capitol building for the inauguration.

You can be sure that there would be no dozing off, no dulled thinking because of drink or anything else. Conscious of the danger of attack, they were to be fully alert.

And Peter says that's to be true of us in our minds as Christians. So where's the danger likely to come from? Well, remember, this church is facing suffering and opposition.

And those two things can steal away our hope, can't they? And then there's the devil who knows us well and he wants to tempt us, perhaps by our circumstances, to lose hope.

There's that constant temptation to swap our ultimate hope in Jesus, which is eternal, for something else that is smaller and doesn't last, but we can see it and we can feel it. So Peter says we must be on our guard to guard our hope, to make sure our hope is always in the Lord Jesus.

[10:25] Now, how does the gospel help us to hope? Peter has shown us the wonder of all that God has done for us. He says, because of that, you obey. Because of the gospel, you can hope.

So how does the gospel help us hope? Well, verse 3, if you go back to verse 3, he's already told us that in God's mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope. Because Jesus has been raised in victory, our salvation is secure in him, we have a living hope.

And we have that promise of an eternal inheritance that cannot be taken from us. And of course, verse 13 says, our ultimate hope is Jesus Christ himself.

When he is revealed, our hope is from Jesus, it's in Jesus. And one day, as the people of God, our hope will become glorious reality. We will stand in the presence of Jesus, our saviour, and we can worship him and enjoy him for all eternity.

So in God's family, we do hope. Now let's think about this for ourselves. Two questions. One, what's the focus of your hope? Perhaps like many, we're discovering if our hope is focused on now, that there's a tendency towards sadness and bitterness because what's happening is our idols, our dreams are crashing around us.

[11:48] All those things that we placed our hope in, they seem to be disappearing. Perhaps in those losses, God is reminding you that we were always made for more, that we were made for him.

By contrast, if our hope is focused on Jesus, he is our treasure in heaven. That is something that is unshakable. That's a future-proof hope. So perhaps today is a time to reset, to readjust our lenses so our hope is in the Lord Jesus.

Another question, what's the foundation of our hope? It's very similar. And we need to recognise, and the Bible teaches us, if the foundation that we build our life on is anything other than Jesus, we will be disappointed.

We will come up empty. So whether our hope is in a vaccine, or in a politician, or in a particular relationship, none of those are big enough to hold all our hopes and dreams and longings, because they are temporary, and we are made for eternity.

Only Jesus can fully satisfy. In him there is the guarantee of the world we all want, a world free of pandemic and pain and suffering and loss and grief and injustice and racism, that we don't want those things.

[13:13] And Jesus guarantees when he returns that those things will be no more, and all that will be left for the people of God is love and joy. And so there is an invitation to us to build our life on him.

So Peter reminds the church, he reminds us that hope is vital to our Christian life to keep us going, and it's vital to our witness that people should see there's something different about us, because we're not consumed by now and all that's wrong.

We're consumed by hope in eternity and by our Lord Jesus. But that's not the only priority that he presents to us, the only family value. The next one we find in verses 14 to 16.

And it's this. In God's family, we do obedience. The command is there, as obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance, but just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

We are commanded to be obedient to our holy God. And Peter's readers are being told, look, don't conform. Don't go back to those old evil desires that you had while you were ignorant of God and of God's salvation and God's goodness.

[14:28] Don't go back to those days. Rather, be transformed by the holiness of God to want to live and to be like him. And that's a reminder that the people of God in every generation, those who love God, we are also to love God's law because we recognise the law of God is a reflection of God's perfect character.

Therefore, it comes to us as a good gift, showing us how we might live, setting safe limits for our lives, that life goes well when we live within those boundaries that our creator sets for us.

And Peter says to his readers, remember, you are called by a holy God, a God who is without sin, a God who is perfectly pure, a God who is in a different moral category to us.

And you've been called by a holy God to be holy, that we have been set apart so that we might live for him. So that's the command. And then again, he gives us a picture to help us to think about what that looks like.

And the picture in verse 14 is of children in a family. It's as obedient children that we are to do this. So think with me of adoption. What happens in the adoption process to a child?

[15:46] Well, a child, there's that legal transfer of status. So they are now in a new family. They have a new surname and that new surname also brings a new home and that home brings a new set of values and beliefs.

Now they have a new sign in their kitchen in this family, we do. And Peter says the same thing is true for a Christian. We have a new family. God has adopted us through the work of Jesus. And now we have this lifetime, a lifelong process of living out our new identity, which involves us learning what is God's will.

What does the Bible teach for how to live? And that we'd be growing in our obedience. And again, bear in mind how much he said about the gospel previously.

How does the gospel help us to obey? Well, first of all, it is a reminder to us that our obedience must be fuelled and empowered by the grace of God, not by our own efforts.

[16:57] We can go right back to the beginning of the letter. Peter in verse one calls them elect exiles, those who've been chosen. And then in verse two, we're reminded that we're saved by the Trinity, chosen by the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, sprinkled by the blood of Jesus, all of those gracious acts of God in order to be obedient to Jesus Christ, saved by grace for obedience.

Not the case that we're saved by grace and then the rest of our life, we have to roll up our own sleeves and work really hard to try and please God. No, there's grace from God to save us and to help us in our day-to-day obedience.

So the gospel promises grace to help us to obey. But also at the heart of the gospel, who do we have? We have Jesus. And who is Jesus? Jesus is the holy God.

So Jesus, therefore, is for us the perfect model of what a holy life looks like. So you might think instinctively holiness, it seems dull perhaps, sounds outdated, sounds like for another generation, until we recognise Jesus was holy.

And we would never surely call Jesus like dull and unattractive. Rather, everybody was attracted to Jesus, barring the sort of legalistic people who thought they were already right with God.

[18:25] People throughout history attracted to Jesus. His is the pattern of what a beautiful and good life looks like. So he is the model of holiness for us to follow.

And also he is the one who dies to make sinners holy. So he is our model, but he's also the foundation for our holiness. So in thinking then about obedience in our own lives, a couple of things to say.

First of all, if you're not a Christian, it's really of critical importance that we understand the order that the Bible teaches, that we are saved by God's grace and only then are we able to obey.

Christianity is unique in this. It is a rescue religion. It's a religion rooted in God's grace. It doesn't say be a good person.

And if you're good enough, God will accept you. No, it says you're a sinner. We're all sinners. And God, by his love and his grace, rescues sinners. And if we get that order wrong, you will find yourself on an exhausting treadmill.

[19:40] I want to know God. I want to be close to God. I need to keep doing and doing and doing. And you're working, but you're getting nowhere. Oh, it's like to use another one. It's like you're climbing a ladder.

I want to reach up to God. And so I'm going to do all kinds of good and religious things. But it's like you're leaning on a ladder, but the ladder is not leaning on a wall. And so eventually you will crash. Because by ourselves, we can never be good enough for God. So it's so important for us to realise that. So we would trust in the only one who is perfect. We trust in Jesus to be our saviour.

But then if we're Christians, to think about our own obedience, let me borrow from the title of a Kevin DeYoung book, which we're going to study as some of our younger guys in Bucleu, to ask the question, is there a hole in our holiness?

DeYoung in his book argues that there is a danger in the modern church of being light on sin, that we want to blend in rather than stand out.

[20:44] And so we don't talk about obedience. And there is a danger in that. There's a danger of presuming on God's grace and of forgetting that the pattern has always been saved by grace in order to obey.

We've been called to put on the family likeness. We've been called to holiness. And so we need to examine ourselves and to ask that God, by his grace, would encourage us towards willing and glad obedience.

And before we move on, to see for all of us that our hope lies in Jesus. Think with me for a moment of the Grand Canyon.

This is the biggest chasm or gulf, I guess, that we can think of easily. Whoever we are, we've probably heard of the Grand Canyon. And imagine that as a picture of the huge gulf that there is between the perfectly holy God and us as sinful people.

Now, if we want to get to God, there is no way that we can jump that gap. There's no way by our effort we're getting there. The gospel, the good news at the heart of the Bible is that God, through Jesus, has bridged that gap.

[21 : 56] Jesus has become one of us, lived the perfect life we couldn't. He has then died on the cross for sin so that through faith in him, we have access to God.

We are brought into the family of God. And so for each of us, we need our trust to be in our perfectly obedient, sacrificial saviour.

And that as we are saved by him, we would turn from our sin and day by day seek with his help to be walking in obedience.

Now, there's one last priority, one last family value. Perhaps it's a surprising one. Verse 17, in God's family, we do reverent fear.

Since you call on a father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. Christians are commanded to fear God.

[23 : 01] The fear of the Lord, we're told, is the beginning of wisdom. What does that mean? What does that not mean? And how can our fear, having a right fear, how can that fuel our obedience? Michael Reeves, a theologian, has written a new book on the fear of the Lord.

And to borrow from that, by way of definition, he says something along these lines, that the fear of the Lord, the fear of God, is a positive wondering, a sense of amazement, at who God is in all of his perfections.

That's the fear that's the beginning of wisdom. It's not, there's a wrong way to fear, and there's a fear that's dread. Think of Adam and Eve in the garden, they sinned, and so they're hiding from God, they fear God as judge.

That's not the fear that's in mind here. The fear that's in mind here is an awe, a sense of wonder at God's goodness. It's like we read in Deuteronomy 6, the people of God are called at one and the same time to fear God and to love God.

To recognise his goodness is to have a sense of wonder, but also a sense of love and gratitude at the same time. So Peter's message to a suffering church is that they will stand firm and live with hope and joy as they have a high view of the glory of God, as they seek to honour him above all.

[24 : 29] The picture of obedience is the idea of living out our time as foreigners. It's the exile theme again. To live with a distinct set of values and beliefs and practices that mark out a person as different, that in a sense create a barrier.

And those values don't shift. For a Christian, those values come from God, come from heaven being our home and we want to make him number one in our life. Perhaps, maybe some of us, maybe we have this by personal experience, but for me, it might be helpful to think of Scottish communities in Canada or Australia who, despite having been away from their homeland for generations, still keep up the Gaelic language, still have Highland Games and still celebrate Scottish culture because their heart is fixed on home.

For Christians, our heart should be fixed on heaven where Jesus is and we should then live with the culture of heaven. Surrounded by different beliefs and values, we are, the Church of Peter's Day was, with a world trying to squeeze us into its moulds, the Roman Empire was doing that just as much as secular culture is doing that to us today.

We are called to stand firm, recognising our home, our passport, our identity is in heaven. Two motivations are provided to help us.

The first, as we already mentioned, was that of fear. Peter reminds them, God is your Father and your Judge. There is, in our relationship with God, both intimacy and awe.

[26 : 13] That sense that, I want to please my Father, I want to honour Him, I want to recognise I am accountable to God, I stand under His authority and that He will judge all of us on the basis of our works and so we want to live to honour Him.

Now the Gospel says, in Christ, if we're trusting in Jesus, our verdict is secure. We can have a sense of fear as wonder when we think about the Judgment Day because we know Jesus obeyed the law on our behalf, Jesus satisfied the justice of God at the cross on our behalf and so we know that our verdict is that we will receive eternal life as a gift from God.

But fear is still that motivation. I don't want to despise the work of Jesus. I don't want to dishonour my Father by failing to live for Him and failing to represent Him.

But there's a second motivation, there's fear, but there's also love. Love because God is our Redeemer. All we have, all we are as Christians, we owe to our God.

He has sent Jesus to redeem us at the cost of His own blood. The people in Peter's day, they hear redemption language, they might think of a slave and the price paid to release them or a prisoner of war and the price paid to release them or Old Testament Israel and the Passover lamb, that sacrifice that ultimately that saw them released to become the people of God.

[27 : 52] Peter is saying, remember, God in His love gave His Son as a sacrifice. God raised and glorified Jesus for you is the message that Peter brings to the church.

And when we think about that, in light of the Father's love in sending Jesus, in light of Jesus' love in becoming our Redeemer, how could we not love and honour God above all?

How can the values of the world dominate rather than loving and honouring God? We need to ask ourselves, do we have a sense of wonder at God's perfections, at the gospel?

This is how, as a church, we will stand out and we will stand firm in our hope. So to sum this all up, Peter's message, in a sense, is this, let home shape your hope and your holiness.

Be so sure of your identity in Christ and your future in heaven that you live as people who hope in the Lord Jesus and who want to be holy and obedient to the Lord Jesus.

[29 : 10] I was listening to a short message from Rico Tice who's based down in All Souls in London. He organised the Christianity Explored courses and he said something like this.

He said, before the pandemic, London had its back to our church but now it is looking to our church for answers and hope.

What have we got as the Christian church? Peter says, remember you have a living hope, a hope that will be fully realised when the risen and glorified Jesus returns.

So all our hope is not in the here and the now so we live with meaning and purpose and value that goes beyond whatever's going on right now and we have a true fear, the right fear that eclipses all other fears because we have that sense of fear as wonder of who God is and what God has done for us in Jesus and that's a message of hope to an anxious, hurting, stressed out and confused world that to know and enjoy the glory of God, the goodness of God, the gift of God in sending Jesus to be the saviour of the world in knowing that there is deep security, there is deep joy, there is deep peace that no circumstance can remove.

It gives us joy to live as God's children in the world, to live as hopeful, obedient children honouring our Father who has done so much for us in giving us Jesus.

[30 : 56] Those are the family priorities that Peter reminds us of. From the world in all as little residents who have been out of reuse with our number of sealed and PLUS indad through