

Focus On Grace

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[0:00] 1 Peter 1, verse 13 is where we pick up. 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.

That's a short one. Maybe we can read it together. Let's read it aloud together. 1 Peter 1, verse 13. Ready, begin. 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. Amen.

You know, one of the most frustrating things about parenting, now that we have already reflected on new parenthood, one of the most frustrating things about parenting is that there comes a day when because I said so loses all of its effectiveness.

And that's a real frustration when that day actually rolls around. You know, when our kids are young, it works quite well. Our authority over them is such that, not in every situation, but in enough situations, you can give them an instruction, and when they turn and say, well, why must I do that? And you can say, well, because I'm your father, and I said that you have to do that.

When they're young, that tends to work, or at least in some cases that works. Now, that's not your experience. I'm sorry. It's worked for me on a number of occasions. But now I have a teenager, and as they get older, it just doesn't work anymore, does it?

[1:37] There comes a time in their lives where they just feel like they need to have explanations for their instructions. The nerve that they would need something like that, right? And yet it's true, as they get older, and it's good parenting to, as our kids get older, to take what would be our instructions and actually pair them with helpful and clear and well-reasoned explanation so that we're not just raising up robots just to do whatever it is that we say.

We're actually raising up human beings that will learn why we do certain things and why we believe certain things and why we would avoid other things. It's helpful. It's good parenting to do that.

Another way to say it, maybe using different language, is that the right parental imperatives, those things that we instruct, must flow out of right indicatives, which are those things that we believe. Imperatives being the things that we command, indicatives being those things that we believe. And if our instructions are not flowing out of convictions, then they're probably not going to be that helpful to our children as they grow.

Now, where do we get this example? We get it supremely from our Heavenly Father, don't we? Isn't He the perfect example of parenting?

[3:09] In the Scriptures, His imperatives always flow out of His indicatives. What He commands is always rooted in who He is and what He has done for us in providing salvation.

In the opening section of 1 Peter that we've spent the last several weeks in, in verses 1 to 12, all we have there are indicatives. They're just statements of gospel truth.

And as we've approached verses 3 to 12 in particular, we've seen that they're taking the shape together of a call to worship. But grammatically speaking, there are no actual imperatives in verses 3 to 12.

There are no direct and explicit commands there. It's all indicatives. So that Peter opens the letter with these struggling Christians across Asia, not by telling them what to do, but rehearsing the glory of God's salvation, of speaking of their eternal inheritance that is theirs in Christ, that belongs to them because the Father has caused them to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He's rehearsed with them that they have waiting ahead of them a future inheritance that is imperishable and undefiled and unfading and that God the Father is keeping that inheritance for His children safe in heaven.

[4 : 41] And as He's doing that, He's keeping them safe on earth, not in the sense of physical safety mostly or all the time, but in the sense of He is guarding us through faith so that while He's keeping our inheritance, He's keeping us for it.

And this brings about this tremendous joy that's inexpressible and it's full of glory. And it is something we can rejoice in as a privilege to live at a time of gospel fulfillment, unlike the prophets who prophesied serving us and the angels who delivered those messages.

That's everything in 3 to 12, isn't it? It's just all indicative. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Look at what He has done for us. Remember what He has done and bless His name.

It's all indicative. It's all gospel truth. It isn't until we get to verse 13 that Peter issues an imperative. And what he's doing is he's beginning to lay the foundation for the practical instructions that will unfold throughout the letter.

He's not getting specific yet. He's laying a foundation. He's speaking about obedience and holiness in a general sense here. And he's very careful.

[5 : 59] Very careful to ensure that these commands that he's now moving to are rooted in the gospel realities of his opening address in verses 3 to 12.

That's why we get to the very first word of verse 13 and we find that it's a significant word for us, isn't it? Therefore, it's important. It's linking the two sections for us grammatically so that the call to worship in verses 3 to 12 are here beginning to transition to what we would say is a call to holiness in verses 13 to 21.

And then he's going to transition again in verse 22. He's going to take us through the beginning of chapter 2 and it's going to be a call to live appropriately as the community of God's people in the local church on earth.

But before he gets there, he gets to this section on holiness. Now here's the main idea of this section, not just the verse, but this section. The main idea is that our calling in Christ that secures our future inheritance should have a dramatic effect on the way we live now.

He doesn't start with the imperatives. It's important. We can't get that in reverse. If we get that into reverse, we're going to fall into a kind of moralism, anti-gospel, legalism.

[7 : 25] We don't want to do that. And Peter helps us here. He says, here's the gospel. Here's who you are in Christ. That should affect you now, not just in the future, but today.

That's the main idea here. Thriving in exile, it requires that. Christians live distinctly in the world, both in how we think and in how we behave.

And with these gospel indicatives in mind, Peter begins to instruct us on thriving in exile through the active pursuit of holiness.

Holiness. Now, I want to share with you Peter's first imperative here in verse 13, which, of course, is the first in a series of progressive instructions, each one flowing out of the other.

It's not just that they're laying side by side. He starts here for a reason. This one will flow into the next one, and that one will flow into the final one. Today, I just want to focus on this first one.

[8 : 30] Here's the first thing I'd like to point out to you as an imperative. Set your hope fully on grace. Set your hope fully on grace.

Now, look again at the verse, but look at the second half. The explicit imperative comes there. It's not in the beginning of the verse. It's in the second half of the verse where he says, Set your hope fully on the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

First imperative of the letter. Set your hope fully on grace. So that after rehearsing the wonders of our future salvation, Peter is now commanding and instructing that to thrive in exile, we're going to need to set our hope entirely on that future.

And notice what he refers to it as here. He doesn't call it salvation. And he's not using the language of inheritance anymore. What does he call it? Grace.

Set your hope fully on grace. Now, don't let that term too quickly be dismissed out of your mind. The Bible always describes salvation as an act of divine grace.

[9 : 52] Always. What is grace? It's God's unmerited favor toward undeserving sinners like you and me.

In other words, salvation, this future inheritance, it's not something that you earn through doing good. It's not something you earn through maintaining a measure of morality in comparison to others who would live less moral lives.

It's not something that you earn through a commitment to religious activities. Salvation entirely from beginning to end is a gracious gift from God that can only be received through faith and repentance in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It's all of grace all the time. And Peter says we are to set our hope on this favor, on this grace, on this salvation that will be revealed to us in its fullness in the end.

Let me just remind you here. The work for salvation is done. It's already done.

[11:08] How many people do you know in a form of cultural Christianity in a place like we live, maybe even in secularism to some extent, they're really struggling and striving through life, hoping that they're just going to get it right enough so that they can make it.

If they can just do enough work, if they can just get it just right, that God will look at them and say, well, you did good enough. You did your best.

You tried your hardest. And if only they would just realize that the work is actually done. It's not something that you do. It's something that Christ has done.

It is finished. He fulfilled the law that we've broken. He lived the life we were meant to live. He died the death we deserve to die, taking on the wrath of the Father against sinful man.

And now he says, come. Just come receive it. Receive it by faith. Just trust in my work. Stop trusting in your work and whatever shape that takes.

[12:13] Trust in my work. It's all grace. Do you trust him? Do you trust him wholly, fully?

If you don't, you're not going to make it. There will never be someone who stands before the Lord at the end of this life and God says, you did good enough.

The song, we sang it last Sunday. It's my favorite hymn. Because the sinless Savior died. My sinful soul is counted free. For God, the just one, is satisfied to look at him and pardon me.

No one will stand before the Lord and him say, you did good. I'll let you in. No, only those who come through Christ will make it.

Do you trust him? It's all of grace. Well, while salvation is certainly received and secured for all who trust in Jesus, the fullness of that salvation, we understand, is still ahead of us.

[13:23] When Peter refers to salvation so far in this letter, he's not speaking of it in the past tense, referring to our conversion necessarily, some hints of that, but not entirely.

He's not thinking present tense in terms of our sanctification entirely. He's going to say some of that. But up to this point, his thoughts on salvation is future. The glorification that will come at the return of Christ.

And that's what he's doing again here. It's this future sense of salvation, our future inheritance that Peter still has in mind. This grace is something he says will be brought to us.

It's certain. It's secure. It will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. We're familiar with this phrase now. This is the third time, just in these first 13 verses, that Peter has specifically called our attention to Christ's return.

Look at verse 5. Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. What's he talking about?

[14:31] Christ's return. The end. Future salvation. Look at verse 7. So that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes though it tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

These patterns in the scriptures, these are important. What's Peter doing? He's keeping our mind focused on what? Future salvation. The certainty of that future.

And his objective is clear. In order to thrive in this life of exile, we must set our hope fully on Christ's return. On the grace of salvation that will be brought to us when Jesus comes back.

For it's at that time that we will receive the blessings of eternal life in their fullness. All of those things he described in verse 4, imperishable, undefiled, unfading, will be ours.

Things that are inexpressible and incomprehensible, will be ours. Then, when he returns. And it's now that we can begin to understand that this hope language is going to become a significant theme in this letter, isn't it?

[15:52] Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you when Christ returns.

Remember, biblical hope, it's not a wish.

It's not a wish. It's the confident expectation that God will fulfill his promises. And for us, as we're looking at the scriptures as a whole and we're seeing the person of Christ, hope, biblical hope, is the confident expectation and trust that Christ is the fulfillment of those promises.

Which is what is expressed in saving faith, isn't it? Hope and faith working together. We say, yes, God will fulfill his promises.

Then we say, yes, God has fulfilled his promises. All of them in Christ. And we believe it. We know it. It's certain. That's biblical hope.

It's hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ that God awakens us to trust in when he causes us to be born again. That's verse 3, isn't it? According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again.

[17:02] To what? To a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. But set your eyes also on verse 21. Or verse 20.

We see it twice. Just in the first chapter without our current verse. We see it. What's he talking about? What's he saying? This hope, this hope entirely, biblical hope, is always grounded in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Always. We are awakened by God to a hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He raises Christ from the dead, verse 20, verse 21, so that we might hope in him, the confident expectation of the fulfillment of his promises.

All fulfilled in the person and work of his son, Jesus Christ. He's given us, particularly in his death and resurrection. This is our hope. It's not a wish.

It's a certainty. Now, let's put ourselves in the shoes of Peter's first audience. They're struggling. He's described their condition as an exilic state, one that extends to all of God's people in this life.

[18:29] We're pilgrims. We're strangers. We belong to a different country. We serve a different king. And yet, right now, we're here. And life's a struggle.

And sometimes it's a struggle specifically because we belong to him. And we start getting distracted real quick. And the temptation is always to set our hope on something else.

Well, if we could just get the right people in office, things will finally turn around. If I could just save enough money, things will be hopeful for me and my future and my family.

If I could just have the right relationships, I just get the right career path. If I just get as far as I can. And if my kids will just succeed, then there's hope.

And there's a lot of Christians that are struggling in exile because they're not setting all of their hope fully on the grace of God. It's there. It's certainly there in their conversion.

[19:40] Do they get distracted? Biblical hope is grounded through and through in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We're not looking at this life.

We're looking at the next one, in other words. So Peter's command in verse 13 is that we maintain such a focused hope on grace. That our hopefulness becomes visible to all who observe our lives. Later in the letter, Peter's going to give us the outworking of this in a practical way. Just set your eyes on it in chapter 3 and verse 15. Let's look at 14.

Even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled. Context? Hardship. Suffering. Struggle. Verse 15.

When that happens, in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the what? Hope.

[20:47] That's in you. Hope that's in you. What is Peter saying? When Christians set their hope fully on the grace of Jesus that will be certainly fulfilled in them at Christ's return, they will thrive in such a way that people around them cannot possibly ignore it.

But when your hope is fully set on grace, it will show itself in your life. Not because you're always forcing it on somebody, but because you can't hide it from anybody.

It's visible. It's there. And it doesn't make sense. So that that unbelieving family member, that unbelieving friend, or maybe the persecutor himself sees the struggle and the hope that you have in that struggle and just can't figure it out and says, Why are you so hopeful?

You should have no hope. And we must be prepared, according to Peter, to answer one word. Jesus. Jesus is my hope.

He alone is my hope. I'm not living for this life. I'm looking at a different life that's to come. My Savior will return. And that's where my hope comes from.

[22:07] Jesus is my hope. David Helm is so helpful here. He writes, If any of us is to do more than simply outlast life's exilic weight, if we are to move beyond melancholy endurance and into positive engagement with the world, let alone enjoyment of it, we must become a people who know what it is to comprehend a decided hope in life's eternal future.

That's a lot of words. What's he saying? He's saying, You don't have to just survive this. And if you're going to thrive in it, you're going to have to be a person who acknowledges and focuses on a decided hope in what is to come, not in what is.

So what's the imperative here? Well, the explicit one in the verse, the actual grammatical imperative is, Set your hope fully on grace.

Set your hope fully on grace. But there's a second part, though, that we can't ignore. We can't skip over it. Set your mind clearly on hope.

Set your mind clearly on hope. Now, the difficulty of this imperative is that it seems like Peter is commanding us to feel a particular way.

[23 : 41] But how can someone command your emotion? How can they expect you to control how you feel all the time?

Well, the answer is in the first line. Peter tells us how to set our hope on grace. What does he say? Preparing your minds for action, being sober-minded.

Preparing your minds for action, being sober-minded. We might read the verse this way to help us get a sense of it. Therefore, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ by preparing your mind for action and being sober-minded.

In other words, this imperative is really about right thinking, not right feeling. Right thinking, not right feeling.

Let's look at these two phrases here. Peter, he's making a single point about focusing our minds on Christ, but he uses two word pictures that might be easy to miss, but two word pictures that help us understand and grasp his meaning.

[24 : 58] This first phrase, preparing your minds for action. If you have one of the older translations, like a King James with you today, it doesn't read that way. It reads this. Gird up the loins of your mind. Gird up the loins of your mind.

That's the literal translation of it. That's weird. What in the world does that mean? It's a word picture, isn't it? It's a word picture. You put yourself in Peter's shoes or Peter's robes.

First century, if he's got to run somewhere, if he's got to do some kind of strenuous activity, what's he got to do? He's got to gird up his loins. He's got to hike up his robe. He's got to tie it off at his waist.

Otherwise, it's going to be too long. He's going to be tripping over himself to try to do things. That's the word picture. And what's he saying here? He's saying that as Christians who are in exile, who are strenuously striving in this time of exile, what we need to do is gird up the loins of our mind.

We need to remove the things that are distracting us from seeing Christ and seeing our future so that we can prepare ourselves for action, intentional thinking and focus on grace.

[26 : 10] And then he uses this second image. The second image, being sober-minded, of course, is setting Christian thinking in contrast with the mind of a drunk.

Rather than with a clouded mind, Christians are to live sober-mindedly in this life. Clear thought, focused thought, a present mind, controlled thinking.

Tom Schreiner says there's a way of living that becomes dull to the reality of God that is anesthetized by the attractions of this world.

And when people are lulled into such drowsiness, they lose sight of Christ's future revelation and concentrate only on fulfilling their earthly desires.

That's what Peter means to say. The truth is, some of us, our robes are just too long. Robes are just too long.

[27 : 22] We're getting so distracted by the cares and concerns of this life. We're tripping all over the place. We're trying to live like a good Christian. We're trying to be faithful to the Lord. We're tripping all over the place.

We're falling again and again and again, either in sin of behavior, or maybe it's sin of the mind, or maybe it's just distracting, whatever it is. Robes are just too long. We just need to clear out the junk. Have a disciplined mind, a disciplined focus. Because rather than disciplining our minds on God's truth and on the glories of the gospel, we're drunk on trials.

We're drunk on temptations. We're drunk in laziness toward Bible intake. And all of these things cloud our thoughts that keep us from setting our hope fully on Jesus' return.

And what we really need to do to thrive is get our minds right, get our thinking right. Now, it's not only Peter that says this. Hear Paul's words from Colossians 3.

[28 : 26] If you then have been raised with Christ, if God has caused you to be born again to this living hope, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. Why, Paul? For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

That's a blessing. And when Christ, who is your life, he says, appears, when he comes back, then you will appear with him in glory.

What's Paul doing there? He's doing the same thing Peter's doing here. He's saying, focus on what's to come. Jesus is coming back. And if you're in Christ, he's gonna transform you.

Salvation will finally come. Think on that. Don't set your mind on earthly things. Set your mind on him. Set your mind on what is to come. And if we turn to Philippians, we find Paul gives us a warning on this, along with a blessing.

[29 : 40] Philippians 3, 18. Paul says, What's the outworking of that?

What's the implications of that? If you don't get your mind right, the direction you're headed is in the direction of an apostate becoming an enemy of Christ, an enemy of the cross, with your mind focused entirely on earthly things.

But then he continues with the blessing. And he essentially says, I think better things of you, Philippians. He says, But our citizenship is in heaven. It's in what's to come.

And from it, what are we doing? We await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who when he comes will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

What's Paul saying? You got to get your mind right. Set your hope on grace fully and set your mind on that hope.

[31 : 10] Think on it. Dwell on it. Meditate on it. Live your life through it. But what's Peter saying with this first imperative? He's saying that to thrive in exile, we got to get our focus right.

We got to avoid getting overwhelmed by our circumstances and being distracted by the allure of sin and instead set our gaze on Jesus.

That was the language of one of those songs we sang at the beginning of the service. When my heart gazes on Calvary and all of his mercies displayed, oh, that my Savior would die for me, I sing out with infinite praise how faithful the Father above.

We sing. That's what Peter's saying. Jesus is going to bring this grace to us when he returns so that we've got to set our minds on hope and our hope on grace.

And who better to teach us this than Peter? There's all kinds of examples in the Gospels where we read about Jesus teaching Peter this lesson.

[32 : 23] Perhaps none of them are as instructive as what we find in Matthew 14. It's the only place you find it in the Gospels.

You'll remember after the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus sent his disciples on across the Lake of Galilee. He went up on the mountain to pray. And as they're out on the sea, they're struggling against a massive storm.

They're not making any progress. Jesus comes walking on the water in the middle of the night.

They all freak out a little bit, right? But eventually, they discover this is actually Jesus.

This is an amazing thing that he's doing. Only Matthew tells us how Peter responds to that moment.

Do you remember what he says? Lord, if it's you, call me to you.

And Jesus says, okay, Peter, come on. Peter, with all of the faith in the world, gets out of that boat.

And with his eyes fixed on Jesus, he starts walking on that water.

[33 : 32] As soon as he starts walking on that water, the closer and closer he gets to Jesus, the greater the storm begins to blow around him. Caught in the middle of that storm, he gets distracted by it.

And in great fear, he turns away to examine the storm. His focus changes. And what happens? He immediately begins to drown. Now, the blessing of the story is that as he's drowning, Lord, save me, he says.

And of course, before he even can say it, Jesus is reaching down to pull him. Jesus is not going to lose any of his own. If God has caused you to be born again, that's not changing.

But you might get to a point in your life where you're so distracted by the storm around you that it feels like you're drowning. Jesus pulls him up. And as he pulls him up, Matthew says that he rebukes Peter.

And he says, oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt? Why did you doubt? Now, doubt in that situation is not a lack of faith.

[34 : 39] Let's not forget, Peter's the only one to step out of that boat. What a weird thing to do anyways. Peter, of course, he loved the Lord.

He's like us. He wanted to be faithful. He wanted to please the Lord, but he had weak moments, didn't he? Jesus isn't accusing Peter of not trusting him at all.

He's not accusing Peter of lacking faith completely. He's just saying, in that moment, you doubted. You had a weak faith in that moment.

Who better, after having an experience like that, to teach us this lesson on faith? Jesus's point was to confront Peter for letting the storm take his eyes off the Savior.

And here, writing to struggling Christians both in the first century and to us in the 21st century, that same Peter reminds us that to thrive in this life is going to require that we not let the storm take our eyes off the Savior.

[35 : 51] rather, we're to discipline our minds so that our hope is set fully on the grace that Jesus will bring us at his return.

for a second time,