

# **ELECT EXILES**

Part 2: “Hope Inspired Holiness”

1 Peter 1:13-21

Sunday, May 10, 2020 (Mother’s Day & Easter Season)

By David A. Ritchie

## **Scripture Reading**

*“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. 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.” 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” (1 Peter 1:13–21, ESV).*

## **Introduction – What should the word “apocalypse” mean to us?**

Growing up, I remember hearing a lot of sermons about the “apocalypse.” I remember hearing about the potential identity of the antichrist, the battle of Armageddon, the seven years of tribulation, and the four horsemen of the book of Revelation. I remember hearing about how the *then*-current news events – like the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the Oslo Peace Accords, the war in the Middle East, and the coat of arms for Prince Charles of Wales – all pointed to the impending doom of the late, great planet earth. I don’t remember all of the details of these sermons, but I do remember how they made me feel – and, honestly, they made me feel *terrified*. The word “*apocalypse*” was a scary word to me.

As I grew older, I became less anxious and more embarrassed by sermons about the “apocalypse.” I would roll my eyes anytime I heard a preacher confidently present a theory for the identity of the anti-Christ or new date for the end of the world. The word “apocalypse” became a ridiculous word to me.

So, on the one hand, I have experienced *end-times fear*, and on the other hand, I have known *end-times cynicism* as well. And these, in general, are the two responses that we often see from Christians concerning the end of human history.

Yet, I think neither of these responses are *anything close* to biblical. Now there are a lot of differing opinions on what the Bible has to say about when and how human history will end. I believe that some of those opinions are much better than others. But whatever you think about the end-times, all Christians are called to believe these central truths of the gospel: *that Christ has died, that Christ is risen, and that Christ will come again.*

This is why, when Peter uses the term “*apocalypse*” (ἀποκαλύψει) in verse 13 of chapter 1, it is not a scary or ridiculous word. It is a word meant to convey *hope*. He *commands* Christians, “...set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation (apokalypsei) of Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 1:13b).

The Apostle Peter is writing to a group of Christians in Asia Minor, in what is today called Turkey. These Christians are beginning to suffer for believing in Jesus and following him. They are being mocked, excluded, and mistrusted by the people of majority culture around them. Even Peter himself is writing from the city of Rome, where he will soon be executed by Emperor Nero for being a Christian.

Nevertheless, Peter is saying that if this gospel is indeed true, *Christians should neither be fearful nor cynical.* The rightful king of the universe is on the move, and he is returning soon! In response to this truth, Christians should be a people of a profound, unflinching, overflowing hope. This hope is to be *full* and not half-hearted. This hope is to contain a joyful expectation of the grace of God that will be unveiled when Christ returns. Even more, today I want to show you how this *Christian hope is the key Christian holiness.*<sup>1</sup>

Now, the word “holiness” is often a misunderstood term. Some people think it means trying really hard to modify your behavior so that you don’t do bad things anymore. Sadly, some people think it means being judgmental toward other people by believing they are better than anyone else. But according to the Bible, the word holiness simply means “*being set-apart and different.*”

Our God is a holy God. He is transcendent and glorious and radiant in his perfection. And God’s people are called to bear witness to God’s holiness in the way we live. As our text says, “...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’” (1 Peter 1:15–16, ESV).<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> “...Jesus’ ethic was [...] thoroughly eschatological – an ethic bound up with his proclamation of the end of history. Ethics is a function of the *telos*, the end. It makes all the difference in the how one regards the end of the world, ‘end’ not so much in the sense of its final breath, but “end” in the sense of the purpose, the goal, the result.” Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon. *Resident Aliens: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for a People Who Know Something is Wrong.* (Nashville: Abington: 1989), 61-62.

<sup>2</sup> In this passage Peter is quoting Leviticus 11:44, “‘For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground’” (Leviticus 11:44, ESV).

Simply said, God desires for his people to look and live and sound completely different from the surrounding world. This difference derives from the power of Christian hope. *Hope inspires holiness.*

### **Exposition – A holy life that flows from hope**

As we dig into today's Scripture reading, we will see how hope inspires holiness in two major ways: **1.) Hope Inspires Holy Thinking, and 2.) Hope Inspires Holy Motivations.**

#### **1.) Hope Inspires Holy Thinking.**

Peter says, **"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" (1 Pt. 1:13).**

Notice that verse 13 begins with the word *"Therefore"* (Διὸ). This word is crucial to understanding the rest of the sentence because Peter wants us as his readers to first recognize that holiness comes from an awestruck awareness of what Jesus Christ has accomplished by his life, death, and resurrection.

In the verses prior to our passage today, we see that Jesus has won for his people a new, "born-again" (ἀναγεννήσας) life (1:3). He has earned for his people an inheritance that will not fade or be defiled but will last into eternity (1:4). Because of Jesus, Christians can have an overpowering joy that outshines our greatest suffering (1:7). This gospel is so amazing that the angels of heaven are in awe of it (1:12).

But Christian holiness is not something we do to earn this gospel of grace. Rather, as Dr. Edmund Clowney writes, **"Christian living always begins with a 'therefore.'"**<sup>3</sup> *What we do concerning our holiness (1:13-21) flows from believing and trusting in what Christ has already done (1:3-12).*

So how should the gospel change our thinking? Well, Peter thinks it should cause us to prepare our minds for action. Now, the literal translation for "preparing your mind for action" is "girding up the loins of your mind." That's admittedly a bit of an odd statement. But what does it mean?

In ancient times (show image [How to Gird Up Your Loins from the Art of Manliness](#)), most men wore long robes or tunics instead of pants. Robes are naturally difficult to run or work in. So, whenever a man got ready to go on a run somewhere, do heavy labor, or prepare for battle, that meant that man needed to wrap up the loose parts of his robes around his thighs so that he wouldn't trip. This was called "girding up your loins."

---

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Clowney. *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross.* The Bible Speaks Today commentary series. Ed. John R. W. Stott. (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1988), 61.

In expectation of the final revealing of Jesus, Peter wants his readers to adopt a posture of *mental readiness*. He wants your mind to put on its gym shorts and running shoes. The opposite of being prepared for action of this would be a sense of mental laziness.

Now, we are living in an extremely odd time. Many people, for the first time, have been required to work from home in their pajamas. And while the relaxed environment of working from home has certain benefits, there are certain also challenges. I've done a lot of Zoom calls during which I have had to stop the video while I go and admonish one of my sons for an act of violence committed against another. The focused productivity that comes from undistracted deep-work is more difficult to achieve. As one pastor I talked to recently described the experience, every day feels like a working Saturday, wherein the lines between work and rest, home and office, task and distraction are blurred.

This season has reminded me that even when long-term plans are uncertain, and the world feels like chaos, it is all the more important to practice intentionality in our lives. It is important to stay focused, to fight for mental readiness, to wake up, get ready, make a plan for the day, and get to work.

The Apostle Peter wants the same to be true for the people of God in regard to our spiritual life. He wants us to be sharp and ready for action. He wants us to keep the hope of the gospel at the fore-front of our conscious life and thought.

So, some important questions that this passage of Scripture should encourage you to ask are, "What causes your mind to be ready for action? What causes your thought-life to be calibrated with eternity in view?"

For me, I have found this is one of the many reasons I need to read Scripture and pray every day in the morning. I need spiritual habits that remind me that I am living for something bigger than my daily task list, or even the American dream. By reading the word of God, I am reminded of the true story of the universe in which my life is a part. By praying, I have a chance to commune with the Spirit of God, so that what matters most to him can matter most to me. Ask yourself: what are your habits, and how do they help or hurt your thought-life? What are your habits training your heart to desire?

And not all habits are created equal. In fact, some of our habits tend to take us away from an eternal perspective. This why Peter says that we are to be "sober-minded." With this phrase, Peter is not only forbidding actual, physical drunkenness but also "letting the mind wander into any kind of mental intoxication."<sup>4</sup> This refers to any type of mental sedation and escapism. So many in our culture try to numb their realities with things like alcohol, drugs, porn, Netflix or video game binges, or even just scrolling for endless hours on Pinterest or Instagram.

However, Peter offers a better way. He charges Christians to be fully awakened to the reality of God. By setting our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the

---

<sup>4</sup> Wayne A Grudem. *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Vol. 17). Ed. Leon Morris. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1988), 81.

revelation of Jesus, Christians are to discipline their minds in such a way that our awareness of God is greater than our awareness of anything else. We are to reorient our thoughts, lives, and expectations toward the agenda of God.

This is how hope inspires holy thinking.

## **2.) Hope Inspires Holy Motivations.**

According to Peter, the character of God is the ultimate motivation for personal holiness. God is holy; therefore, we are to be holy (1:15-16). God is the powerful, impartial judge; therefore, we are to conduct our lives with a sense of holy “fear” (φόβος). Christians are to acknowledge God as the sovereign Lord over our lives, and we are to live in an awestruck wonder of his power and glory that the Bible often calls the “fear of the Lord.”

But interestingly, Peter also challenges us to walk in holiness “*as obedient children*” (1:14). We are to call on God as our “Father” (πατήρ) (1:17). When we approach God as a child approaches a good Father, it is a motivational game-changer.

For my first real job, I sold cellphones for what was then called Cingular Wireless. On my first day of training, my co-worker showed me the ropes of the job, like how to retrieve inventory and write up a contract. But he did more than that. He went out of his way to show me how to pretend to be busy when one of our many managers came in to check on us. He was the type of guy who wanted to do the least amount of work possible.

So, when one of our managers came in on my first day, my coworker hurried to look busy and told me to do the same. But I ignored his advice, and instead, I walked up to the manager, shook his hand, and gave him a big hug — *because he was my dad*.

And as it happened, I ended up doing a much better job at selling phones than the other guy. The other guy was motivated out of fear and wanted to do the minimum to keep his job. And I certainly wanted to earn money with this job, but a deeper motivation to excel came from my love for my dad. Imagine if this is how we approached living a holy life before God.

Now the idea of the fatherhood of God was a radically new idea for the first readers of Peter’s letter. After all, they were all relatively new Christians. They are gentile (meaning non-Jewish) Christians who have come from a very messy past. Their parents and grandparents worshipped idols. This is why Peter reminds them of how the gospel has delivered them from the “*passions of [their] former ignorance*” (1:14) and the “*the futile ways of [their] forefathers*” (1:18).

But the good news for all of us is that no matter where we have come from, we don’t have to be defined by our past. We don’t have to succumb to the power of generational sins that have poisoned our family trees. We don’t have to be a slave to our temptations anymore. Why? Because God has adopted us into his family. And now we can call him our Father.

One of the unique things that I love about our church family at Redeemer is that we are a church that values and practices adoption and foster care. In fact, a significant number of our families have felt called to foster and/or adopt children into their homes.

Over the years, I have watched many of my closest friends walk through the extraordinary financial and emotional costs that are associated with adopting a child into their families. And on a cosmic level, this is exactly what God has done for all those who believe in Jesus.

Look back our text, *“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.”* (1 Peter 1:17–19, ESV).

Our heavenly Father has paid a sacrificial cost to “ransom” (λυτρόω) and redeem us (1:18). He paid this cost with the most infinitely valuable currency in the universe – the “precious blood” (τιμίῳ αἵματι) of his own Son (1:19).

This is why the truth of adoption should amaze us and transform our hearts. This is why holiness is not just an outward behavior, but also an inner delight in the Father who has loved us with such extravagant love.

J.I. Packer writes this in his brilliant book, *Knowing God*: *“You sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one’s holy Father. 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 does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. ‘Father’ is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption.”*<sup>5</sup>

This is how hope inspires holy motivations.

### **Conclusion – Why we can hope in God**

I know that we live in an anxious age. Simply watching the news can induce a panic attack.

A global pandemic has wrought chaos, not just in America, but across the globe. Our city has been surging in cases to the point that the federal government has now intervened.

---

<sup>5</sup> J.I. Packer. *Knowing God*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973/1993), 201-202.

We have increased our national debt by the trillions. Over 30 million people have filed for unemployment. And now, apparently, we have “Murder Hornets.”

It seems like this would have to be the end of the world. But, if we believe the gospel, we must not grow fearful or cynical. We must not fall prey to the temptations toward anxiety or anger that so many in the world have succumb to in this season. We are still called to be a people who look to the future with a hope that gives us strength and inspiration to live holy lives even in times of suffering.

But hope does not mean that we are to ignore or minimize the reality of suffering. We serve a God who knows the meaning of suffering. The reason we can have ultimate hope is because Jesus knew ultimate despair. He experienced an excruciating death on the cross, but even more, he felt the cosmic despair of bearing the wrath of God. And it is important for the people of God to know that Jesus went to the cross, not because of an accident, but because of God’s eternal plan of redemption. Peter says, *“He [Jesus] 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” (1 Pt. 1:20-21).*

Interestingly, I think this passage shows that Peter didn’t define the term “the last times” (ἔσχατου τῶν χρόνων) to mean something like the last seven years of human history. Instead, Peter believed that all of the people of God since the coming of Christ live in the last times (1:20). In fact, the last times began to moment that God entered into human history. We live between the first and second coming of Christ. We live at the dusk of one age and the dawn of another that will come with the revelation – or apocalypse – of Jesus Christ.

And this is good news!

And it is precisely because we live in these last times that we can gird up the loins of our mind, marvel at the love of our heavenly Father, and be a people of hope inspired holiness.

AMEN.

### **Prayer**

We pray your grace and mercy upon our city, our nation, and our world in this time of pandemic, economic turmoil, and division. Lord, bring an end to this trial we pray.

We pray your grace upon our state as we begin to re-open sectors of our economy. We pray your strength upon our medical professionals and your healing upon all who are sick. Grant wisdom and courage and creativity upon leaders, business owners, and decision-makers. Help them to discern between what they can do and what they should do.

Help all people observe courtesy and kindness upon all people as we do small things like washing hands, wearing masks, and distancing to help one another – especially the vulnerable among us – be healthy.

Lord I also please that you would grant your people wisdom and fortitude to refuse to participate in the culture of outrage. You are a holy God. Help us to be holy in all our conduct. Help us to reflect the wisdom and love of Christ to a watching world.

I pray that when people view our words and actions – in real life or on social media – that the first thing they see is the character of Christ – not our anger, not our fear, not our politics.

For all the mothers of Redeemer Christian Church, we pray your blessing upon them on this Mother’s Day. Equip them to love, serve, and nurture their families. Likewise, I pray these mothers would be rightfully treasured by their families.

I also pray for those who have lost mothers, those who have lost children, those who have been estranged from their children, and those who yearn to have children for whom this day is difficult. Grant them your peace and presence, and let them know that they are seen, known, and loved by you.

And finally, for all of your people, I pray that you would bless us keep us. Cause your face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us. Lift up your smile upon us and give us peace. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit I pray. AMEN.

### **Gospel Community Discussion Starters:**

- 1) Read 1 Peter 1:13-21 out loud. Attempt to paraphrase the main ideas of this passage in your own words.*
- 2) When you hear the word “apocalypse,” what is the first thing that comes to mind? According to 1 Peter 1:13, what should come to mind when we hear the word apocalypse? (Hint: the word “revelation” in 1 Pt. 1:13 is the English translation of the Greek word “apokalupsei”).*
- 3) What are some practical habits that help us set our hope fully on Christ?*
- 4) What are habits that we should purposefully neglect in this season?*
- 5) How should viewing God as Father and oneself as a child of God (1 Pt. 1:14) motivate a Christian toward holy living?*



## Bibliography

- Carson, D. A., and Kathleen B. Nielson, eds. *Resurrection Life in a World of Suffering: 1 Peter*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018.
- Carson D.A. and Douglass J. Moo. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, 2005.
- Clowney, Edmund P. *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross*. The Bible Speaks Today. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988.
- Grudem, Wayne A. *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 17. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988.
- Hauerwas, Stanley, and William H. Willimon. *Resident Aliens: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for a People Who Know Something is Wrong*. (Nashville: Abington: 1989),
- Ladd, George Eldon. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
- Moore, Russell D. *Onward: Engaging Culture without Losing the Gospel*. Nashville: B&H, 2015.