

Set your Hope Fully on Future Grace

- 1 Peter 1:13-21
- In training camps across the country, college and professional football players are gathered these next several weeks for one purpose: to get ready for a season that they hope will lead to a championship. These players have set their hopes on future victory and are willing to put in the hard work to get there. At least that's what the coach wants them to do and it is why he chose them to play on his team. For future victory. He knows that half or more of the battle is between their ears, and it is his job to get them to see and understand and believe that they can win.
- Followers of Jesus, our training camp is year-round and our future victory is already secure! But Paul said, using a running metaphor, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable." (1 Cor. 9:24-25)
- Peter is writing to elect exiles, followers of Jesus living as strangers in a strange world, just as we are who follow Christ. He celebrated the glorious wonders of their salvation with them in the previous verses and the indescribable inheritance that awaits them in heaven. He told them their suffering, like Christ's, is purposeful and precedes glory. And then he says, "Therefore." And we always have to ask, what is the therefore there for? The "therefore" points back to who we are in Christ, what he has done and is doing for us. The indicatives. These are settled. The therefore points forward to what we are called to do in him and for his glory. The imperatives. What is the first thing Peter tells us elect exiles to do?
- Peter starts with, "set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Keep your eyes on the prize. Training camp is hard, but victory is worth it and for the believer, victory is as certain as tomorrow's sunrise. If we forget *that* in our battle for holiness, and we start to look around at all the lesser goals this world offers, we will miss the abundant life and trade it in for building mudpies. We will take our eyes off what is infinitely more important than anything else. So how do we set our hope fully on future grace? Let's look at today's text under three main points: Prepare your mind, Don't look back, Call on Daddy.
- **Prepare your mind (verse 13)**
- Peter starts with "Therefore, preparing your minds for action." That phrase could literally be, "gird up the loins of your mind." Men in the first century wore long robes so when it was time to go into battle, they wrapped those robes around them to free up their legs for movement. Otherwise, they would have looked foolish and died quickly. If you have ever run a race, you don't see people wearing heavy coats or big rubber boots or baggy pants that threaten to fall off at any time. They have no chance of gaining the prize and had they prepared their *minds* for action, their clothing choices would have been much different. If the battle for the believer is first won in the mind, what do we do to prepare our minds for action so we can set our hope fully on future grace? The writer of Hebrews tells us. "Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." (Heb. 12:1)
- To set our hope fully on future grace will start with putting away sin. Remember when you were first saved? You knew instinctively what your favorite sins were and you dealt with those big ones first. My vocabulary changed very quickly as I knew even as a newborn believer that the words I was using were not pleasing to the Lord. But as you grew in your desire to love Jesus well and be holy, and as you studied the Word, you saw that sin was not just an external thing, like using the Lord's name in vain or taking something that didn't belong to you. You began to understand that we are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. You saw what Jeremiah meant when he said the heart is deceitful and wicked above all things. And you saw that sin starts with giving in to your own desires. James wrote, "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." (James

1:14-15) As a young boy of 10 years old or so, my desire for a candy bar in a convenience store gave birth to sin as I slipped it into my pocket and walked out the door. The manager came after me because he saw me steal from him. That sin did not bring death to my body but the guilt and shame I felt as he spoke with me killed my desire to ever do that again.

- That's why Peter added that we need to be sober-minded in order to prepare our minds for action. A sober-minded person is clear in his thinking. He may still desire the candy bar but his mind tells him it is not his to take without payment. That's a sober mind. Drunkenness removes clear thinking and makes someone a danger to himself and to others. Spiritual drunkenness can also be deadly. Edmund Clowney writes, "The hallucinations of spiritual drunkenness are not amusing pink elephants, but devouring monsters: the ideologies of political oppression, the fantasies of sexual lust, the jealous hatreds of personal spite." Peter urges his readers to sober watchfulness that acknowledges the deadliness of sin and the foolishness of living life on your own terms. And to choose sober watchfulness does not result in a gloomy life of woe but a life filled with joy in the Lord and great hope in future grace.
- Finally notice that Peter says, "set your hope *fully* on the grace that will be brought to you." Why does he include that adverb "fully"? I think it is because he knows that there is a great temptation among believers to play the middle. To have one foot of our hope placed in future grace, and the other foot planted somewhere else. Jen Wilkin wrote, "We're prone to placing our hope on our own good deeds, or on a spouse or our children, or on a pastor or president. We may place it on a bank account or a career, or even on the size of our social media accounts. We tell ourselves that we hope in Christ, but what we mean is that we hope in Christ and _____." There's no joy in sitting on the fence, is there? And we know the truth from the words of Jesus himself who said we are to store up treasures in heaven. Jesus also said, "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" The people Peter was writing to were facing persecution in the Roman empire and the very present possibility of losing all their worldly goods and even their lives. They were all-in on future grace! We must be as well. When we give ourselves to Jesus, the certainty of our hope in future grace has a powerful effect on how we live each day. Let's prepare our minds for action. Let's also...

- **Don't look back (verses 14-16)**

- You can't run a race looking behind you. I remember a movie in the 70's about a cross-country car race and one of the drivers, an Italian, said to his racing partner as they got in the car, "And now my friend, the first-a rule of Italian driving." (He then rips off his rear-view mirror and throws it out of the car) "What's-a behind me is not important."
- Peter says it this way: "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance." This is the second imperative. Do not slide back into your past. You and I were formerly hollow men and women and now we are filled with the Spirit of Christ. We were dead and enslaved and now we are alive and free. Free to serve the Lord. When we were without Christ, what was customary seemed normal. And what was normal seemed right. Then Christ came and turned that all upside down. And we began to understand that what we thought was thrilling was really killing us. We had been Legion, living in the cemetery, cutting ourselves and crying out with rage. Christ came and with a word set us free, turned our world right-side up, and we traded in rage for rejoicing. We were Matthew the tax collector, rich in all the world's goods and despised by men and honestly, we despised ourselves. Jesus walked by and called us to come and follow him and everything in us changed. The money we thought we had had us, and now we are filthy rich in the grace of the Lord Jesus. Would Legion ever go back to the graveyard? Would Matthew ever go back to the misery of his former life? No! They followed the man who called them to come and be like him. Peter says, "As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct." The Son of God himself became the model for the pattern our lives are to take. He is holy and calls us to pursue holiness as well. And the word for holy means "set apart." It doesn't mean perfect, as that would be soul crushing for us. We cannot be perfect, not

even close. No, our Father loves us and is calling us to the most joyful life we can possibly have, a life of knowing him more and more and day by day becoming more like him and less like the world. Not looking back to our former worldliness, but moving forward in our pursuit of holiness. Not worldly but holy. Daniel Doriani wrote, "We are strongest when we know how to separate from worldliness while staying engaged with the world." Or as Elisabeth Elliot said, "The secret is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances." And saints, this is a *community* of faith project. That is why we need the body of Christ. Not one of us can grow in holiness all by ourselves. Praise God for the gospel community that we have here. So as you set your hope fully on future grace, also do this:

- **Call on Daddy (verses 17-19)**

- Daddy wounds are everywhere, but Daddy wounds notwithstanding, we have a heavenly Daddy who loves us powerfully and perfectly. So Peter says, "if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, (then you must) conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile." We have a Father who is also judge. The teaching on God's final judgment of mankind is perhaps one of the most misunderstood teachings in the church universal. Listen. We believers have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ. The judgment due to us was paid for by Jesus. But! There is a belief among whole sections of the Christian faith that the final verdict on our lives is hanging in the balance, partly paid for by the death of our Savior, but the rest of it will depend on our good works. Like the old layaway plan where you couldn't afford the whole sofa so you made an initial payment to show your good intentions, and then you came into the furniture store once a month and put some more money down on it and they kept it laid away for you until it was paid in full. They didn't cut it in half when you were halfway there with the money. No, you had to pay for it all. And then and only then could you say it was yours and take it home. Did Jesus die on the cross and say, "Ok, Father, I have gotten them mostly to the finish line. It's on them now to struggle and earn the rest of it"? No. That's why Peter says we are to conduct ourselves with reverent obedience to the Lord, "**knowing** that you were ransomed...not with silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ." It is finished. And because of the cross, God will look at Christ and see us in Him, and He will welcome us in as his own. Christ will also on that last day recognize our good deeds as testimonies to our faithfulness. Faithfulness that was *always* powered by his grace and for the glory of God. And to those who claimed to know him but were unfaithful, the Lord will expose the foolishness of their hypocritical confession. He will say to them, "I never knew you; depart from me you workers of lawlessness." (Matthew 7)
- The last few verses picture the beauty of the gospel again that was God's plan from before time. Jesus died in your place and mine, and God raised him from the dead and gave him glory, **so that** your faith and your hope are in God. See that last phrase? Our faith and our hope are in God. Peter started with "set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you (when Jesus returns)." He ends with, "your faith and hope are in God." Praise his holy name.
- Prayer/Greet One Another