

## STUDY ON THE BOOK OF FIRST PETER

### LIVING HOLY LIVES

Read 1 Peter 1:13-19

#### **Introduction**

Peter started his letter on hope which he described as living hope - *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope...” (v3)*. Where will we set our hope today, in this life, on this side of eternity?

What does it mean to set or fix our hope on something? It's a question of where we will turn to find meaning for our lives, to find relief from suffering, to fill up the emptiness that every soul experiences (Romans 8:22–25). With what will we occupy our hearts? In what will we invest our thoughts, energy, and focus? If all that Peter has told us so far in this letter is true—that we, as Christians, will be resurrected as Christ was, that God guards us and our inheritance with Him in eternity—then there is only one logical place to set our hope. That is in God's grace to us at the future coming of Jesus, the moment in which all the longings of our hearts will be fully satisfied.

Still, even for those of us who believe, it is difficult for us to keep our hope set on that day.

In fact, we start our study from verse 13 where we are told to make a deliberate choice to set our hope there. We need to do this on purpose, instead of setting our hope on things that cannot truly satisfy, such as money, pleasure, or prestige. Obeying this command in verse 13 will take mental work. So, Peter writes that we should stay alert, "preparing your minds for action."

We must take control of where our thoughts go, and what our minds dwell on. If we do not fully engage in intentional hope-setting, we will be easily distracted by the false hope of satisfaction the world continually offers us.

#### **Get Ready, Get Set**

*“Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (v13)*

Peter begins this section with the word "Therefore...." What is he referring to that lays the groundwork for his present call to action? It's clear from the context that he's referring to the great salvation discussed in verses 2 through 12. Salvation is described variously by the phrases: "sanctifying work" (1:2), "sprinkling by his blood" (1:3), "great mercy" (1:3), "new birth" (1:3), "inheritance" (1:4), "salvation" (1:5, 9, 10), and "grace" (1:10) – a salvation that prophets yearned to learn more about and angels to peer into.

Therefore – because you have such an awesome and precious salvation – Peter urges his readers to live out their lives with holiness and serious purpose. People in the first century wore long outer garments, but when it was time to work or walk, they would tie the ends of their garments around the waist (that is, the loins or kidneys), so as to keep them from getting in the way. Peter is saying, "Now give your full attention to this." Peter also calls his readers to “be sober” which translates to "discipline yourselves". Have you been rather casual towards Christian living? Peter calls you to clear thinking.

#### **The Second Coming of Christ**

Peter also directed his readers to "rest your hope" on the coming of Christ – that is, to focus on the time "when Jesus Christ is revealed," and on the grace that will accompany it. Peter's perspective is of the

present time involving struggle and suffering, but of a great anticipation of Christ's coming, glory, final judgment, and vindication of Christians.

This great hope of Christ's return should not inspire in us a sloppiness of life, but a determination to live our lives in holiness. The Apostle John, too, sees the hope of Christ's appearing to be a motivation to get our lives in order: *"And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."* (1 John 3:3).

### Conforming to the Standard of our Society

*"[Live] as obedient children [of God]; do not be conformed to the evil desires which governed you in your ignorance [before you knew the requirements and transforming power of the good news regarding salvation]."* (v14 AMP)

You know the temptation to fit in. Your children face extreme pressure from their friends to conform, especially at teenage years. You face pressure from an increasingly secular society where God and Jesus should not be mentioned. You are pressured to tell lies, to make moral compromises for the sake of business. Twenty-first century society places strong pressures on Christians and non-Christians alike to stay within its norms. But the pressure to conform was no less in Peter's day.

"Conform" is the Greek word *"syschēmatizō"*, "to form according to a pattern or mould, form or model after something." The same word is used by Paul in Romans:

*"And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs] ..."* (Romans 12:2a AMP)

We conform to that which has the greatest influence over us. Little children imitate their parents' words and behaviour -- often with humorous results. Teenagers tend to emulate their friends and the fashions and mores of a very trendy culture. At work, we model ourselves after others. But we too often adopt values that are foreign to Jesus Christ. We can be chameleon Christians who are adept at blending into our surroundings rather than bringing salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16) to the people around us. Don't conform to the evil around you, says Peter, but be transformed to your Father's holy nature like obedient children.

### Holiness Is What I Long For

*"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy.""* (vv15-16)

The main idea behind *holiness* is not moral purity but it is the idea of *"apartness."* The idea is that God is *separate*, different from His creation, both in His essential nature and in the perfection of His attributes. But instead of building a wall around His apartness, God calls us to come to Him and share His apartness. He says to us, **"Be holy, for I am holy."**

When we fail to see God's apartness, we begin to believe that He is just a "untouchable, unreachable". Then we don't see that His love is a **holy** love, His justice is a **holy** justice, and so on with all of His attributes. Holiness is not so much something we possess as it is something that possesses us.

God is holy and separate from sinful mankind. But so are those who are dedicated wholly to him. Moses, the priests, and Levites are ordained and set apart to serve God exclusively. Their garments, their food, and everything they touch while "on duty" is set apart to God. They belong to the Lord in a full and unique way. They are "devoted" to God's service exclusively.

To draw close to God, we must hate iniquity and love righteousness. We must forsake sin and seek to resist temptation. Of course, sometimes we fail miserably. We can't make ourselves holy by will power alone; it is God's forgiveness that gives us hope and the gracious Spirit of God who works holiness within us.

If we as Christians call on a holy God (presumably for help), we must understand that we call on a God who shows no partiality — and will so judge our conduct. This makes a working, sober, holy walk even more important.

### **Life in Light of Judgment**

*“If you address as Father, the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in [reverent] fear [of Him] and with profound respect for Him throughout the time of your stay on earth.”*  
**(v17 AMP)**

Sometimes people tell us that we shouldn't be afraid of God. Jesus said: *“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*  
**(Matthew 10:28)**

We aren't to cower in fear; we can trust in God's love. But if we choose to live contrary to God's way, we can't expect him to ignore it, since he is just and "judges each man's work impartially" -- that is, "without reference to rank or status." Beloved, judgment day is coming. You can't wish it away; you can't pray it away; you can't excuse yourself from it. The day is coming and it is certain we will stand and be judged.

*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...”* **(2 Corinthians 5:10-11a)**

If we know the terror of the Lord, we will live right in light of the coming judgment and also, persuade men to get right with God.

### **Redemption Price**

*“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”* **(vv18-19)**

Holiness also includes the idea of ownership. If we are wholly owned by God, completely dedicated and consecrated to him, then we are set apart solely for his service. Redemption introduces the concept of payment to procure our freedom.

"Redeemed" (NIV, KJV) or "ransomed" (NRSV) is the Greek verb *lytroō*, "to free by paying a ransom, redeem." This word is literally used concerning purchasing freedom for prisoners and slaves. Why is the Lamb's blood so "precious" or valuable? Because this Lamb is the Messiah, the God-anointed Saviour, who is the Son of God himself!

