**Further Up & Further In — 1 Peter 1:13-16**

*Five Points Community Church (10/4/15) Brett Toney*

[READ & PRAY]

**Exiles & *The Last Battle***

You remember the final scene in Lewis’ *The Last Battle*. The Pevensies have walked through the Doorway into a new land that is familiar but different. They are accompanied by a slew of animal friends from their many journeys. One of them, the Unicorn, captured what they were all feeling as they took in this majestically new-but-known place by saying, “I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this … Come further up, come further in!”[[1]](#footnote-1) And so they did, trekking ever further up and further in.

The Pevensies and fellow Narnians were pilgrims looking for the place where they belong, carrying on until finally arriving. And we too are pilgrims, elect exiles dispersed among many nations looking for our homeland. We catch glimpses of that homeland, but they just increase our yearning for our final destination. And our pilgrimage is marked by going further up and further in. We start now what we will forever experience. We go further up into the hope of our coming Lord. We go further in deeper to the holy character of God.

These are the two directions Peter calls us to in these verses as he sets two imperatives on us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. “Set your hope” on the return of Christ—go further up—and “be holy” as your God is holy—go further in. Pilgrim—Exile, you do not just exist or merely wait out your time until you’re brought home. Start giving yourself *now* to what you will experience *then*.

**Further Up: Set Your Hope (v.13)**

 Now as we look at our passage, what would you say is the most important word to take into account and understand in context? Hope? Revelation? Holy? What would it be? I think perhaps the single most important word for rightly understanding these four verses is … “therefore.” If we are not reading these verses with their imperatives and calls to a certain way of life connected with the glorious truths that precede, then we will fail to get them right. Recall what Peter has told us about who we *are*. Christian …

* You *are* born again to a living hope (v.3).
* You *are* guaranteed an imperishable, undefiled, unfading inheritance (v.4).
* You *are* being guarded by God’s power (v.5).
* You *are* one who rejoices with inexpressible joy because of Jesus (v.8).
* You *are* obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls (v.9).
* You *are* the recipients of all that was anticipated by the prophets (v.10).
* You *are* beneficiaries of the good news of the redemption of your soul (v.12).

*Therefore*, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you. *Therefore*, be holy in all your conduct. This is the indicative-imperative logic of the Bible. If we fly by “therefore” and jump straight to the imperatives, we will fail. We will be trying to attain a righteousness as if by works and not by faith (cf. Romans 9:32). The commands of v.13-16 are grounded deeper in the declarations of v.3-12 than the RenCen in its foundations. So keeping all that Peter has extolled in the first twelve verses in mind as the root of your life in Christ, pursue the imperatives as gospel fruit.

**Prepared, Sober Minds (v.13a)**

 So v.13, the main verb is the imperative “set your hope.” Peter tells us how to do that by “preparing [our] minds for action.” Literally, he says to “gird up the loins of your mind,” which is … well … kind of awkward. So we’re *actively* preparing our minds. We aren’t going to set our hope on anything if we aren’t being intentional about it. Or as Schreiner put it, “Hope will not become a reality without disciplined thinking.”[[2]](#footnote-2) What you think will shape where you set your affections. What you hold to be true and good will inform where your hope will be. And there are too many worldviews seeking to allure you away into falsehood for you to not have your mind engaged and prepared for action.

 And so Peter explains further. How do we prepare our minds for action? By being sober-minded. He draws on the imagery of physical drunkenness to get his point across. Don’t be so dull and hazy to the things of God in Christ that you couldn’t care less about them. Don’t be so intoxicated with the things of this world that the beauty of v.1-12 is an ugly blur. Be clear. Be focused. Be disciplined in your thinking. Or as one dictionary captured it, “Be free from every form of mental and spiritual ‘drunkenness,’ from excess, passion, rashness, confusion.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Don’t give yourself to things that will diminish your valuing of the glory of God. Be sober-minded and in so doing be ready for action.

 Then you will be well-equipped to set your hope *fully* on the grace coming in Christ’s return. May your hope not be divided because the object Peter calls you to hope in could not be any better. The object of our hope is Jesus. Grace came to us in the fulfillment of all that= the prophets anticipated in the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. v.10). And grace is coming to us upon the return of Jesus. Set your hope there because there is necessary suffering for you to experience, and you need to know how it is all going to end. Christian, just as certain it is that Jesus rose from the dead, so sure you can be that Jesus is returning. Believe in that. Trust in that. Hope in that.

 When the going gets tough, when the sorrows roll in, when the persecution mounts, know where your hope is. Know that you are an exile in this world and go further up to the hope that is yours in the risen Christ. The victory has been won. Jesus is risen. And he has not left you as orphans but is returning. We don’t hope in such perishable things like silver and gold. New homes won’t endure or satisfy. New babies will disappoint as their sinful depravity is demonstrated. But boundless grace will be ours at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So set your hope there; come further up!

**Further In: Be Holy (v.14)**

However, we don’t go further up and get lost in the clouds. We go further in … to the character of God. The past grace of v.1-12 and the future grace of v.13 have present significance for us *now*. We press further in to the character of the Holy One by becoming like him, by being holy. Peter supports this call to holiness with three descriptions of what our holy lives will look like.

First, holiness will look like obedience; that is the banner that flies over our holiness. Verse 14 begins with this description, “As obedient children … be holy.” Obedience is such a central and necessary part of our pursuit of holiness because Jesus is our *Lord*. We owe him our complete allegiance and submission. But he is also our *Savior*—we don’t earn his favor through our obedience but demonstrate our love in obedience because of his salvation. In God’s working of things, obedience to his decrees *always* flows from his prior work of salvation. Take for example the Ten Commandments. They are recorded a second time in Deuteronomy 5, but before Moses tells Israel what *they* must do, he proclaims what *God* has done. Deuteronomy 5:6, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house slavery.” So in light of that reality, have no other gods, no idols, and so on. Obedience flows *from* God’s prior work of salvation. And the same is true in the New Covenant; God delivered us and so we must be obedient to his command. That’s what being holy will look like.

Indeed we have been delivered from much. We have been saved from great depravity, so we must not be conformed to that former way of life. This is the second description of what being holy looks like. Verse 14, “Do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.” You have been delivered from Egypt; so don’t go on living as though you are still a slave. You have been saved from sin; so don’t go on giving yourself to it. Because you are born again to a living hope, those sinful desires, the cravings of the flesh, have no part in your new life. You were, at one time, being increasingly conformed to those evil desires. Like the miserly Scrooge whose outward demeanor reflected his inner desires, you were being made into the image of your sin. You were ignorant to the things of God. Or as Paul put it, “[W]e all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (Ephesians 2:3).

But that was your *former* way, Christian. That was in your *former* ignorance. You have now been enlightened. You now prepare your mind for action. Get this, you actually now can think clearly when those former passions surge. They no longer entirely cloud your thinking. You are equipped by the indwelling Holy Spirit to see through the fog and fight against being conformed to those evil desires. So we must be on guard against the schemes of sin. They are subtle and insidious. Consider this quote from Spurgeon, “One of these days you may be unable to get rid of those habits which you are now forming.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Your evil desires may start as seemingly innocuous habits but will grow to the point where you are utterly bound by them. So take inventory of your thoughts, words, actions, and habits. What are you making a practice of that threatens to conform you to its image rather than God’s? Don’t be ignorant about such things, but take decisive action with clear, sober-mindedness.

And instead of being conformed to those passions, be conformed to the very standard of holiness, God himself. This is the third description of what being holy looks like. We are no longer being conformed to the passions of our former ignorance but to the Holy One who called us. Rather than becoming more and more consumed by sin, we are becoming more and more like the Holy One. We do so because he has effectually called us. He called out to us as we lay in the grave, and we rose to new life. So we cannot go crawling back into the pit.

**Be Holy as He is Holy (v.15-16)**

We instead must be holy. And this holiness ought to mark every aspect of our lives, not just our “religious practices.” Peter is not concerned merely with our doctrine or religion. No, he calls us to a life of holiness “in *all* your conduct.” Our entire lives must be brought into conformity to the Holy One. All of it. All of our conduct. We hate that. We so want to keep little fiefdoms that we reign over. I am far more like my three-year-old than I would like to admit.

“No, Daddy, *I* can do it.”
“Sweetheart, come here. Let me help you.”

“Sweetheart”—yeah, she’s started calling me “Sweetheart” in these conversations—“Sweetheart, *I* can do it.”

Or I tell her something she doesn’t want to hear, and there is a little melt down. And too often I am the exact same. “*All* my conduct, God? How about this—how about *most* of my conduct, and I’ll oversee the rest.” No. God won’t have it. He is too perfect of a Father and knows that *all* of our conduct conformed to his holiness is what is for our ultimate good.

 Peter grounds his chief call here—this call to be holy—in Holy Scripture. This is not the apostle going rogue on his teaching. This is flowing directly from the inspired revelation of God. And so he quotes Leviticus 19:2, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” What we see Peter doing here is employing the Bible study method he mentioned in v.10-12. Commentator Karen Jobes pointed this out and it is really helpful.[[5]](#footnote-5) He tells us that all that was revealed to the prophets was for *our* good. And then he demonstrates that with this quote from Leviticus. Jobes writes, “By quoting from Leviticus, Peter establishes the principle that the holiness to which the Christian is called in Christ is consistent with God’s character as revealed in the ancient covenant with Israel. However, Peter does not enjoin on his Christian readers the specifics of the Levitical religion of ancient Israel.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

Our holiness is not primarily about us, our obedience, our conduct—our holiness is primarily about God. Our holiness testifies volumes about God’s holiness. That is why it is necessary that we be holy and conformed to his image. We are bound to him by faith in Christ and being holy in all of our conduct will make known to a watching world what the Holy God is like. A significant way God’s glory will be communicated through the whole world is by his redeemed people reflecting his holiness.

 So our whole lives must be conformed to the perfect standard of holiness—it is for the sake of witness and mission. That was true for Israel, and that is true for us. Israel was given the book of Leviticus to know what the holiness of God was like and how they ought to be conformed to it. That’s why there are so many commands that seem so odd to us—they were expressions of God’s holiness for God’s people. That does not mean Peter is laying on us the whole Levitical law. What he is doing is calling us to the same life transformation Moses called Israel to. And for what purpose? Israel was to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, Exodus 19:6. They were to be mediators of God’s glory and salvation to all the nations of the earth. And what does Peter call us New Covenant exiles? 1 Peter 2:9, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Your pursuit of holiness is for your eternal good, and it is for God’s eternal glory.

**The Lord’s Supper**

 We are going to partake of the Lord’s Supper in just a few minutes. The Apostle Paul cautions against eating the bread or drinking the cup in an unworthy manner. So he exhorts us to examine ourselves lest we bring judgment on ourselves. We ought not partake of the bread and cup if we are not striving by faith to be holy as he is holy. We ought not partake if we are not setting our hope on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. For sure that means we ought not eat and drink at this Table if we have not been born again to a living hope. But I think it is dangerous to come to this Table if we are willfully and knowingly setting our hope on something besides Jesus, if we are willfully and knowingly allowing ourselves to be conformed to the passions of our former ignorance.

 So examine yourself. Are you by faith setting your hope on the grace of the coming King? Are you seeking to be holy as God is holy? Is there sin that you need to repent of? Is there a conversation you need to have, to ask forgiveness? Friends, there is a great God who has caused you *or can cause you* to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Set your hope on him and be holy as he is holy. Come further up and further in.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

**Benediction** – Jude 24-25

Now to him who able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

1. Lewis, C.S. *The Last Battle* (New York: HarperCollins, 1956), p.213. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Schreiner, Thomas. *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC, vol.37 (Nashville: B&H, 2003), p.78. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *BDAG*, entry for “νήφω” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. C.H. Spurgeon, “The Man Whose Hand Clave to His Sword,” in *The Complete Works of C.H. Spurgeon*, vol.56, sermon no.3191. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Karen Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), p.107. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)