

The Power of Hope

Our Identity in Christ

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I invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 1. 1 Peter 1, we'll be resuming our exposition of this letter from Peter to the saints in Asia Minor. Remember the purpose of this letter, if you've not been with us before, let me just remind us, all of us, just briefly, the purpose of the letter, Peter is writing to Christians who are about to experience persecution. In the providence of God, the Lord inspires this letter to be written at exactly the right time for these believers. Within a year or so after he writes, there will break out a widespread persecution across the church, across the Mediterranean world, start emanating from Rome and the Emperor Nero, and so this letter is written to give believers stability. They're already experiencing though, difficulty, they're already experiencing trials and tribulations and so the main theme in the letter is suffering. And the purpose of the letter is given in the fifth chapter where Peter says, "I'm writing these things so that you can stand firm in the midst of your suffering and trials." The goal is to help Christians stand firm against cultural opposition, against spiritual attack. And so the letter is very relevant for us as believers in a society that's becoming increasingly hostile to the Christian faith, increasingly opposed to the proclamation of one way of salvation, the exclusivity of Christ, that there is no other name given under heaven by which men must be saved but the name of Jesus, that God has spoken with great clarity about how we should live and he's given it in his word.

And so as Christians, we need to be able to bear up under increasing difficulty and opposition. So this letter is specifically relevant for that, and we saw that in the first series of messages covering the first 12 verses, we're going to start in 1 Peter 1:13 today, but the first 12 verses, Peter begins his letter that is aimed at helping Christians stand firm by showing us the stabilizing power of gratitude or the stabilizing power of thankfulness. He starts out telling them all they need to know to be thankful for. "You need to understand the incredible riches that you have in Christ." And this is what we looked at over a number of weeks, these first 12 verses. You are recipients of incredible blessings. Don't forget that. In fact, know that, actively thank God for that because that's the foundation of a life that will stand firm against opposition. And so he says, "Remember you've received great mercy, recipients of a new birth." These are the blessings unpacked in the first 12 verses. You've received great mercy, a new birth to living hope, to an internal inheritance. You're receiving ongoing protection by the Lord. He's protecting you from your own departure from the faith as well as from the attacks of the enemy. You're experiencing the

providence of God that he's using your circumstances to purify your faith. You have the presence of Christ with you. And as we saw last time on December 18th that we were in this passage, you are recipients of a salvation that makes you on the timeline of history from creation until the present moment, you and I are of all people most blessed. So much so that the Old Testament prophets longed to see what you see and to hear what you hear. So much so that the angels in heaven long to understand what you now know, what it is to be redeemed as a sinner and brought near to God. The angels can't imagine, they long to look into that.

So in light of all of that, he's going to say, "Therefore," is the first word in the text we're going to read. Therefore, an inferential conjunction that says, "Based on what I've told you so far, this is what you should conclude. This is what you should do." And now he turns to the imperative mode. He's been telling us the indicative, that is what God has done. The indicative is a statement of fact, the mood, the indicative mood in language. That is to state facts. The imperative mood is to issue commands. And so he turns from the indicative to the imperative in verse 13 and we're going to see in verses 13 to 25, he issues four key imperatives. In fact, in the Greek text, there's really only four imperatives. In your English Bible, it's going to look like there are more commands than that but there's really only four foundational commands, that is, main verbs that are in the imperative mood in this passage. Sometimes what happens as the translators are translating is they'll take a participle that's strictly speaking, not an imperative and because it's attached to an imperative, they'll give it imperatival force. They'll make it sound like a command. You have two in this first verse that we're going to look at, because our focus is verse 13 today. We're going to look just at verse 13. But I want you to see the larger structure. In verses 13 to 25, he's going to issue four basic commands. We're going to read the whole passage. I'm going to tell you what they are and you watch for him as we read. He's going to say, "Based on all that you have received and all that you should be thankful for, now what are you to do?" And the first command is fix your hope completely on the grace to be given to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Fix your hope. That's the first one, which we're going to look at this morning. The second true imperative in the passage is, "Be holy for I am holy." That's the second command. The third command is conduct yourselves in fear in verse 17. Live a life in the fear of God. And the fourth command in verse 22 is love one another fervently.

So these four commands that God gives us on light of what he's done for us: fix your hope, be holy, conduct yourselves in fear, and love one another. We're going to take, Lord willing, one message on each one of those imperatives and so today, we're looking at the issue of hope. The title of the message is "The Power of Hope." The power of hope. So remember, Peter has laid this foundation of gratitude. He says, "If you're going to be faithful, you need to know all that God has done for you and you need to actively thank Him for this. You need to live in light of the wonder of what He's done for you. You need to be reminded of that." Now, how do you live? And he gives these four pillars, as it were, these four commands that show us how to take what God has done for us and turn it into action. And the first pillar he starts with is fix your hope. He doesn't start with be holy, as important as that is. He doesn't start with love your brother, as important as that

is. He doesn't start with conduct yourselves in the fear of God, as important as that is. He starts with fix your hope completely.

So the power of hope. Let's read the passage together. We'll read the entire passage, verses 13 to 25, but our focus is verse 13.

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." 17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 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. 22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, 25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we come to You with thankful hearts, so grateful for the salvation that You have given us in Christ, that You have made available to all who will repent and believe and rest in His finished work, ask Him for the gift of salvation. We thank You, Lord, for the Holy Spirit that You have given to us as believers, and we thank You so much for Your word, which reveals Christ to us, which exposes our own sin and need and the way that Your grace satisfies every need of our hearts. Speak to us, Lord. Your servants are listening. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

So the power of hope. The power of hope. It's important for us to know what hope is. I mean, the word here in the passage, "fix your hope," and as later you heard the same word repeated in verse 21, "your faith and hope are in God," what is hope biblically? It's important for us to define this because the biblical definition of hope is much different than the way we use the word in modern English. The word "hope" means ""desire of some future good with expectation of obtaining it. It's to desire some future good, but to

have expectation of obtaining it. It's not like a hope where I just sort of hope that it might turn out, you know, kind of a wish, a desire that really I don't have any expectation, but if I could just have it the way I want it, I hope it will turn out okay. I hope it won't rain later today. It's supposed to rain, although just the fact that our cell phone tells us that doesn't mean anything, does it? I mean, it means something, but not as much as we would like it to to tell us how reliable is because we don't know, but the biblical hope is not like that. Biblical hope is the desire for some future good with expectation of obtaining it. In fact, hope is very closely related to faith. Very closely related to faith.

In the Old Testament, hope is, and in the New Testament as well, hope is awaiting on God to be faithful to his word. In fact, "hope" in the Old Testament and "wait" are very close, the same root word, one of the major words for "hope" in the Old Testament, and actually both words that are translated "hope" mean "wait" in other contexts. That is, you're in present difficulty. The idea in the Old Testament, the way that this word develops as it flows into the New, so important to, as we study words in the New Testament, to remember that there's an Old Testament background that leads into that and informs our understanding. We look at the word "hope" in the Old Testament, what we see is the people of God in difficult circumstances looking to the promise of God to make the future better and the looking to the future and the promise of coming blessing and the expectation of future good informs the present by, through faith. You believe the promise of God that he's going to bring good, and hope then is what happens as you look to the future in faith. It's as if the blessing and power of the future is infused into the present. Even though you're presently in affliction, even though you're presently in times of dark, doubt, the future hope comes into the present and strengthens you in the moment.

And so hope is really, if you think about it, faith. Faith is, you know, knowing the truth of what God has said plus assenting to the fact that it's true. You accept it is true plus trust. Knowledge, assent, and trust is how you define faith biblically. You know what God has said, you accept what he said is true, and you trust in it. Okay, so faith is rooted in the word of God. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of Christ. It's not something we stir up in ourselves as much as we hear the word of God and we trust in it.

Now think about this. Faith, normally then, it's acts in the present, but what does faith do? Faith looks at what God has said about what he has done in the past, right? How do you get saved? You look at what God has said about what he did in Christ, that God sent his Son into the world. The eternal Son of God becomes man and lives a perfect sinless life, tempted in every way yet without sin. He offers to God a perfect record of righteousness. He goes to the cross, becomes the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the affliction, he is afflicted where we should have been afflicted. He experiences the wrath that you and I should have experienced on the cross. He experiences the holy wrath of God. He satisfies that wrath. He says, "It is finished." He dies, and then on the third day he's raised from the dead to show that God accepted his sacrifice. And the fact that you believe that God in the cross took your sins and laid them on Christ and Christ's righteousness is then imputed to you, you believing that is faith. You believe that what God did in the past, what he said in the past, he did. That's faith.

Faith has its focus in the past and also in the present. Faith also believes that what God has said he's doing in the present, he is doing. When you believe that he says, "I will never leave you or forsake you," and you call out to him, he's the God who answers prayer, and even though he's not giving you your answer right now, you're doing what Jesus said in Luke 18, and you're continuing to pray day after day, night after night, you're continuing to ask him for the blessing. This is how he says to pray in Luke 18. Men ought always to pray and not to faint. Pray like that. And so what's driving your prayer life? It's faith. You believe that God has said he answers prayer, and he wants you to pray like this.

So faith has a dimension that it looks to the past and it looks to the present, and faith when it looks to the future becomes hope because you're looking to what God has said he will do in the future and in believing that, that births hope. So faith and hope are closely related. In fact it's interesting, 1 Corinthians 13, what are the three great things that now abide? Faith, hope, and love. The greatest of these is love, and love is the only one that's going to be needed in heaven. You realize you won't need faith, and you won't need hope in heaven because your faith will have become sight, and your hope will have been realized. We hope for what we don't see, Romans 8, I think it's verse 24 or so says this. Who hopes for what he sees? You don't have to hope for something you already see. I hope that my wife is making this particular meal when I get home. Well when I get there and I find out she's making it, I don't have to hope anymore. Hope has become sight. Who needs hope? "Well I really hope that you're going to make this. honey. Patty, are you going to make this?" And there she is making it right then. How stupid. Hope is unnecessary. Faith, trusting in that which is unseen, is unnecessary when faith becomes sight. When you see it, you no longer need faith. But how much we need faith and hope in this present world because our faith is not sight, and our hope has not been fully realized.

And so Peter is saying you and I need the power of hope to be this first plank that we build upon the foundation of gratitude. We need to fix our hope. We need to have and labor at having a confident expectation of the good that is going to come to us when Jesus Christ is revealed. And your life will be strengthened by that hope. The belief of what God is going to do when Christ is unveiled, and your focus on that will bring the power of that event into the present in the midst of your great need now. That's what hope does. It brings the power of the future action of God into the present experience and it strengthens you. It enables you to walk faithfully.

Now, I want us to look at this passage, three main points: explanation, illustration, application. Those are the three big points. Going to explain the text, then we want to illustrate the text with a wonderful biblical illustration of the power of hope, and then want to apply the text.

So explanation, first point, 1. We noted that we have a command. When I read it in New American Standard, "Therefore prepare your minds for action," technically, it's not an imperative. It sounds like an imperative, doesn't it, prepare your minds for action? In Hebrew, actually, it says, I mean in Greek, I don't know what it says in Hebrew, but in

the Greek, it says, "Therefore having prepared your minds." Having prepared. It's a participle. And like I said, a lot of times the translators realized that if you're going to do the main verb of fixing your hope, you're going to have to do this one. It's right. You have to do this but it's not the force of it. It's not really imperative. It says having prepared your minds. And the second apparent imperative that's not one, it says "keep sober in spirit." Literally in the Greek, it says "keeping sober in spirit." So having prepared your minds and keeping sober in spirit, here comes the command, "fix your hope completely on the grace to be given to you at the coming of Jesus Christ, the revelation of Jesus Christ."

So let's look at this first participle, preparing, having prepared your minds for action would be a better translation. Having prepared your minds for action. It is an aorist participle, which speaks of a more of a one, not necessarily a one-time of all action, but points in time. Aorist emphasizes punctiliar action, that is, action that happens at moments in time. The present tense in Greek is not so much about the time of the action, present, past, future, it does have that element, but it's more about the kind of action and the present Greek is ongoing continuous action. We're going to see the first participle is aorist. The second participle, "keep sober," is present.

So this first participle, "having prepared your minds for action." All of the major translations translate in that way, preparing your minds for action. The King James actually says, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind." Literally in the Greek, it says "having girded up the loins of your mind." And so they translate it to say, hey, we don't really know what girding our loins is in American life and they didn't know that even in England. It was something that was true to oriental life, that is, life in Asia back at the time of the first century because the clothes that men wore at that time were flowing robes. And so if a man was about to have to run, he had to gird up his loins so he wouldn't trip and fall. You don't run with a big robe on unless you want to fall on your face. And so they would gird up their loins and what that would mean is they would gather together their robe, tie it around, pull it around the trunk of their body, and with a belt hold it in place. So then they could run without impediment. Or you would gird up your loins when you're about to enter into a fight. If you were about to have to defend yourself, go into battle. Remember in the classic passage on spiritual warfare, one of the first things we're told to do is gird up your loins with truth. Put on the belt of truth. Gird up your loins. Get ready for battle.

It's a really helpful word picture that we lose in the modern translations because it speaks of the seriousness. Prepare your minds for action is taking an attempt to explain that. You need to be preparing. You need to prepare yourself. Yes, that's right. But the idea of girding up your loins communicates something of the seriousness of this moment and something of the difficulty. It's going to be hard to do this. What you're about to do, the main verb of fixing your hope is going to be hard. It's going to be hard to fix your hope so if you're ever going to fix your hope, you better start by girding up the loins of your mind. You've got to start here.

Gird up the loins of your mind. The idea is take your thought life in hand. Get hold of your thought life, the loins of your mind. I mean, what do you do without thinking?

You're always thinking. Try to not think for a minute. It's almost impossible. I mean, we think. It's part of what we are. We are thinking people. God has made us to think. The problem is that we tend to allow our thoughts to run to and fro wherever they want to. This is the natural way that human beings live in a fallen world. We live with uncontrolled thoughts, that is, I mean, we control them to some extent, but we're continually fighting it. We have to continually fight against it. Think about when you're trying to read your Bible, where your thoughts can go, and you're trying to read your Bible, and you realize you've been reading and you've been going over the words of the text, but your mind has not been thinking about what you're reading at all. Isn't that amazing? Or you're praying. You have an earnest desire to pray, something that is really urgent, and you're praying and the next thing you know, you're thinking about what you're going to eat for dinner tonight. Why is that?

The mind is untamed now. The mind is darkened in sin, and so it continues to find ways to flit about and be distracted and Peter is saying, listen, you're going to have to be intentional. And this is what he's saying when he uses the aorist tense, you're going to have to take times and moments where you decisively deal with and reign in your thinking. Take control of your thoughts. Make your mind submit to Christ.

I like the way Martyn Lloyd-Jones speaks of this in his wonderful book, "Spiritual Depression," in referring to Psalm 42 and 43, where the psalmist is actually talking to himself. He actually speaks to himself. You know, usually in the Psalms, the psalmist is speaking directly to God, or he's speaking to the congregation. He's telling others about what God has done, speaks of God in the third person. He's speaking, hey, you know, be still, you know, he gives an exhortation to the people and less often he talks to himself. "Why are you in despair, O my soul? Why are you downcast within me? Hope in God." That's a conversation with himself. Lloyd-Jones says our problem is that we listen to ourselves when we should be talking to ourselves. Think about that. You listen to yourself means that you allow your thoughts just to kind of run uncontrolled. You have an anxious thought and what happens? You start thinking about all the various things that could go wrong. You think about other things that you want to not happen, or you think about whatever. You distract yourself with other things that make you feel better. And your mind is just running amok. Our problem is we listen to ourselves when we ought to talk to ourselves. We listen to ourselves, create arguments of why it's not really going to work out, it's not really going to turn out well, because I really don't see the evidence of God's work in my life right now so it's not going to turn out so well. And we listen to ourselves. Lloyd-Jones says we need to talk to ourselves. We need to take the word of God and speak it to our own heart.

This is what he's talking about when he says gird the loins of your mind. Get your thought life in control. Stop the running around that's happening and still yourself before the Lord. And what he's going to end up telling you to do is fix your hope. That's what the talking to is going to come back to. But you've got to stop listening to yourself. Stop running around. Attend to God in his word. So that's the first participle here. The second participle is also very important: keeping sober. It's a present tense. It means ongoing continuous action or really, there's a sense in which the aorist participle is used about gird

up the loins of your mind, because that action of that verb precedes the action of the main verb. Before you can fix your hope, you must gird up the loins of your mind. You must stop your mind from flowing wherever it goes. You've got to stop it before you can fix your hope. So it's about that. The second participle, keeping sober, is actually present because it's also the action of this second participle, keeping sober, is contemporaneous to the time of the main verb. That is, you're to keep doing this even as you are fixing your hope. You see, you do the other first. Gird up the loins of your mind. Decisively rein in your thoughts. Now, start to fix your hope and as you do, keep sober all the way through it. That's the idea.

The word "sober" here is usually used in extra-biblical texts as the idea of sober from drunkenness, the idea of alcohol consumption. Here, Peter means more than that, but he certainly means that as well. Christians are not to be controlled by alcohol and it's something we need to be mindful of because we teach, the Bible teaches that it's not a sin to drink but it must be done in moderation and you must be careful that you are not controlled by alcohol. In fact, I think it's something especially for Christians in Reformed circles, we need to be especially mindful of because there's way too much laxity with the use of alcohol in Christian circles. And we must remember what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:12, "All things are lawful for me but not all things are profitable." Is this profitable? And so the idea is make sure, I'm not saying stop drinking alcohol. I'm not saying that at all, but I'm saying make sure you're continually checking and evaluating are you sober even though you're drinking now?

So that's enough about alcohol. The bigger issue he's saying here is keep sober as it relates to intoxication with the world. This is what Peter's getting at. He's saying we have to continually keep sober so that we will not be intoxicated with the things of this world, the pleasures of this world, the good things of life. Don't become enamored with them because you're only a stranger and alien passing through. Your home is in heaven. Don't become so enamored with these things that you're intoxicated with them that you're forgetting to fix your hope.

I think this particular participle, if you think about it, the first participle having girded up the loins of your mind really focuses on your thought life. This also there's some bleed over, but I think this also gets at the affections, keeping sober. It's at the affections, the desires. Are your desires becoming controlled by the things of this world? Are you able to lay down anything you need to at any time you need to for the glory of Christ? Doesn't mean it's sinful, but in this moment I can lay it down for the glory of Christ. If you can, then you probably are sober. You're keeping sober. If you can't, watch out. You're becoming intoxicated with the things of this world.

So he says having prepared your minds for action, that is, having girded up your loins of your mind and keeping sober, now fix your hope, and here again is an aorist imperative. It's the idea of a decisive action. It's not a one-time for all action. No, it's something you have to continue to do again and again and again, but it's moment in time, moment in time, moment in time, moment in time. It's that kind of thing. We need from time to time to remind ourselves of where our hope is and for the Christian, it is not in this life.

Fix your hope. Some translations say set your hope. Remember, if hope is the expectation of some future good, he's saying, think about a particular future good. We can think about a lot of future good we'd like to have happen. Like I said, you can think about what you'd like to have for dinner when you get home from work. That's a future good. But he's saying think about a particular future good and set your heart on this particular future good. Fix your hope.

What's the object of your hope according to the text? You're to fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is the grace of God that will come to you when Jesus is revealed. He's not even saying here fix your hope on the glory of heaven. I mean, that's a worthy thing. Other Scripture talks about that. It's the beauty of God's word is God's word tells you everything you need to know as you keep reading it and you'll find different emphases. Sometimes it'll talk about fix your hope on the glory of heaven. He's not even saying here fix your hope completely on the glory of seeing Christ, though that is clearly a part of this. He's actually saying in this passage, this particular passage, there are other passages that talk about that, he's saying fix your hope on the grace that will literally be carried to you when Jesus Christ is revealed, the grace of God which will come to you.

Now, it's important for us to know what is the grace of God? The grace of God is the gifts that come to us out of the lovingkindness of God's heart completely apart from anything in ourselves, undeserved blessings. That's what grace is. Unmerited favor. Undeserved blessings. Everything that you are, you are by the grace of God. You haven't merited anything. If you see it rightly, you don't deserve anything except hell, just like me. That's all I deserve, hell. But Christ's grace has been made known. The lovingkindness of God out of the goodness and benevolence of his heart because of nothing in you or me, he has willed to impart the blessings of salvation to you. That is grace. It's a gift.

And so what he's talking about then is you have received grace if you belong to Christ, if you've repented of your sins and placed your faith in Jesus. If you do that today, you are a recipient of grace and salvation. And what have you received? We saw it already. You have a new heart. You've been regenerated. You have a living hope, which he's unpacking for us a little more right now. You have an eternal inheritance. Yes, yes, yes. But he's saying right here, don't so much think about your inheritance in heaven, you know, what heaven is going to be like. He's saying fix your hope on what grace is going to do at the moment Jesus Christ is revealed. At the moment Jesus Christ is revealed, grace is going to be brought to every single believer. A truckload of grace, an overflowing, infinite amount of grace is going to come to you and it's going to do some radical things and that sets your hope on that anticipation. That's the future good you need to set your hope on. The inauguration of the new age, what's it going to mean when Christ returns.

At the revelation of Jesus Christ. He uses the strongest word he could use here. The Scripture sometimes talks about the appearing of Christ or the coming of Christ but the revelation of Christ is the fullest, most complete description. It means literally the

unveiling of Jesus, not just his coming, but his complete unveiling, that everyone will see him exactly as he is. We will see him exactly as he is. We will see everything that he has done. It will all come to fulfillment.

And what is that grace going to do in our lives? That's what we want to think about now. Now I forgot to mention the adverb. He says fix your hope completely. He's saying, listen, we have hopes for this life and we hope that our children are going to accomplish certain things, grow up and certainly love the Lord, but we have other hopes for them, right? Reasonable good things. We hope that we can accomplish certain things in our jobs and our families. Those are all reasonable and good things. But he's saying, listen, decisively in your heart having stopped your mind from thinking about everything else, maintaining sobriety with the things of this world, fix your hope completely on the grace that's going to come to you at the moment Jesus Christ is revealed. What's going to happen at the moment Jesus Christ is revealed is your salvation will be actualized and finalized and completely realized at one instant. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, everything is going to change. He's saying think about that as it relates to you because he's talking about the grace that will be brought to you to finish the transformation, the transforming work that's already begun in you and is going on in you will be finished at a moment, at an instant. And if you and I can learn to fix our hope completely, fully, this adverb means to the fullest extent, if we can discipline ourselves from time to time in our lives to gird up the loins of our mind, maintaining sobriety, not being overcome by the things of this world, and we intentionally labor at fixing our hope on the grace that comes to us when Jesus Christ is revealed, it will have a powerful impact on you in the present moment. It will bring, like I said earlier, what does hope do? By faith, it lays hold of God's future action and infuses the present trial and difficulty with that future power. That's what it does.

Let me show you how this is talked about other places. Just turn a couple pages over toward the back of your Bible to 1 John 3. This is now the illustration. Second point, the illustration. The explanation, now the illustration and we're going to look at two places that's illustrated. 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." He's saying, listen, you're the child of God. If you've come to faith, you've been given a new heart, you are now a child of God. The Spirit in you cries out, Abba, Father. You have been made new. Old things have passed away. All things have become new in the truest essence of who you are, yet you still have sin clinging to you. You still dwell in a world that is opposed to God, and you have to fight every day. He's saying that when Jesus appears, we will be fully like him. No more sin. No more fighting against it. No more love of the things that God hates. And no more aversion to the things that God loves. Complete reordering in an instant, and everything is right. He says if you will fix your hope on that moment, it has an ongoing purifying power. Now, that's what he's saying in verse 3. Everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself just as he is pure.

I want to show you another illustration of the power of hope. Turn with me to Romans 4. Romans 4. The example of Abraham. Paul describes for us the power of hope in

Abraham's life. Remember, hope is faith looking to God's future action. God has made a promise he will do something in the future, and you trusting in that even though in the present it looks unlikely, in the present you're in affliction, in the present you can't see how this is going to happen, but faith, believing the promise of God, looking at the promise of God, knowing the faithfulness of God, believes in the future fulfillment of God's promise, and you are strengthened in the present moment. This is what we see here in Romans 4. Look at verse 16, "For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, 'A father of many nations have I made you')." That's the promise that God gave to Abraham, a father of many nations have I made you. That's what he says, and that's in Genesis 17. In the presence of him whom he believed, even God who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist, verse 18, "In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, 'So shall your descendants be.' Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief," but look what happened, "but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness."

Now think about this. Let's walk with Abraham for a moment. Abraham is 85 years old when he is told by God in Genesis 15, he's talking about two different passages here Paul is referencing. He's 85 years old when he's told by the Lord and he's told by God in Genesis 15 that he will be the father of nations and he's told in Genesis 12, but it's reiterated in Genesis 15 because Abraham says, "Listen, hey Lord, I don't have a son yet." And God says, takes him outside and says, "Look at the stars, count them. So shall your descendants be." Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Abraham believed the promise of God and he exercised faith. This is saving faith. Abraham believes the promise of God and righteousness comes through faith. That's the gospel.

Now, he's 85. He goes home and he tells Sarah, what happened? Sarai, this is when she's Sarai, he's Abram actually. They become Abraham and Sarah. But let's just go back to Abraham and Sarah because it confuses me if I have to keep changing names as we go back in time. So Abraham and Sarah, he goes back home and tells Sarah about it and she comes up with an idea. She's like, "Look, Abraham, we've been trying to have children for a long time and it's not happening. And I'm now really past the years of childbearing already at 75." She's 75 now. He's 85. "So I think what we need to do is you need to take my handmaid, Hagar, and through her you'll have, that's what God is talking about." She helps to figure out how the Lord's going to make this happen. And he goes into Hagar. She has Ishmael and now he thinks God is fulfilling his promise.

Well, God comes back 13 years later. Isn't that something? 13 years he thinks Ishmael's the guy. God comes when he's 99 now and he says, "Listen, next year your wife is going to have a son. I'm talking about Sarah." Abraham laughs and says, "How can Sarah at 89 years old, me at 99, how can we have a child?" And then God eventually names the child

Isaac, which means laughter. Remember what Sarah did when she heard about it? They both laughed.

So he's 99. God says, "I'm going to give you a child through Sarah." "We've been married for all these years. We've been trying for all these years. She's gone through menopause. I'm too old to have kids. There's just no way." But what this text says in Romans 4 is Abraham in hope. God said, "I'm going to give you, I'm going to make you a father not only," and he says in Genesis 17, "not only the father of a nation, a father of multitude." That's what Abraham means, a father of a multitude of nations. Ishmael plus Isaac plus others. It's amazing what God does through that man of faith. But anyway, he says, "I'm going to make you a father of a multitude of nations." And Abraham, looking at his own body, the weakness of his body, the deadness of Sarah's womb contemplates all of that. You see, faith is not a blind leap in the dark. Faith is not wishful thinking. Faith is rooted in the word of God, the promise of God. If you rightly understand the word of God and you believe the word of God, that is faith. And he looks at what God has said, "Through Isaac, your descendants will be named. Sarah's going to have a boy, and you're going to name him Isaac, and he's going to be, through him, salvation is going to come."

So Abraham looks at his body, believes that God has said this future good that's going to happen is "a nation's going to come from me and Sarah in our physical relationship, God is going to bring a son through that, and the Messiah is going to come through that," and in hope against hope, he believes. He believes that the promise of God will happen even though, think about the misery of his circumstances, all those disappointing years of hoping that she might be pregnant. Some of you know what that is like, to be thinking, "Maybe I'm pregnant this month," and then to find out you're not. Think about the years of agony for this couple, and then to have the promise of God spoken to them. When he's 75, he's told, "Through you, all the families of the earth are going to be blessed. It's going to come through you." He already knows he's going to have a descendant then. Ten years later, he has a conversation with him, "Hey, Lord, no children yet." And God says, "So shall your descendants be like the stars." Thirteen years after that now, "Why did you wait 24 years, Lord? Why didn't you do this 25 years ago when it would have been less of a hardship for Abraham and Sarah?" Because the Lord isn't so interested in our comfort as he is his glory and the reality is, our comfort is a very small thing compared to experiencing his glory. He loves you too much to let you settle for what you would want, and I would want.

And so he tells Abraham, "I'm going to, through you and Sarah, you're going to have a son," and Abraham in faith, in hope against hope, believes. The faith in the future blessing that's going to come comes back into his heart, and he is strengthened, as it says in Romans 4, "yet, with respect to the promise," verse 20, "he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured He who promised is able to do what He has promised." Now what this means now is you and I, in the moments that we now have of doubt, and difficulty, and unbelief, that we are to anchor our hope in something in the future that then will infuse the present with strength and power through faith, through hope.

Let's talk about the application. How do we apply this? Well, we said already that we have to get our thoughts under control. We've got to be disciplined. We've got to discipline our minds. We can't let our minds just run amok and we've got to be more intentional about that. And especially when we're struggling, when we're battling with sin, when we're burdened over our lack of love for God, when these things come to us, we have to take it seriously, and we've got to seek the Lord, and we've got to ask for his help in girding up the loins of our mind. We've got to be sober from the things of this world, and then we have to go about this particular thing. How do I put my heart and my hope on the moment Jesus Christ is revealed? What does that look like? I want to think about it in relation to the battle with sin, to battle with your besetting sin. Hebrews 12:2 speaks about the sin which so easily besets us, actually, verse 1. What is the sin that trips you up, that sometimes leads you to the verge of giving up? Aren't you tired of battling with it? Why does God not give us victory over these things? Don't you wish he did?

I mean, have you thought about that, why he doesn't? He's got a really good reason, but it's a good thing to stop and ask that question. Why doesn't God just make it where you just poof, got no more desire for that? Occasionally, the Lord does that for some believers at moments, but it's not normative. It's very unusual. If he does, praise God for it, but don't even trust that it's always going to be that way. Cling to Christ. Sometimes what he does is he loosens the bond for a period of time, and then he's going to let you learn how to walk by faith later by bringing it back around. He's going to allow Satan to come back around and tempt you. So let him who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall.

But why does he not just make it evaporate? Because the Lord is doing something much more wonderful than just delivering us from sin. He's leading you to a relationship of loving trust, and intimacy with Christ and there's something about the struggle that makes you cling to the Savior. God is doing something much more wonderful than we would ask. It's so good that he is, because it's so much better to have Christ than merely to conquer some habit. Now, he wants you to conquer that habit, but don't do it without Christ. Christ is the key.

And so this idea of how does that work out? So you've got a besetting sin, and you're not making the progress you do. You should be doing all the other means. You should be confessing your sins to other people, close brothers or sisters that love you. You should be bringing God's word continually to bear against it. You should be cultivating your heart like we talked about last week, working on your thinking, your affections, your will, all of that. But here he's saying another weapon in the arsenal against sin is to set your hope fully on the grace to be revealed to you. What's going to happen at the moment Christ is revealed? Listen to this. At the moment Christ is revealed, you will suddenly see everything exactly as it truly is. You will see sin in all of its exceeding sinfulness, and you will detest even to be spotted in any way by sin. It will instantly become that clear to you. And you will see the beauty of holiness, the glory of what it is to live exactly according to God's perfect will and word. And in that moment it will become so clear, and think about that, you will love righteousness. You will love holiness in that moment. You will love it like you've never loved it before. And if you're born again, you have a part of your heart that now loves it, that didn't ever love it before, and that you've been

changed, but you're fighting against the old man continually. In that moment the old man evaporates. Instantaneously everything changes. You now hate sin with the hatred that God feels toward it and you hate sin not because it stains you, you hate sin in a truly Godward way. You hate sin because it is an affront to your precious Father. It is that which nailed your precious Savior to the cross and you suddenly see it as it is, and you will detest it and you could never be tempted. Listen, it's going to be impossible to sin in heaven, but you would never even want to imagine sinning once Christ returns. It will have lost everything that it ever appealed to you. So sin, in thinking about that, in remembering this is who you are, this is where you're heading, do you see how the joy of that, and you meditate on that, you think on that, and the power of that future hope comes back into the present and strengthens you for the battle of today, because you're still having to fight to the death with sin every day right now. But if you don't use this weapon in the arsenal, you're fighting with one hand behind your back. So think about that in relation to whatever sins you're fighting against.

Now think about it from another direction, another application. How often do you find yourself thinking, you know, I don't love as I should love. I don't think of others as I should think of others. I don't love the things of God as I should love the things of God. I don't want to be in the word. I don't want to be in prayer like I should. And you're grieved over that, and it burdens you. In the moment, and you're distracted. I mentioned earlier how we can be so easily distracted as you're reading your Bible. In the moment Christ is revealed, when we see him as he is, you will become like him in every way and you will now know in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, you will see in a way you've never seen before the exceeding beauty of God. You will see in a way that will enrapture your whole being how glorious is his holiness, how wondrous is his goodness. Everything that you could ever long for is in God. You will see the supreme beauty of Christ in all that he has done and you will want nothing more than to sit in his presence and bask in his glory forever. You will instantly see that. You will instantly know that there is nothing more precious than to just stand before my Savior, to look into his face. You will know that. You will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. Meditate on that.

And again, the hope and the glory of what God is going to do, if you keep your mind and you keep thinking about that. And so think about it. You go through day to day, you're dealing with a temptation and you're trying to apply all the different weapons that you have, maybe you're meditating on Scripture, "Thy word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against thee." You're praying. You're trying to turn your heart and putting off and putting on. But also add in the fact that there's coming a day when I will see with such clarity how awful and evil and ugly sin is that I will not even be able to imagine wanting that. I will be like God in my heart, truly, as he created me to be. And when you're having trouble wanting to pray, rather than kick yourself, think about the grace that's going to come to you when you will have a changed heart and you will know that the most wonderful place to be at any moment that I could ever be, the place that I would be above everything else, is to be at the feet of Jesus. That will make a difference in your battle with sin, in my battle with sin.

Peter says, listen, if you're going to live out the Christian life, if you're going to be faithful, you have to have gratitude for what God has done, but you have to also be looking ahead to what's coming so that then you can bear up in the present. We have the most glorious past because our past is everything that Jesus is, and we have the most glorious future because our future is everything that Christ is bringing, and so we have to live in kind of a hard present, but in reality, if we keep rooted in what Christ has done and we keep looking toward what Christ is going to do in us, it makes the present, though our outer man is wasting away, our inner man is being renewed more and more glory. We're being transformed in the image of Christ as in a mirror, as it says in 2 Corinthians 3, transformed into his image as we look at him. God wants that for you and me so that we can be all that he wants us to be for his glory.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we rejoice in the great salvation that You've given us in Christ. We confess, Lord, that we do need to talk to ourselves and stop listening to ourselves. How easy it is for us just to let time slip by, to be intoxicated with the things of the world, to put our hope in this world and to put our hope in the things of this life. Lord, let us hate that and show us that the way to hate it is to set our hope fully on what's going to happen when Jesus returns. And thank You that it's by grace that He's going to do all these things, grace that's going to be brought to us, undeserved blessings that will transform us in the way we just talked about. We can't do any of this in ourselves. We're like a leopard, we can't change our spots. We need grace. And we thank You that we come to the God of all grace when we pray and we come to a Savior who is full of grace and truth. Lord Jesus, be glorified in our hearts, in our lives, make us strong in You, strong in faith. We pray this in Your name. Amen.