Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

One of the books on my study shelf has this title: ‘*How Now Shall We Live?*’ And the premise of the book is that we live in a world that is opposed to Jesus Christ, to His Word, and, increasingly, to His people. What we believe and what we value is becoming more and more different than what the world believes and values. So, how now shall we live? Well, that is not something that we have to figure out by ourselves; the Lord has told us, in His Word, how we are to live. Indeed, it is the chief concern of the passage in front of us today.

Verse 13 begins a new section of Peter’s letter. And we know this for two reasons:

1. First, it begins with the word “***therefore***.” And the more time you spend reading the New Testament in English, and particularly the Epistles of the NT, the more you become aware of the importance of the word “*therefore*.” It even made me wonder if it is the same with other languages? And it is! In Maori Bibles, the word used is “*Na,*” French uses “*donc,*” in Mandarin it is ‘Soyee,’ in Korean it is ‘Geromero,’ and in Dutch it is “*daroom*.” Bible translators always use the same word to translate the word used in the original language, Greek. And the word tells us that an important point or conclusion or application, based on what has just been said, is about to be made. And that is the case with 1 Peter 1:13 and what follows. Peter has finished the wonderful “salvation song” of verses 3-12. Now he wants to tell us how we are to live in light of this wonderful salvation.
2. And the second reason we know we are beginning a new section is **the language** in these verses. You see, up till now, the language has been what we call *indicative* – describing language – you are this and you have received that, etc. But now we get what is called *imperative* language – commands – you must do this, and you must not do that.

So, in this next section of Peter’s letter, we see **How the Knowledge of Salvation Should Shape Christian Living.** And what we will see is that Christian living is shaped by a **FOCUSED HOPE** and a **FORMED** **HOLINESS**.

1. In the first place then, verse 13 reveals that a life shaped by salvation has **a focused hope**.
   1. And as I said a moment ago, we are now going to hear a bunch of commands. And the first three are in verse 13: “*Preparing your minds for action,*” “*being sober-minded,*” and “*set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” And I won’t bore you with an explanation of how Greek grammar reveals this, but the **main command** is the third one: “*Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” The first two are what we could callan activity and an attitude that are necessary to do the main command. And we will look at those soon. But let’s begin with the main command: “*Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” And hope is one of those words that we use often, but **what is hope**? Well, if you boys and girls have a birthday coming up, you might be hoping for a particular present. Lego or a bike or a special outing. But that is not the hope in view here. That is an emotional feeling sort of hope – maybe it will happen, maybe it will not. The hope spoken of here is a confident or concrete expectation. You can’t see what you hope for, you can’t touch it, it is something in the future, but you have no doubt at all that it will happen.
      1. And I have called this a **focused** hope because we are told *what* it is that we are to set our hope fully on and *when* it will happen: “*on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*”
         1. And we spoke about this, already, in connection with **verses 3-5**. To Christians who were suffering persecution, Peter spoke about the “*living hope*” that all believers have in “*an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you …* [which will be] *revealed at the last time*.”
            1. Do you have something wonderful ahead in your future? A birthday, a holiday, a windfall, a promotion? It is amazing how some future good thing can help us endure difficulties or hardships or even just the monotonous routines of life.
            2. Well, there is an incredible inheritance of riches and praise and joy and honour that awaits every believer. And we will receive this inheritance when Jesus comes again and takes us to be with Him in the new heavens and the new earth.
      2. And this would have been a **wonderful encouragement** to the believers that Peter originally wrote to. Remember that they were suffering terrible persecution and had been forced to flee their homeland. So, Peter said to them, “You have lost much for the sake of Christ. But you have been shown grace by Jesus Christ. You have a glorious salvation. And a time is coming when the fullest measure of that grace will be given to you by Jesus Himself.”
      3. And I hope that these words are a wonderful encouragement for you, also. Perhaps you have lost much or suffered much. Perhaps you are paying a heavy price for being a follower of Jesus, today. Well, you can’t see it or touch it, and I can’t show it to you; I can only point you to the promise of Jesus here in Scripture. But have no doubt that Jesus will come again, and you will receive His praise and a glorious inheritance.
      4. And you know, this focused hope is an **integral part of the Lord’s Supper**. When we sit at the table together, we are not only remembering what Christ did on the cross in the past, we are also looking forward to His Second Coming. **1 Corinthians 11:26** says, “*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes*.” So, at this table, we declare our certain hope that Jesus will come again!
   2. But Peter didn’t just say, “*Set your hope fully on”* this future grace*.* He also described **the activity and the attitude that are necessary** for us to set our hope fully on this future grace. You see, for starters, **you cannot see** this future grace/inheritance. I can’t put it on the table in front of you or transport you forward in time so you can take a peek at it; you just have to believe it. And the devil, sin, and the world will do everything they can to convince you that it is a foolish hope, or that you do not deserve it, or that science disproves what the Bible says, or that you are better off watching Netflix or anything else than hoping for some silly future inheritance. So, that is why the activity and attitude described here are a very important part of how we set our hope fully on the grace to come. Let’s look at each of these:
      1. The **activity** is“*preparing your minds for action*.” To set our hope fully on this future we must prepare our minds for action. So, what does this mean?
         1. Well, the ESV has a marginal note which explains that the literal meaning of the Greek here is to “**Gird up the loins of your mind**.”
            1. You see, back in Bible times, men wore a full-length seamless linen shirt thin that was held in place by a leather belt. And that was fine for walking or sitting, but if you had to run or go into battle, you would take up the shirt tails and tuck them into your belt. Then you were able to run fast and do battle.
            2. So, in terms of our minds, we have to actively engage them and prepare them and train them in order to have this living hope.
            3. And remember that Peter wrote these words **to believers**; to those who trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation and who have the Holy Spirit living within them. So, to believers, he says, Tuck in the loose ends of your life, turn your mind away from the world and its ideas and the devil and his lies, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you focus your mind on biblical priorities, to engage with the teaching of Scripture.
            4. We will talk about this verse more in connection with our second point but **Romans 12:2** says, “*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect*.” And **Colossians 3:1-3** says, “*If then you have been raised with Christ … Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth*.”
            5. You see, we do not naturally and easily slide into a solid and living hope. When trouble comes, we will not automatically switch into what does the Bible teach/promise mode. We have to work at these things; we have to train/fill our minds. This book (the Bible) is full of God’s truth and God’s promises. But it needs to get from in here (Bible) to in here (mind). And God has designed very ordinary ways that that happens: Sunday services – preaching and sacraments. Regular Bible study. Personal devotions. Reading. Church history. Biography. Leadership course. Podcasts.
            6. We are surrounded by sexual liberation, secular Humanism, evolution, egalitarianism, critical Race theory and Intersectionality, neo-Marxism, the end of the world by climate change. And all of these things are hope-less. Only Christianity brings real hope, because it is informed by God’s truth.
            7. But to know this we must set our minds on Scripture.
      2. But alongside the activity of “*preparing your minds for action,*” we are also to have the **attitude** of “*being soberminded*.”
         1. And this literally means to not get drunk. But the idea here is that unlike the world, we are self-controlled, disciplined, discerning, not doing whatever we feel like or what everyone else is doing.
            1. Our world lurches from one cause to the next. Racism, sexism, environmentalism, anti-this, pro-that. What was wrong yesterday is celebrated and mandatory today! How people lived as male and female and views on marriage and family are thrown out the door in favour of a new idea.
            2. But what did we hear James Hyslop preach about last Sunday afternoon? **Ecclesiastes 1**: “*What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us*.” Calm the farm! Take it easy. What does God’s word say before we get all excited and join the protest or give into despair or change what we have always done?
            3. One example for today. **Covid**. Will it kill us all? Vaccines. Should we take them? Will this lead to economic ruin? Will this change how government monitors its citizens? World – fear!!!!! You – “I am not my own but belong body and soul in life and death to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ … He watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven. And “*for me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain*!” And when they ask you, why? You can say, “because I have a living hope in a future eternal inheritance!”
         2. But you will only know this and say this if you have prepared your minds for action, and you are soberminded*.*
2. So, the first response to our wonderful salvation in Christ is that we would live with **a** **focused hope**. But the second response to our wonderful salvation in Christ is that we would live with **A** **FORMED** **HOLINESS**.
   1. When we looked at our wonderful salvation, we saw that its heart is **relationship** with a Triune God. And that is highlighted by how Peter describes believers in **verse 14**: “*As obedient children*.”
      1. Are there any parents here who like disobedient children? I didn’t think so. Well, **Ephesians 1:4-5** explains that God chose us and adopted us as His children in Christ “*that we should be holy and blameless before Him*.” So, as our Loving Father in heaven, God expects us to obey Him.
      2. And it is this relationship that forms our holiness. It is not a *rule* holiness; it is a *relationship* holiness. It is not a bare do this and don’t do that, it is because I have graciously adopted you into my family, by punishing your sins in my Son on the cross, that you must live like this and not like that. It is because I have put my HOLY Spirit in you that you are able to strive to be holy.
   2. And what this relationship obedience looks like is expressed negatively and positively in the rest of **verses 14-16**: “*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."”*
      1. And notice **the standard or measure** of the holiness we must strive for – it is God Himself: “*as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct*.” In other words, be just like your Father!
         1. And how often do we hear that in relation to children – oh, he is just like his father, or she is just like her mother! And parents are usually chuffed to hear that, unless, of course, it is their bad habits that the children are imitating. 😊 But it should be that people say of us, oh he or she is just like his or her Father in heaven – Holy.
      2. And **verse 16** quotes the passage we read earlier from **Leviticus 19**. “*You shall be holy, for I am holy*.” But of course, we have even more reason to love these words as New Testament believers. You see, unlike the Old Testament believers, who only had ceremonies and promises of a Messiah to come, we have Jesus Christ who has come! And on the cross, He took our sins on Himself and put His holiness in our spiritual bank account, which we receive by faith. So, our Father views us as holy because He has united us with Jesus. So, in Christ, **we are holy**! But because of Christ, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are to strive to live a holy life. We want to be like our Father and like the Lord Jesus and like the Holy Spirit.
      3. And how do we do this? Well, we do this by “*not* [being] *conformed to the passions of your former ignorance*, *and* [instead by being] *holy in all your conduct.”* So, we have to unlearn some things and learn others.
         1. One sport I learned to enjoy in America is **baseball**. And for several years I have watched one player on the team I keep an eye on get better and better. You see, a few years ago, he would come out to bat, and he would always swing at the first pitch and try and put the ball into orbit. Sometimes he connected but most often he missed. This was his natural inclination. But he has practiced and practiced, and he has learned to curb that natural inclination, and to wait a ball or two to see what type of pitch the pitcher is throwing, and not to give everything to every attempt to hit the ball. And his batting percentages are way up.
         2. And most of us will have learned not to follow our first instincts in relation to one thing or another and develop others skills, and be better off for it.
         3. Well, a consistent message of the New Testament letters is that before we were born again, we were slaves to sinful passions. In our ignorance, we gave in to sexual urges, anger, selfishness, and greed, etc. There was no place for God in what we thought, said, or did. But now that we have been born again and given a new nature, by the Holy Spirit, we must put off sinful passions or instincts or behaviours, and put on godliness or holiness.
         4. And there are lists of put off these behaviours and attitudes and out these ones on instead throughout the New Testament: Colossians 3, Romans 13, 1 Corinthians 6, Galatians 5, and Ephesians 4-5. I commend them to your study.
      4. And the key point here is that this does not happen without effort on your part.
         1. Have you ever heard someone say that on the night before an exam, put the textbook under your pillow and the material will float up into your brain. Wouldn’t that be great! But it doesn’t work. You have to spend time studying.
         2. And similarly, we do not drift into holiness. In fact, if we drift, it will be away from holiness. We must be intentional. We have to make use of the ordinary means of grace I mentioned earlier.
            1. One example – the Lord’s Supper preparatory form. Did you use it? Did you take the form as a reminder to set some time aside to examine yourself…?
            2. Sermon game. Every Sunday, even when there were visitors. One thing you learned/memorable/made an impression/need to do.

Brothers and Sisters, what is desperately needed in a world that wants everyone to think and eat and watch and dress and behave *its way*, which is the way of wickedness, is people who are noticeable because how they live is spiritually and morally different.

Does this describe you?

Or could it be that you are one of those who loves the idea of being *saved*, but is not so in love with the idea of being *holy*? If this describes you, remember that your God is holy. And the price of your salvation was the death of His Holy Son, Jesus.

So, how now shall we live? With a focused hope and a formed holiness. Amen.