

Please read 1Peter 1:13-16 ...

What we expect to happen in the future drives how we live in the present. ***The athlete preparing for the Olympics, the person getting married / having a baby etc. - all live accordingly!***

Peter says Christians are looking forward to a glorious future, and it shapes how we live now – if it doesn't, something is seriously wrong! He has told us about this future earlier in ch.1: we've been born into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and now we have a guaranteed inheritance of life with Him, for which God is even now preparing us.

And now Peter tells us that the Christian life is lived in the light of that inheritance. That's why Peter begins v.13 with the word "*Therefore*" - linking what he's just told us about our future with what he's going to tell us next about how to live today. ***NB: Because we're impatient, we want to put the cart before the horse ... "Just tell us what to do – how to fix our lives!"*** But the things we need to do are determined by what God has already done for us in Christ, and the future He's preparing for us. That's what not only shows us how to live well, but give us the strength and motivation to do it!

So P says, "In order to live well, you've got to look ahead – see where you're going!" ***v.13: "Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at His coming."***

We usually think of grace as our present possession – the riches of God's goodness poured out upon us already in Christ. But now Peter turns to the future and there's even more grace to come. For the return of the Lord will mean complete and perfect salvation, the fulfilment of our deepest longings.

That's why we're to set our hope there. ***NB: Peter is not talking of an uncertain hope, like "I hope we'll be able to finish the Premier League season."*** To hope means to wait eagerly for something God has promised, something that's certain because of what God has already done in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The victory is already won, and we look forward to the full fruits of it. ***"My hope is built on nothing less ..."***

But here's the problem: the sin that remains in our hearts latches on to the temptations of the world around us and draws us away from our hope.

That's why Peter tells us to have minds that are alert and fully sober (v.13) – literally, "*to gird up the loins of our mind.*" It's a battle image. We have to fight to keep our mind looking in the right direction! Our thoughts scatter like chaff on a windy day, but Peter calls us to focus on what's coming, like a child looking forward to Christmas – the anticipation grows stronger every day!

You see, the more we meditate on God's promises, the more they exercise control on our living. So Peter says, "*Fix your mind there, and it will begin to make an impact on your life here. And your life here will become very different from the world around.*"

So pray and fight for a mind that's alert ***and sober***. Not solemn and joyless, but clear and stable. Not imbibing the philosophies of this world that befuddle our minds and cause us to wander through life in confusion, like a drunk staggering all over the road.

Are you beginning to be delivered from the intoxication of this world by setting your mind on your future hope? ***Is that how you live? What do you think about when you've nothing else to think about?*** That tells you a lot about where your hope is and where you've set your mind, because your mind automatically goes there!

The battle to live well begins with focusing our minds on the saving grace that will be fully ours when Jesus returns. This is what transforms your living here and now. *When you centre your thoughts on Christ and His return, life becomes a lot simpler and you make much faster progress. It clears our mind of junk – it sorts the agenda page.*

The Christian life is lived backwards from the future, as it were. Knowing what we're destined for transforms and energizes how we live now.

That's why Peter now tells us that our HOPE leads to our HOLINESS: vv.14-16: "*As obedient children (if you can imagine such a thing!), do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'*"

HOLINESS! There's a word to make us tremble ... or yawn! I often get requests like, "*Help me with my marriage*" but not "*How can I live a holy life?*" Again, we want to be practical. But holiness is the most practical thing there is! It's the foundation of everything if you want to live well. Here's how it works.

The basic idea of holiness is the idea of "*different.*" The holiness of God is one way of talking about God's otherness. His difference from us. His being in a class by himself, set apart.

And when God gives us new birth by His Spirit and adopts us as His children in Christ, we become different too: set apart for God. It's as though He puts a "reserved" sticker on us! We're no longer available for other purposes; our life is reserved for God. And this makes us different from the world around us. That's why Peter describes us as "exiles" (v.2) and "foreigners" (v.17). We're living in this fallen world but we no longer belong to this fallen world.

And what Peter is saying is: since you have in fact been reserved for the Lord, LIVE as those who've been reserved for the Lord, by devoting yourself to Him.

What does that look like? Simply this: to be holy means becoming like Jesus. He lived a life completely reserved for His Father, always doing the Father's will, perfectly reflecting the Father's character. Holiness in someone's life is a life that looks like Jesus.

Which means holiness is super-practical. This is the foundation for living well. Think about it:

- If you had the kindness and gentleness of Jesus, that would make a difference to the way you speak to your wife / husband / children – wouldn't it?
- If you had the integrity of Jesus, wouldn't that change what you look at on the internet?
- If you had the compassion of Jesus, wouldn't that make a difference to how you respond to difficult people?
- If you had Jesus' concern for the lost, wouldn't that change the way you use your time and money?
- If you were like Jesus in your desire to please God, there'd be a revolution in your values and attitudes and ambitions!

Don't tell me holiness isn't practical – has nothing to do with real life! It's about the goodness of God reshaping the whole of our lives. Every part reserved for Him!

That's what Peter underlines when He adds in v.16: "For it is written, 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" He's quoting Leviticus (11:44; 11:45; 19:2; 20:7; 20:26), which is a scary book for many people. *How many attempts to read through the Bible have collapsed and died in the pages of Leviticus!* Leviticus seems so far removed from us! We're having to deal with real world issues like

Coronavirus – we can't be bothered with a book like Leviticus that's full of things like washing your hands properly, disinfecting your work surfaces, social distancing, self-isolation, quarantining people, etc – What's that got to do with real life? Who would live like that?? Oh, wait a minute ...

Anyway, we find Leviticus hard-going. But by the end of Leviticus, you're left in no doubt that holiness is meant to shape every part of our lives. Leviticus portrays all of life constrained by holiness: what you wear, how you shave, who you sleep with, how you deal with rising damp, how you respond to having a baby or having a zit on your face. It's a symbol-laden way of living, reminding us every day that our whole life is reserved for God.

Leviticus shouts that holiness is not just what you do at church! It's what kind of neighbour you are, what kind of family member, work colleagues etc. Holiness is as much about how you behave behind a steering wheel as how you act in your life group. And Peter is going to bring this out in his letter just as Leviticus does. My whole life, reserved for God, lived for His glory.

Is that how you live? With a consciousness of the “reserved for God” sign on every part of your life? My marriage – set apart and reserved for God; my children ... my job ... my possessions ... my body ... etc. Is that how you live? Think what a difference it would make in every area of your life if you lived out of your new identity as a child of God destined for a glorious inheritance, instead of living out of the hurts and resentments of your past, or out of the cultural values that surround you.

Far from holiness being remote and impractical, sealed up in a box marked “religion”, holiness is the most practical thing there is! Living every part of your life as a child of God who will inherit the Kingdom. And holiness is a joyful thing, because it puts broken lives back together again.

CONCLUSION

That's the Good News Peter is sharing with us. God has given us a new identity and a magnificent future. Think on this, says Peter, and let it shape your life today.

Is that how you live? Let's ask ourselves: Do I look just like this world, or am I increasingly looking like my Saviour Jesus, reserved for my Father in heaven? What does my life reveal as my true hope and my real god? *For you can be sure of this: how we live now shows where we've truly placed our hope.*

People planning to get married live now in preparation for the wedding. As Christians we're heading for a wedding day, when Christ the Bridegroom returns to take His Church as His Bride. That's not a bleak prospect – that will be the happiest day of our lives! And what Peter is saying is, *“Keep your eyes on that day, and let the splendour of that day guide your pathway now, for your joy.”*

PRAYER: Our Father God, we thank you for the future that You have won for us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Enable us by Your Spirit to fix our minds on that glorious hope, and to live as those whose whole life is set apart for You; for Your glory's sake. AMEN.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION:

- What does your life reveal as your true hope and your real god?
- What difference would it make to your life if you set your hope on the future God has prepared for you?