

The Life of Faith – How should we then live?

We've looked over the past few days at some of the wrong motives that people have for 'following Christ'. On Saturday evening, we turned our focus to what it means truly to follow Christ – what it was that Christ commands and demands of us when He calls us to be His disciples. Yesterday, Dave Li reminded us of what great rewards we have in Jesus Christ: the result of faith.

This morning, I want to take this time to encourage and exhort you on how Scripture says we ought to live, in light of all of this. There are some very practical ways to live that Peter commands here in the rest of 1 Peter 1. Let me first just try to provide a few summary thoughts on the passage we studied on Saturday, 1 Peter 1:1-12.

I. Why faith?

- I. We are creatures, dependent on our Creator; Faith is really the only way that we live by
 - a. When Adam and Eve were created, an implicit trust-relationship based on faith was defined:
 - God was omniscient, they were not – He alone knew every single thing He had created, even before man existed
 - God was omnipotent (able to create all that would sustain life), they were not – God alone was powerful to create all things *ex nihilo*, 'out of nothing'
 - God was the rule-definer, stating, "...but you must not eat of from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." (Genesis 2:17); Adam and Eve (like us) were to trust in the very Word of God, that they would die if they transgressed the law that the Creator had defined
 - It is ironic that sinful man, in various ways throughout history, has sought to reverse this dynamic, believing that a creature's puny intellect can slay the existence of the very Almighty One who gave him a brain to begin with → "God is dead... and we have killed him" declares Nietzsche
 - b. We utterly rely on God for everything we need
 - The Bible reminds us in 2 Peter 1 that "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."
 - We are implicitly creatures of faith... every single person lives by faith in something. On what or whom do you place your faith?
- II. Faith thrusts us into a full dependence on God, and reminds us that He is the One who preserves us in our salvation
 - a. God is the One who has chosen us (1:2), called us, and is shielding us by His power (1:5)
 - In verse 5, Peter reminds us that it is through faith that we are shielded by God's power
 - God Himself preserves us unto salvation, and we access this through believing His Word:
 - "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:13-14)

- III. Faith forces us to contend with of the character of God in the midst of uncertainty, trials and suffering, rather than on the situations themselves
- a. In every moment of the day, faith forces us to focus on God's character (e.g. His goodness, justice, mercy) instead of on events
 - Seldom do we truly understand what is going on behind the scenes, or what forces are driving a particular situation
 - b. By faith, Job feared God, and honoured Him, even as God repeatedly allowed devastation in his life
 - Even after losing his all of his flock of oxen, donkey and camels, and losing all of his servants and all of his sons and daughters, Job recognized that his life and all that he had owned was fully dependent on God
 - "At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.'" (Job 1:20-21)
 - In his anguish, and suffering now even physical affliction of boils, Job lets his grief be known and yet by faith would rather die than deny God's Word
 - "'Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for, that God would be willing to crush me, to let loose his hand and cut me off! Then I would still have this consolation – my joy in unrelenting pain – that I had not denied the words of the Holy One.'" (Job 6:8-10)
 - As Job grieves over his loss, his pain and his suffering, God's answer to Job is not an explanation, but a revelation and reminder again of God's nature and His character; Job is to focus back on the sovereignty and goodness of God, rather than on his situation, painful as it may be (Job 38-42)

II. What is the nature of Biblical faith?

- I. A life of faith requires eyes of faith, and its foundation is the certain promises of God
 - a. As we studied in Saturday evening's Bible study Christian faith is trust in something that we know has happened (the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ) and will happen (the second coming of the Lord Jesus to redeem His people), with certainty
 - b. What we set our gaze upon is ultimately what motivates the way we live
 - c. Examples of faith set forth in Hebrews 11:
 - "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was **looking forward** to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Heb 11:8-10)
 - "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only **saw them and welcomed them from a distance...**" (Heb 11:13)
 - d. All of the examples of faith in Scripture looked heavenward - they set their eyes upon things that weren't always immediately visible to them... instead, their gaze was fixed upon God's promises
 - e. So what ought we be looking forward to? 1 Peter 1:8-9 reminds us:
 - "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you **believe in him** and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1:8-9)

- f. Christians who believe in God's promises need to get used to living with this way of thinking: "I don't know, but I trust in who God is to know that He will do what is right, just and most loving"

II. Biblical faith is active, not passive

- a. Hebrews 11:1 → "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."
 ▪ Faith here is a state of being... "**being** sure of..." and "being certain..."
 ▪ It is a choice of action, for we can always choose not to be certain
- b. The kind of faith that Scripture describes is a matter of choice that we make, and one we make each an every single moment of every day

III. The rewards and benefits of an active, vibrant faith in God are manifold

- a. A vibrant faith will result in rejoicing (1:6) in times of trial and suffering; why rejoicing?
 ▪ Our faith is in a 'living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that will never perish, spoil or fade...' (1:4)
 ▪ Ultimately, suffering and trials is a means by which our faith is tested and proven genuine – true faith in the Lord will only be strengthened through trials (1:7)
- b. Our faith will '... result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.' (1:7); Scripture reminds us that 'the best is yet to come' in '...praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ returns

III. What does a life of faith look like?

Let's conclude by focusing on the rest of the passage in 1 Peter 1:13-25, where Peter instructs the Christian on how then we ought to live. There are two very clear, very practical mandates given here. You can't miss it. There's a definite shift in Peter's thought here. Up to this point all the verbs are in the indicative mode, that is they state fact. Now they begin to be imperative, they make commands.

First, he discusses our responding obligation to God in verses 13-21. That is, to live in obedience to God's commands.

Second, Peter discusses our responding obligation to others in verses 22-25. That is, to love one another with a deep, deep sort of love.

In doing so, Peter is actually reminding us of what he undoubtedly would have been a first-hand witness to: what the Lord Jesus said were the two greatest commandments: To love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, strength and second, to love your neighbour as yourself (Mark 12:29-31). What was it that the Lord Jesus said? "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me..." (John 14:21a). Obedience is evidence of true love for God.

I. Living in obedience to God's commands: 3 aspects of this

- a. Hope
 ▪ 1:13 → "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; **set your hope fully** on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed"
 ▪ Focus on 'set your hope fully' → this is the first exhortation
 ▪ Notice 'therefore', a word of transition, takes us from statement to application
 ▪ Because we have been saved and because God has given us this great gift of salvation, He says "set your hope fully"
 ▪ What is hope? It's basically the Christian's attitude toward the future

- Hope in its essence is the same substance as faith; it is **believing** in God, it is **trusting** in God... John MacArthur points out that “faith is believing in God in the present and hope is believing in God for the future.”
- Faith accepts, hope expects
- In exhorting us to ‘set our hope fully’, Peter is saying that we owe it to God to fix our hope in Him... i.e. to live for the future, to believe God and anticipate the glorious fulfillment of His future promise... to trust in God unreservedly, completely... no back doors, no ‘plan Bs’. Set our hope fully in God alone
- John MacArthur: “We owe our God hope. This great and gracious God who saved us, this great and gracious God who by grace was generous to us beyond description, who proved Himself able to forgive our sins, to provide the perfect sacrifice in Christ on the cross and His resurrection, to redeem us, this God who totally transformed us is worthy of our confident trust for the future as He has proven Himself worthy of our confident trust in the present. If He has been faithful in the past, He will be faithful in the present, He will be faithful in the future. And we are to live in the light of that future. What He promised He will do.”
- Hope should characterize our life, a living hope, a hope for an inheritance which is imperishable (verse 4), and undefiled and will not fade away – it is reserved and protected for us by God Himself!
- But listen carefully: this hope isn’t as much meant for how it affects or impacts us as wonderful as hope is. Peter is calling us to hope before it **glorifies God**.
- When you truly trust God for the future, you are affirming by that trust that God is trustworthy and that brings Him glory. If you deny God, you doubt God, you disbelieve God, you are saying in effect, I’m not sure you can trust Him

What are we to set our hope on?

- But what are we to set our hope on? “Set your hope fully on the **grace** to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed...”
- Peter is here talking about the Lord’s Second Coming... we are to live in light of the Second Coming, but more specifically, the grace we will receive at the second coming
- Peter is reminding us that none of that which we hope for is earned... it is entire God’s grace... so as Christians, we are to live setting our hope fully on the grace that God has promised us in Christ Jesus
- Colossians 3:2 → “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”
- Question: is the experience of grace in your life a thrilling thing? Do you set your hope fully on the grace that we will yet receive when Christ returns?
- What do you set your hopes on?

How do we do this?

- Earlier on in verse 13: “Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled...”
- Other translations say “gird your minds for action...”; it really simply means to tie something that is loose – much like tightening up your belt or garments, getting ready to do something, to get down to business
- In other words, you are ready to move, ready to go. That’s the idea. Fix your hope on the grace that is to come and at any moment you are ready to go.
- Peter applies this metaphorically to the mind... ‘prepare your **minds** for action’; He’s not saying, get your pajamas on and sit on the roof and hope for the Rapture... that’s not the idea
- Rather, Peter is saying get your priorities right, get your mind screwed down, let nothing hinder your mind as you fix on that hope, prepare your mind to come out cleanly from the

clutter of life's circumstances; disentangle yourself from the hindrances of the world so that you can fix your hope squarely on Christ

- Having self-control literally means to keep sober; the Greek word *nepho* means literally not to get drunk, but here Peter is borrowing this word in calling us metaphorically to not be intoxicated by the world
- Sober-mindedness is the idea of spiritual steadfastness, of spiritual self-control, clarity of mind, of being in charge of your priorities, having a discipline of heart and of mind
- So Peter is exhorting us to tie down our minds and live a disciplined life so that we can firmly fix our hope in God!

b. Holiness

- 1:14-16 → “As obedient children, 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””
- John MacArthur reminds us that hope produces holiness: “Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.” (1 John 3:3)
- There are two commands presented here: 1) to not conform, and 2) to be holy
- I don't think we should miss the point that Peter is trying to make here. It is absolutely possible for a Christian to abstain from evil pursuits and activities that the world presses upon him, but at the same time remain stagnant in his spiritual walk
- So Peter reminds us that not only are we to not conform to evil desires, but we are instead to look for ways to be holy, just as God is holy

“Do not conform...”

- To conform to something means to be similar or identical to, or to be in agreement or in harmony with
- Another dictionary definition could be “to act in accordance with prevailing standards or customs...”
- Peter is warning that the world has prevailing standards or customs that are evil, but that these aren't patterns that are unfamiliar to us... we were once a part of them, he says
- Question: do you remember what your life was like before you experienced the regeneration of the Spirit of Christ? Do you remember all the things your heart coveted, your attitude, your character, how you treated people, the things you perhaps indulged in? Perhaps it was pride that characterized your life. Perhaps it was addiction. Ambition for riches and success? Envy towards those who had more? One broken relationship after another?
- God saved you from all of this, Peter is reminding us... so do not conform or go right back to those evil desires from which you were freed!
- There ***is*** a pattern to this world, and the pattern is sin
- Peter goes on to give examples: “...malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind.” (2:1); debauchery, lust, drunkenness, etc. (4:3)
- 1 Peter 4:3 → “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do – live in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idoltry.”
- Paul writes in Romans 12:2a → “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” **Be Transformed**

“Be holy...”

- “As obedient children...” should better be translated, “as children of obedience” → as Christians, we ought to derive our character from obedience
- Peter is saying that since we are children of obedience by nature, by God’s sovereign election, our pattern should certainly be holiness
- We are to (instead of conforming to our old evil ways), be pure, be clean, be righteous, be sinless, be set apart from defilement, cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh
- Look for ways to imitate the holiness of God – Christ was tempted in every way, yet sinned not.
- In every situation, in every moment of every day, look for ways to emanate the holiness of God – love truth, love righteousness, love obedience to the law of the land that God has placed in authority over you, rejoice in morality, celebrate goodness and purity, act out God’s perfect standard of holiness in your life – seek after God’s grace to do this

c. Honour

- Final mention here about a third aspect of obedience that Peter points out
- 1:17 → “Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.”
- To live in reverent fear of God means to live in deep reverence, awe, respect and honour of Him
- Question: Do you have honour for God? Do you respect His holiness?
- Remember, those whom God loves, He disciplines, as Hebrews reminds us (Hebrews 12)

II. Love others with a deep love

- 1:22 → “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.”

a. This is the second major exhortation that Peter has for us: to ‘love one another deeply, from the heart.’”

- Dear friends, do we truly love one another in this manner? Can we truly say, looking around the room, that our love for each other runs deep, stemming from the depths of our hearts?
- This is something that the modern Church lacks severely, and it originates from the sinful desire to put ourselves first in everything
- The world constantly feeds into our selfish desires, egocentricity is at an all time high, considering others better than ourselves, and placing their needs above ours is totally ‘uncool’
- We spend too much time wrapped up with ourselves and our affairs that we have no capacity left over at the end of the day to love others truly, deeply.
- Joshua Harris joined Facebook on a whim after much chiding from those in circles. But after only a week, he called it quits and closed his Facebook account. Here’s an excerpt from his blog explaining why he did this...
 - “First, I just don't have enough self-control not to check my page constantly. In one week I saw what many of you warned me about: it's addictive. I found myself tempted to update my "status" every five minutes. "Joshua Harris is walking across his office. Joshua Harris sitting in his office chair. Joshua Harris is wasting valuable time describing what he is doing... The other reason I feel right about making my time with Facebook just a visit is a little harder to explain. How do I put this? I found that it encouraged me to think about me even more than I already do--which is

admittedly already quite a bit. Does that make any sense? Without any help from the internet I'm inclined to give way too much time to evaluating myself, thinking about myself and wondering what other people think of me. If that egocentrism is a little flame, than Facebook for me is a gasoline IV feeding the fire. I need to grow in self-forgetfulness. I need to worry more about what God is thinking of me. I need to be preoccupied with what he's written in his word, not what somebody just wrote on my "wall."

Some questions we need to ask ourselves to see if we are truly loving one another deeply, from the heart:

- Are we on our knees enough in prayer for the needs of others?
- Do we know how to focus so intently on the spiritual welfare of others that our own 'issues' and 'problems' become dismal and pathetic to even ourselves?
- Are we quick to forgive others when they've wronged us, yearning instead that there be restoration with him or her, and for everyone, restoration with God?
- Who do we most frequently associate ourselves with when we gather together as a church and as a fellowship? Is it only those whose company you enjoy the most, those who benefit you the most, or those perhaps who are more easily marginalized?
- Do we see each other as objects of God's love and mercy and look for every opportunity to encourage / exhort or even rebuke them in love, to deepen their spiritual growth? Or do we spend more time gossiping to ourselves and to others, thinking the worst of peoples' actions and motives?
- Are we willing to lay down our lives for others? To serve others?

The life of faith needs to be characterized by obedience to God in His Word, and a deep love for others that is sacrificial and enduring.