

## “Tuning up our hope.” (6)

So far in our sermon series of **1 + 2 Peter** he has reminded us of some of the many blessings we enjoy whilst we’re living here on earth as strangers heading towards our real home of heaven. In **1 Peter 1:2**, he reminded us of our election, our sanctification, and how we’re washed in the blood of Jesus. In **1 Peter 1:3** he reminded us of our birth into a Living hope. In **1 Peter 1:4** he reminded us that of our incorruptible inheritance, which is reserved in heaven for the faithful. In **1 Peter 1:5** he also reminded us about how we are being kept by the power of God through faith for the salvation to come. In **1 Peter 1:6-9** he reminded us of the great joy we have, which is inexpressible and full of glory. And finally in **1 Peter 1:10-12** he reminded us of the blessing and honour we have by being served by such a great group of individuals. And so as Christians we are truly blessed indeed but before we get into our sermon today let me share with you a story I read a few weeks ago.

A sideshow strongman was demonstrating his power and as a final trick he squeezed the juice from a lemon between his hands and then offered ten pounds to anyone in the audience who could squeeze a single drop out of it. Several husky men tried, to no avail. Finally, a small bespectacled man came forward. He took the lemon in hand, and to the delight of the audience, managed to squeeze one more drop from the lemon. As the strongman paid out the ten pounds, he asked the man, "What is the secret of your strength. How did you manage to get that last drop?" "Oh," the man replied, "I was the treasurer of the church of Christ for 30 years."

Now just like that treasurer, Peter is going to expand on this idea of hope. And he wants us to squeeze everything out of our hope so that we can fully understand what he’s talking about. **1 Peter 1:13** “Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep a clear head, and set your hope completely on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

Now notice that he begins with the word, ‘therefore,’ now this important because what he’s about to say is based upon everything we’ve already looked at. He says, because of all those blessings we’ve looked at, because this world is not our home, because we’re privileged but responsible, because we have a living hope, because of our joy and glory because we have so many people serving us.

Because of all that, **1 Peter 1:13** “Prepare your minds for action, keep a clear head, and set your hope completely on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.” In other words Peter wants to encourage us even more to think about the hope we have as Christian. He basically wants us to tune up our focus on the hope we have as Christians.

But what does he mean when he says, ‘rest your hope completely’ or ‘fully’ as some translations have it? **John Wesley** was walking one day with a troubled man who expressed his doubt of God's goodness. "I don't know what I shall do with all this worry and trouble," he said. At that moment Wesley noticed a cow looking over a stone wall. "Do you know," asked Wesley, "why that cow is looking over that wall?" "No," replied his troubled companion. "I will tell you," said Wesley, "because she cannot see through it. That is what you must do with your wall of trouble, look over it and above it."

You see loved ones faith enables us to look over and above every trouble, to God, who is our help. And what Peter is saying is never lose sight of that, set your hope perfectly, unchangeably, without doubt and keep looking towards Jesus. He’s trying to encourage the saints to make their hope, a hope which is complete, strong, and not wavering.

But loved ones this won’t happen by itself, we have a duty to develop and fine tune our hope. Just like we need to develop patience, self-control, etc., we also need to develop our hope. Now you might be wondering **why? Why is developing our hope so important?**

Well Christians without a strong hope will suffer and waver. That’s why some Christians are always ready to serve and do what they can one minute, but the next minute you hardly see them. People who have a weak faith are always going to be prone to attacks of fear and doubt and even depression more than any other Christian.

That’s why some Christians are always hot then cold in their faith and we know what Jesus thinks about lukewarm Christians, **don’t we? Revelation 3:14-16** "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: "This is the message from the Amen, the faithful and true witness, who is the origin of all that God has created. I know what you have done; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. How I wish you were either one or the other! But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am going to spit you out of my mouth!"

And so what Peter is saying is, you need to develop your faith Christian because it's essential if you want to live a life full of joy so that you can be victorious in Christ Jesus. That's Peter's main point in **1 Peter 1:13**, he wants to encourage us to fine tune our faith in order to make it stronger. So again just as we are to develop and grow in our faith and love, we are also need to grow in our hope. But for us to do that we need to remember what the focus of our hope is.

**1 Peter 1:13** "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep a clear head, and set your hope completely on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed". Peter says focus on 'grace' that unmerited favour that we will receive when Jesus comes again.

That same grace he alluded to in **1 Peter 1:4** when he spoke about our inheritance kept in heaven for us. That same grace he alluded to in **1 Peter 1:5** when he spoke about our salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time. That same grace he alluded to in **1 Peter 1:7** when he spoke about our praise, honour and glory which we shall receive at the revelation of Jesus Christ. That same grace he alluded to in **1 Peter 1:9** when he spoke about the salvation of our souls. That same grace which cannot be earned or gained by anything we do; that same grace which stands for God's riches at Christ's expense.

**So what is the hope we've to develop and fine tune?** The hope of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the wonderful grace He will bring. The hope of the wonderful praise, honour, and glory we shall receive when He comes. The hope of the complete and final salvation of our souls from sin and its effects. The hope of the receiving of our wonderful inheritance, the heavenly city, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that does not fade away.

Peter says don't loose sight of your hope Christian and to help you develop and fine tune your hope, he tells us how to do it in **1 Peter 1:13**. Let me read from another translation, **1 Peter 1:13** "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

**What does he mean when he says, "gird up the loins of your mind"?** Well the words **gird up** is an oriental expression; it refers to the act of gathering up around the waist the long, loose robes worn by those in the east. You see they couldn't run around freely with them just hanging down, they had to gather up the robes so they could run and do some other activity which required them to move around.

**Do you see what Peter is saying loved ones?** He saying we must put out of the mind everything and anything that would impede the free action of the mind in connection with developing our hope. In other words we need to put out of the mind such things like worry, fear, or obsession with material possessions. We need to remove anything and everything that is not helping us to have a strong hope in the coming of our Lord.

That was Jesus point in **Luke 21:34+35** "Be careful not to let yourselves become occupied with too much feasting and drinking and with the worries of this life, or that Day may suddenly catch you like a trap. For it will come upon all people everywhere on earth."

When Jesus was teaching about the seed sower that was His point when He said in **Luke 8:14** "The seeds that fell among thorn bushes stand for those who hear; but the worries and riches and pleasures of this life crowd in and choke them, and their fruit never ripens".

Everything and anything which is going to take your mind off the hope we have when Christ returns, Peter says, get rid of it. Instead of filling your mind with thoughts of food or drink or clothes, fill your mind with hope, with heavenly things. **Colossians 3:1+2** "You have been raised to life with Christ, so set your hearts on the things that are in heaven, where Christ sits on his throne at the right side of God. Keep your minds fixed on things there, not on things here on earth."

Let me give you a few tests to examine yourself to find out what kind faith you have. **The weather test:** Are you a sailboat Christian, making progress in the Lord only if the winds are favourable and things go your way? Or are you a tugboat Christian, ploughing right ahead according to God's Word even though the gales are against you?

Jesus says to you Christian in **Revelation 2:10** to encourage you "Don't be afraid of anything you are about to suffer. Listen! The Devil will put you to the test by having some of you thrown into prison, and your troubles will last ten days. Be faithful to me, even if it means death, and I will give you life as your prize of victory".

**The worry test:** If you trust, you do not worry; if you worry, you do not trust as you should. Haven't you found that "He keeps him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him" because he trusts in God? Jesus says in **Matthew 6:28** to encourage you Christian "And why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow: they do not work or make clothes for themselves".

**The worldliness test:** Do you think as the world thinks, go where the world goes, act as the world acts? Does your life give evidence of having your affections set on things above, not on things of the world? Paul says in **Romans 12:1** to encourage you Christian "So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer".

**The wallet test:** What proportion of your income last year was turned over for the work of the Lord? Was it at least as much as the tithe which the Jews paid before the grace of God was revealed in Christ? The Bible says in **1 Corinthians 16:2** to encourage you Christian "Every Sunday each of you must put aside some money, in proportion to what you have earned, and save it up, so that there will be no need to collect money when I come".

**The work test:** How much of your energy is being given to the work of the Lord, and is it a reasonable portion of what you are expending in the day-to-day task of making a living? Jesus says in **John 9:4** to encourage you Christian "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me; night is coming when no one can work."

And then finally **the soul-winning test:** Are you by life and lip presenting Christ so that He is attractive to those who do not know Him as their Savior and Lord? Jesus says in **Matthew 12:30** to encourage you Christian "Anyone who is not for me is really against me; anyone who does not help me gather is really scattering".

So not only does Peter want us to **gird up our minds**, he also says if you want to develop and fine tune your hope, then **be sober**. **1 Peter 1:13** "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Now when we talk about the word 'sober' we often think of someone who has a drink problem. But here the word "sober" means "to be calm and collected in spirit, to be pleasant, cool, careful." It is the state of mind in which a person is self-controlled, and able to see things without the distortion caused by worry or fear.

The story is told of the ship that was trapped in a severe storm at sea. All were preparing to abandon ship, all except one young lady who was playing with her dolls. When asked are you not afraid? Why are you not afraid? She calmly replied, "No, because my father is the captain."

You see loved one, worry and fear causes us to lose sight of Who is in control. Worry and fear causes us to forget our future hope in Christ Jesus. Worry and fear causes us to abandon the ship which Jesus Christ is the captain of. And so for us to develop and fine tune our hope we need to be calm and serious about what we're doing. That's why Jesus Himself reminds us in **Luke 21:36** "Be on watch and pray always that you will have the strength to go safely through all those things that will happen and to stand before the Son of Man." Now I understand that it's difficult sometimes not to give up when we're worried and frightened but loved ones hang in there, we have hope of better things to come.

The famous Swedish diplomat who was the second secretary general of the united union, **Dag Hammarskjöld** once wrote: "When the morning's freshness has been replaced by the weariness of midday, when the leg muscles quiver under the strain, the climb seems endless, and suddenly nothing will go quite as you wish, it is then that you must not hesitate." He was unwilling to give up; he refused to quit!

The successful life arranged by Christ requires faithfulness until death: a hand on the plough with no looking back, steadfast perseverance; racing hard for the tape, fighting the good fight of faith. The devil loves it when we simply relax our efforts and he has a good day if we become discouraged. There are temptations to overcome, disappointments to handle, personal sins that plague us, burdens that depress us.

And Satan is standing by urging that we quit trying. But **Hebrews 12:2+3** says, "Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right side of God's throne. Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners! So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up."

Someone once asked **James J. Corbett**, at that time heavyweight champion of the world, what was the most important thing a man must do to become a champion? He replied, "Fight one more round." The Duke of Wellington said that 'the British soldiers at the Battle of Waterloo were not any braver than Napoleon's soldiers but they were brave for five minutes longer'. Think about it Christian the secret for success is to "fight just one more round. Be brave for five more minutes." It really is the difference between defeat and victory.

Loved ones the message is clear this morning, we cannot develop and fine tune a strong hope if we are so "weak-minded" that we allow things to divert us away from our true calling. **And what is our calling?** To journey through this life as strangers in a strange land, but with a hope that is resting fully upon the grace we will receive when Christ comes again.

And loved ones, Peter knew back then and he still knows today that the problem with many Christians is **not** that they have no hope but that their hope is weak and shallow. Peter doesn't want you to have a weak and shallow hope like that and neither do I. Peter doesn't want any of us to be so preoccupied with the affairs of this temporary life that we end up losing focus of what really matters in life.

He wants us to remain faithful to the Lord, and listen to the encouragement he has given us this morning to develop and fine tune your faith. He wants us to have a free mind, to get rid of all those thoughts which hinder our development and fine tuning of our hope. He wants us all to be more serious about the kind of lives our heavenly Father would have us live.

**Luke 12:35-40** "Be ready for whatever comes, dressed for action and with your lamps lit, like servants who are waiting for their master to come back from a wedding feast. When he comes and knocks, they will open the door for him at once. How happy are those servants whose master finds them awake and ready when he returns! I tell you, he will take off his coat, have them sit down, and will wait on them. How happy they are if he finds them ready, even if he should come at midnight or even later! And you can be sure that if the owner of a house knew the time when the thief would come, he would not let the thief break into his house. And you, too, must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you are not expecting him."

You see it's not a matter of asking **if He will return** or **when He will return**, it's a matter of asking **are you ready for Jesus' return?**

There's story about a ship called the **Royal Charter**, who left the shores of **Wales** to travel around the world. After many months of sailing it was on its way back home when suddenly it hit some rocks just off the shore of **Wales** and almost everyone lost their lives to the sea. The captain survived and had the difficult task of writing letters to the families of those who lost their lives. One lady received the letter and broke down in tears and cried out 'so close to home, so close to home but lost.'

How sad it would be for you to be here today after hearing the message of hope but to leave without any hope at all. If you're a Christian who is slipping away and need some encouragement to help strengthen your faith, or if you're not a Christian this morning, then please come and speak to someone today about the living hope which we have.

Because we don't want to leave here today and meet you on judgment day and think to ourselves, 'you were so close to home, so close to home but lost'.