

RESILIENT HOPE // Hope & Holiness

Last week we started our series on 1 Peter. Peter, one of the original 12 apostles, is writing to believers who'd scattered across the first century world because of the horrific ways they were being persecuted by the Roman Empire. These people were suffering in ways that are difficult for us to even imagine.

That's why in verses 3-5 Peter says that through Jesus Christ, we've been born again to a living hope.

1 Peter 1:4-5, "...to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

He's reminding them that there is an eternal inheritance that is coming one day, and it is a guaranteed inheritance. But in the meantime, he says, *"You're living as exiles in a foreign land. You've been chosen by God and sent into a place that isn't your true home."* That was true of them, and as followers of Jesus, that's true of us as well.

We talked about three ways that we can approach the world. As a...

- 1. Settler** - A settler leverages all their resource and creative energy to make this world as comfortable as they can. Their hopes in life rise and fall based on what's happening in the culture around them, and it's incredibly easy for this person to turn pressing social, cultural, and political issues into the central focus of their life.
- 2. Visitor** - A visitor is the exact opposite. This person is just passing through. They don't have any real connection to the place they currently live in or care for the people. They remain emotionally disengaged and disconnected from social or political issues that have deep implications for the culture around them.
- 3. Exile** - An exile is someone whose true citizenship is somewhere else, but for an undefined amount of time, they must make their home in a new place. So, they don't disengage from the culture, and they don't worship the culture. They engage faithfully in the culture. They invest in this new community, form relationships, learn the culture, and they steward their influence in a way that benefits the culture. But they don't worship it, they don't center their life on it, their hopes in life don't rise and fall based on it. Because they know there's a day when they'll get to go to their true home.

A PURIFIED FAITH

1 Peter 1:6-7, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Hope is not optimism. It's not wishful thinking.

Hope = Confident Assurance

Biblical hope is a certainty not rooted in a finite person running a broken system but in the promises of God who rules over all creation.

"Optimism reflects ignorance as to whether good things will ever actually come. Christian hope expresses knowledge that every day of his life, and every moment beyond it, the believer can say with truth, on the basis of God's own commitment, that the best is yet to come."

— J.I. Packer

Our faith is compared to gold.

In order to purify gold, a goldsmith must heat the raw materials to a temperature of 1,948° Fahrenheit and bring the gold into liquid form repeatedly. Each time, the impurities of the gold, the contaminants, rise to the surface in this liquid state and the goldsmith skims the impurities off the top and removes them from the gold, each time, purifying it a little bit more. Only after this repeated process of refining the gold by removing the impurities can a pure, valuable, and useful object be formed.

Peter is telling us that a purified faith is more precious than the most precious metal on earth, and through our trials and hardships and suffering, God is removing the impurities in our character. He's purifying us and refining our character over time if we'll allow Him, submit to Him, and cooperate with Him in that process.

Job 23:10, "...when He tests me, I will come out as pure as gold."

1 Peter 1:8-9, "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

Peter is saying your faith in the God who you cannot see is building something in you that gives you a resilience, a perseverance, a buoyancy in life that you cannot gain any other way and will result in the salvation of your souls.

Peter 1:10-12, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

Peter is saying that every Old Testament prophet was inspired by God to point future generations to Jesus as the Messiah.

PREPARING FOR ACTION

Peter gives us five commands in this passage in light of a purified faith, and the salvation of your souls, and the inevitable return of Christ.

1 Peter 1:13-16, "Therefore, **preparing your minds** for action, and **being sober-minded, set your hope** fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, **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.'"

What many Christians do when it comes to the spiritual battle is they don't take the battle seriously. They are lazy in their approach to Scripture. They rarely spend time with God in prayer before the busyness of the day. They don't take temptation seriously. Think about it in terms of little moral compromises.

To sin literally means to miss the mark. The more you compromise, the more you entertain what seem like little sins in the moment, the further and further off target the aim of your life becomes. Every little sin and every little compromise skew the aim of

your life. Little compromises over a long period of time reaps tremendous consequences.

1. Prepare Your Mind

The more you deviate, the easier the next little compromise becomes. This is why Peter is saying that especially in hardship, in pain, in suffering, you're going to face temptation. Prepare your mind! Wake up! Get ready for battle!

2. Be Sober-Minded

Be self-controlled. Don't be given to excess of anything. Be free from every form of mental and spiritual "drunkenness." Rather than being controlled by substances, or circumstances, be directed by the Holy Spirit who resides in you.

3. Set Your Hope

In verse 5, 7, 9, and 13, Peter has mentioned the return of Christ. He's giving us that fixed reference point we talked about last week, that is untouchable even by death itself. Set your hope on the fact that Jesus is coming back for his bride!

4. Don't Go Back

Don't return to former ignorance and how you lived before Christ. Have you ever noticed that it's in the hardest or lowest moments in life that we're most tempted to revert back to old patterns? Old ways of coping, numbing, or escaping? We all have patterns of behavior that are so easy to fall back into if we're not careful. That's why Peter says not to be conformed to your former manner of living. God has so much more for us.

Maybe this is what you're compromising on. You're going back to something you know was a part of your old way of living and you left it behind but somehow it keeps finding its way back into your life. God wants to deal with that today. Make a decision. Tell someone about it that will help you to something better because God has more for you.

So, what do we do instead?

5. Be Holy

THE POWER FOR HOLINESS

Be holy as God is holy. How do we do that?

When we say God is holy, it's hard to really grasp what that fully means.

Imagine a holiness scale and God is at the top. Where would you place yourself on the scale? This is how we typically think of holiness. That somehow there is a scale, and God is at the top of the scale, but holiness is not just the best version of us that we can imagine. Holiness is perfection. Perfect goodness, perfect beauty, love, justice. Perfect patience. Perfect purity. Perfect generosity. Perfect wholeness and completeness. Everything that is pure and good.

What this means is that God is not the best version us at the top of the holiness scale. It means He is so far off the charts, He's not even in the same hemisphere. There's no way for us to even comprehend it.

And yet, He commands us to be holy like He is holy. To become like Him in holiness. Moving toward holiness is aligning your heart and mind with the ways of God. Another way to think about holiness is to be wholly devoted to someone or something... to be set apart for a specific person or purpose.

For example, in marriage, on that wedding day, your vows are expressing a commitment to be wholly devoted to your spouse. You're saying, *I'm set apart for you, there is no other, there never will be another for me. I'm devoted.*

In the same way, to be holy, is to be totally devoted to God in every aspect of your life. It means that there is no area of your life that does not belong to Him. It means no priority of your life is not judged by Him. It means no part of your heart does not belong to Him. It means no aspect of your decision-making is withheld from Him. Everything about you is centered around bringing joy to the One you're devoted to.

Here's the amazing thing: God would not call us to something that is an impossibility. He wouldn't call us to total devotion if it weren't possible.

See, many of us view holiness or devotion to God as a set of rules we have to follow to appease God. We sort of go, *"Ok, well, how much do I have to do for God so I can do what I want the rest of the time?"*

There's a story out of 2 Samuel 23 where King David is longing for the day when he would have a drink from the well of Bethlehem. He was forced to flee into the desert by his enemies, and he's longing for the day when Bethlehem would become his home again. And David let's out this 'sigh' about it... this deep desire.

A few of his warriors overhear it, and these men were so devoted to David that they secretly go and fight through enemy lines just to bring him water from the well of Bethlehem. At the risk of their own lives, they do something for David that they knew would bring joy and peace to his heart.

That's what total devotion does. It doesn't ask, *"How much do I have to do?"* It asks, *"How much can I do?"* Not, *"What commands do I have to follow?"* But instead, *"What desires of God's heart can I fulfill? What pains Him pains me. What brings Him joy ultimately brings me joy."*

To be holy means that your ultimate desire is to bring delight to the person you're devoted to. Not, *"What do I have to do to stay on your good side? What are the rules?"*

When I was exploring Christianity all my questions were about, *"What do I have to give up in order to be a Christian? What can I get away with and still be good with God?"* They were the wrong questions, but I was asking the wrong questions because I had an incredibly limited view of who God is. I didn't understand how good God is, how holy He is, how wonderful He is.

In fact, the reason why Peter quotes **Leviticus 11:44**, *"Be holy as I am holy..."* is because the only way for us to truly become holy is to understand that HE IS HOLY. What do I mean?

1 Peter 1:18-21, *"...you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 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."*

What is this saying? It's saying you can be wholly devoted to God to the extent that you see God is wholly devoted to you.

Jesus says in **John 17**, "And for their sake I consecrate myself..."

He says, *"I am wholly focused. I am wholly devoted to you. That's why as a lamb without blemish, without sin, I shed my blood to ransom you from your own destruction."*

See, David's men fought through enemy lines to bring him water from the well of Bethlehem. Jesus Himself fought through enemy lines to bring us the water of life. And He didn't do it at the risk of His own life. He did it at the price of His own life.

And until you see how wholly devoted He is to you, you have no power to be wholly devoted to Him. Until you see how holy He is, you can't be holy. But when you see it, when it sinks in, everything changes.

Jesus invites us, *"Think about the price I paid. Think about how I fought past enemy lines. Think about the fact that I was pierced for you. I love you, and I laid everything down for you. If you see it, if you can see my devotion to you, you will become wholly devoted to Me. If you think as much about My holiness, My matchless love for you, holiness will no longer be a have to but a get to."*

What's one area of my life that I have been withholding from God, that hasn't been set apart for Him, wholly given over to Him?