

Living Hope:
Living This Hope in a Hopeless World
1 Peter 2:11-3:12

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March 17, 2019

Text Introduction: We are returning to 1 Peter. “Living Hope” is a phrase that we find in 1 Peter 1:3. Jesus is our Living Hope. This is the Gospel. Our salvation rests in the resurrection of Jesus. Our hope in this life rests in the resurrection of Jesus.

As so often the case in the New Testament letters, theology prepares us for practices. Our beliefs should produce in us a certain behavior. We see that often with the word, “Therefore.” So, we understood that Living Hope calls us to Holy Living. And then, last time, we learned that we are to “live this hope together as the church.” Today, we continue with that theme of outwardly living out our hope. It is actually the continuing theme of the rest of the letter. In fact, some commentators indicate that the first two verses of our text today, 1 Peter 2:11-12, forms something of the crux (thesis) of the entire letter. So, let us start there and then continue forward with even a more specific development of that main theme.

Text: ¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. ¹² Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.

Introduction: In around A.D. 400, a young teenager, Maewyn (pronounced My-win) Succat was abducted from his home in Great Britain and brought on a slave ship to another country. At the time of his abduction, he considered himself an atheist. As a slave, he began to pray, and he says in those times of prayer he began to know and believe in God, and know His son, Jesus, and understand the Spirit. After six years of slavery, he escaped and returned to his homeland. Some years later, he heard the voice of God calling him to return to the place of his slavery for the purposes of being a witness of Jesus Christ. One historian reports that his former master was among his first converts. In his 29 years of ministry to that land of his slavery, 120,000 converts were recorded and 300 churches were started. He is credited with bringing Christianity to that country.

That is exactly the application of the text before us today.

Those who have believed This Living Hope are called to live holy and honorable lives for the purpose of evangelizing those in this world without hope.

A Pattern to Follow:

This is the pattern of the Gospel, the pattern of this letter, and the pattern of verses 11-12.

- Salvation
He called them “dear friends” and they are “strangers” and “aliens.”

- Sanctification

They are to “conduct themselves honorably.”

- Public Testimony
They are to conduct themselves honorably “among the Gentiles.”
- Salvation of others
The goal is that they, in observing our good works, will “glorify God” themselves.

I am reminded of a story that Warren Wiersbe told in his commentary on this passage. In the summer of 1805, a number of Indian chiefs and warriors met in council at Buffalo Creek, New York, to hear a presentation of the Christian message by a Mr. Cram from the Boston Missionary Society. After the sermon, a response was given by Red Jacket, one of the leading chiefs. Among other things, the chief said:

Brother, you say that there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agree, as you can all read the Book?

Brother, we are told that you have been preaching to the white people in this place. These people are our neighbors. We are acquainted with them. We will wait a little while and see what effect your preaching has upon them. If we find it does them good, makes them honest, and less disposed to cheat us, we will then consider again of what you have said.

Particular Relationships Highlighted:

We move from the theology of this idea to real life situations which begin to make this tough. What follows verse 11 and 12 is an elaboration on specific relationships. If the Gentiles of verse 12 are included, there are five groups identified by Peter.

- Unbelievers
¹²Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles,
- Human Authorities such as Government
¹³Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority ¹⁴or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good. ¹⁵For it is God’s will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good. ¹⁶Submit as free people, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but as God’s slaves. ¹⁷Honor everyone. Love the brothers and sisters. Fear God. Honor the emperor.
- Everyday Relationships such as Work
¹⁸Household slaves, submit to your masters with all reverence not only to the good and gentle ones but also to the cruel. ¹⁹For it brings favor if, because of a consciousness of God, someone endures grief from suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit is there if when you do wrong and are

beaten, you endure it? But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God.

- Marriage

3 In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live ² when they observe your pure, reverent lives. ³ Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes, ⁴ but rather what is inside the heart—the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also adorned themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands, ⁶ just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and do not fear any intimidation.

⁷ Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker partner, showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

- Everyone

⁸ Finally, all of you be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble, ⁹ not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you may inherit a blessing.

¹⁰ For **the one who wants to love life and to see good days,**

let him keep his tongue from evil

and his lips from speaking deceit,

¹¹ **and let him turn away from evil**

and do what is good.

Let him seek peace and pursue it,

¹² **because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous**

and his ears are open to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against

those who do what is evil.

You may not like some of these words. Some of these words might seem overwhelming and impossible. Remember at the heart of this application is the evangelism of those who are without hope.

(A Brief Word of Caution in our Application)

I think we can under the leadership of the Holy Spirit living inside of us discern when it is not advisable to stay in relationships for the sake of evangelism. If there is abuse at work or in the home, we are not being called on to be a martyr. That would be a misapplication of the heart of this text.

The Passion of Jesus as Our Example

But, we do find right application in this text in the example of Jesus. The heart of the Gospel is the heart of the right application of this text.

²¹ For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² He did not commit sin, **and no deceit was found in his mouth;** ²³ when he was insulted, he did not insult in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten but entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. **By his wounds you have been healed.** ²⁵ For you **were like sheep going astray**, but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

So What?

Declare war on your sin and selfishness!

I may not always get my way, but if not getting my way means that others find THE WAY, won't it be worth it?

Be willing to wage war for the sake of the Gospel.

I have been reading a book called *Dangerous Calling* by Paul David Tripp. Indeed, it is a book written to pastors, but I think there are principles in the book that apply to all of us. Tripp writes about this "war of the heart."

As a pastor, you'd better be ready to fight for the gospel, but you'd better be also ready to war for your own soul. . . .It is a war fought on the ground of the pastor's heart. It is a war of values, allegiances, and motivations a war between the kingdom of self and the kingdom of God. (pp. 97-98.)

Conclusion: Who was that 16 year old sold into slavery who returned to the land of his slavery? Who was that young man willing to declare war on his own sin and his own selfishness to live as a light in a dark and hopeless world so that others might know Christ? The memorialized date of his death was March 17, 461. The country of his slavery that he returned to was Ireland. He changed his name to Patrick. Some of you are wearing green today because of him. And, now you know the rest of the story.

So, what about your story? Will you today be willing to declare war on your sin and your selfishness so that you can live your lives holy and honorable among unbelievers—folks that don't believe like you, have the same values as you, and don't vote like you—so that on the day of God's visitation, they might glorify God by believing in Him as the one and only way to salvation?