

XXVI. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in the Exile
“An Unwanted but Effective Gospel Platform–Part 1”
I Peter 3:13–17
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September 30, 2018 • Morning Sermon

I will read in your hearing from I Peter 3. I Peter 3:13–17 says [13] *Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good (the good)? [14] But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, [15] but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, [16] having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. [17] For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

A couple of years ago in anticipation of this ministry theme for 2018 in focusing on a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship, where our lifestyle doesn't evangelize but that we would want to evangelize as a lifestyle, I prayed asking God what book of the Bible I could preach through that would really support effectively this theme. Without much debate, I landed personally on I Peter and then brought it back to our elders who affirmed it so we have gotten into it.

There are three reasons why I chose I Peter as the basic expositional series to deal with a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. Reason number one is because of Peter's perspective on believers from their conversion to glory. He is borrowing the imagery from the book of Exodus where God's covenant people are liberated from slavery and oppression with the hand of God's judgment falling upon Pharaoh and Egypt, brought through miraculously the Red Sea, set on a 40 year journey in the wilderness to be matured and multiplied, then through the Jordan River they were brought into the Promised Land. Peter calls us His elect exiles and this is not only foundational to God's covenant of grace unfolding in the Scripture but it becomes the picture of not Moses but Christ defeating, not Pharaoh but all of our enemies – Satan, sin, death, hell and the grave – liberating us from not the oppressive slave labor but the oppressive slavery of sin, bringing us and delivering us through the miraculous work of regeneration into the wilderness of this world whereby we are pilgrims, exiles, sojourners on this journey. Then we are brought all the way to glory in the Promised Land which is a new heavens and a new earth.

I love the picture of elect exiles. This is so important to me because I believe this is the way you need to start looking at yourself. I know this is subjective, but most of us don't look at ourselves this way. An exile (sojourner, alien, refugee) is not an insider and they never feel like one. They long to be insiders but they are outsiders and that's the way we are. It's hard for us to understand because almost as a blip in history God has blessed His work of the Gospel in this nation with revivals and Gospel awakenings so that Christians for much of the history of this nation have been insiders, been welcomed and had their freedoms welcomed. That has not been the testimony in history in all the nations. It has been a very special blessing by God's providence in this nation, but it's rapidly ending.

In this tsunami wave of neo-pagan, secular humanism in rebellion against God that is bent on a revolution where once what was celebrated will be despised and what was despised will be celebrated, is not going to take any prisoners. Don't think that as Christians you can find a little place to hide. Those who are going to be faithful to Christ as churches and as Christians are going to have to pay a price. The first price you will have to pay is that you are not an insider. They will not give parades for you anymore. I realize being in the buckle belt of the South we haven't felt it as much here but when I go to places like Michigan, Wisconsin, Maine or out West you will see and feel it quickly.

So how do you live knowing you're not an insider? You are not allowed to retreat. You are supposed to be in the world but not let the world in you. Here Peter is preparing these people in the first century of not neo-paganism but paganism buttressed by the power, military might, economic might of Rome, and the philosophical might of Athens of they should live for Christ. They are not going to throw a parade for you unless it's a parade that is going to take you to a fiery ordeal. I want to pastorally to prepare you for how you are to live in light of that.

There is a second reason I chose I Peter and that is because Peter, like Paul insistently maintains the apostolic and pastoral profile of you do evangelism and discipleship. They do this by insistently saying to us that when we come to Christ here are the Gospel blessings that Christ has purchased, by grace not merit, by love not earning, to give to us. So far we have studied 13 of those Gospel blessings secured by the crucified and risen Christ and disposed to you by the power of His Spirit into your life. Then Peter gives us the Gospel commands of how you live for Christ. The reason he doesn't give you the commands first is because we tend to think what we do allows Him to save us or empowers Him to save us or what we do enables Him to keep us saved. He tells us it is the finished work of Christ that has blessed you and then he tells us how we should live. With the benefits of the cross how do you bow to the call of Jesus Christ?

We have also studied five Gospel commands that tell us how to live. The first command was to have a personal pursuit of pervasive holiness in life. The second one is to have a sincere and heart-felt love for one another. The third command was to cultivate an appetite for God's Word and His Word preached. This is why I don't think we have a revival. One we're not praying and two we have no hunger for the preaching of God's Word. Therefore preachers have left preaching the Gospel and give coach-me-up talks instead.

Paul told Timothy that there would come a day that they will not have ears for sound doctrine and will want to accumulate for themselves teachers for itching ears. I have no hope for an awakening until we have a revival and I have no hope for a revival until God's people have a hunger and appetite for God's Word, His Word preached and the desire to call upon Him in prayer. I praise God for those groups and people who are praying but if there is no hunger for Him and His Word there will be no true revival because that's how He delivers it.

This results in the fourth command which is a lifestyle of obedience stimulating praise to God as sojourners and God will be praised on the day of visitation in how they have lived for the Lord. The fifth command is to be subject to every human institution silencing the ignorance of foolish men. He addressed Christian slaves to masters, Christian citizens to those in authority, Christian wives to their husbands, and Christian husbands how in surrender to the Lord how they are to lay down their life for their wife to honor her as a fellow heir of the grace of life. Then Peter gives us this glorious picture of submitting ourselves to each other in the body of Christ. They are humble. They have unity of mind. There is brotherly love. They are tenderhearted and sympathetic with each other. It is a glorious picture of intimacy.

Have you seen how the world lives in this last week by what has covered the news? Why will we not live distinctive and different from that? What would happen is the world witnessed our love for one another? We will not violate the ninth commandment and bear false witness or the sixth commandment and commit adultery. We will live with one another in honor, imperfectly and unevenly, yes, but intentionally by the grace of God that we would be zealous for the good, not because it saves us but because we love our Savior. This is what He calls us to do and enables us to do.

Now we come to a sixth commandment in this study and this is the third reason why I chose I Peter to help us develop a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. It is because of the picture we see of the foundational work of grace, the exodus and what this looks like in our life. We are sojourners on the journey. Furthermore we have to get these blessings and commands of Christ in the right order, the right perspective. I will be taking the next couple of studies on this commandment because I think the verses in I Peter 3:13–17 are so vitally important in our lives and it's rooted in an overall text. So please hear me out in these next couple of studies on this commandment.

This sixth commandment comes in a context and it actually begins in I Peter 3:13 and goes all the way to I Peter 5:11. I Peter 3:13–17 is a section on Christian suffering and will continue to I Peter 5:10–11 which says [10] *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. [11] To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.* I want to make a distinction for this is not general suffering.

There is a general suffering where we are in a sin-cursed world – a broken world. We are in sin-cursed bodies – broken bodies. We get sick, we lose jobs, we die and there are all kinds of adversities that we face in a sin-cursed world, living in a sin-cursed body. This hits everybody but this is not what I'm talking about in this I Peter 3:13–17 text. Peter also said in this text he wasn't referring to the suffering done in evil. We aren't talking about when you speed and get a ticket you're suffering for Jesus, no that's not it because here you were suffering because you were speeding. You can take it and honor Jesus in how you deal with and what you learn from it. There is also whatsoever a man sows that shall he reap and He will use that in our lives and that suffering is not out from under the sovereignty of God either but that is not what Peter is dealing with here.

Peter is focused on Christian suffering in this text and he talks about it two ways – suffering for Christ's sake and suffering for righteousness sake, when you're zealous to do the good. The payback in this world is suffering. I Peter 3:15–17 talks about verbal suffering as when they slander and revile you but he will escalate from that to social suffering, emotional suffering, physical suffering and to lethal suffering that he calls the fiery ordeal. Peter incrementally develops how suffering will move forward in the world by initially dealing with verbal suffering but we are not to revile back. Also when they do evil against you, you don't do evil back. So were going to take a little closer view of this as we look at I Peter 3:13–15a in this study. As we go through this you will be able to give an account of the hope that is in you and you will do it with reasonableness, winsomeness, insistence and persistence but we'll go over that in the next study.

Right now we'll start looking at this sixth command as it flows out of a rhetorical question that he asks. In I Peter 3:13 he asks, *who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?* Peter is actually paraphrasing from the book of Isaiah. Again, he is talking to all Christians here. Rhetorical questions have a purpose in mind. They have a presupposed answer.

I think there is two possibilities. The God of glory and grace is the one who made you a Christian, a child of God, a royal priesthood with an eternal inheritance.

This question is paraphrasing Romans 8:31 which says, if God is for us, who can be against us? The answer is there can be a lot of people against us, but who are they in comparison to Him? I love the way the Puritans put it – do what you will for the most you can do is kill me and when you kill me it just chases me all the way to heaven for that’s all you’ve done. All you have done is promoted me for I’m going to the One who can kill body and soul. You can kill the body but He has given me eternal life through His work in my soul. So who are you to threaten me? Jesus is Lord!

Or Peter may be saying who is there that would want to harm people who are doing good to others, submitting to authority in their jobs and government, treating their spouse the way God tells them to? We ought to welcome people like that and in God’s common grace many times we are welcomed when we are zealous for the good but ultimately the adversary will move among those who have rejected Christ so that they would kick the common sense (the traces) of common grace, or step over the restraints of common grace when they ought to appreciate that in the community, and decide to go after it because that’s the only way they can get after their Savior. I think this is where Peter is aiming because he goes onto say in I Peter 3:14, *But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed.* There are going to be people in irrationality and perversity, even those who are zealous for the good and all the benefits it brings to society and the culture who will still go after you out of their antagonism to Christ, your Lord and Savior.

When that happens what should be your perspective? Most of us would go into self-pity and I include myself at times on this where we say ‘Lord, I can’t believe this because all I’ve done is just try to be a good church member. I’ve been submissive to the governing authorities, to my family and my other relationships. I haven’t returned evil for evil and then they persecute me. They target me. They take away my job because of my beliefs. Lord, I can’t believe You’re letting them do this to me.’ We go die in a pile of self-pity.

Peter says if they do persecute you for righteousness sake when you’re zealous for the good it’s a Divine benediction, you are blessed. Has Peter gone insane? It’s a blessing to lose my job over this or that my kids get called names or get burned at a stake? A benediction is not our word to God in prayer but God’s Word to His people, a good word to His people. In the early church the preacher used to go around and lay hands on each person who attended and speak a verse from the Bible over them. As the church got bigger the preacher would stand up at the end with his hands out toward the audience and the people would put their hands out to God as the preacher gave one benediction to all. We do that here at our church.

Peter is saying that when persecution comes specifically because of your obedience and fullness to Christ raise your hands for you just received a benediction. This is Peter quoting Jesus yet he doesn’t even bring the intensity that Jesus brings to this. We see this in the beatitudes in Matthew 5 when we hear repeatedly ‘blessed are you’ when you do these things. Matthew 5:10–12 says [10] *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

Peter tells us when we’re persecuted that we are blessed (gives one benediction) but Jesus says in Matthew 5 that it’s a double benediction, a double blessings. Now I don’t think you sit there and smile at the persecution but I think you smile at Jesus using it in your life. Jesus says

it's a blessing for Me in this world for you. How is it a blessing? Now you have your sixth Gospel commandment that comes with two negatives and one positive.

The two negatives are that when persecution comes one, do not fear their fear. Don't fear them, their tactics or their threats. Satan goes about like a roaring lion to intimidate you and if he intimidates you it will paralyze you. If he paralyzes you then you will no longer do a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship for you will go right into silence. Perfect love casts out all fear (I John 4:18). The worse they can do is kill you and all that does is promotes you.

The second negative is do not be troubled. Jesus says in John 14:1 not to let your heart be troubled and that literally means not to let your heart be agitated. May the peace of Christ descend upon you (I Thessalonians 3:16). Do not be agitated for it distracts you.

Then Peter gives the positive which is what we're to do—*in your hearts honor (sanctify) Christ the Lord as holy*. Sanctify means to set apart—set apart Christ as Lord. He is already Lord if you're saved, but this persecution becomes the occasion to solidify His Lordship. I set Christ apart as Lord **in my heart**. Fear, you will not sit on the throne of my heart. Agitation, you will not sit on the throne of my heart. Self, I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. I have a new heart that has a throne and the only that belongs on that throne is Jesus. Honor Christ as Lord. Fear, intimidation, the world, self and agitation are not lord and this event becomes the occasion for me to establish it. So before the Lord you sanctify Him as Lord of your heart.

Remember, you are covered with His blood, you are born again by His Spirit and His Word. You have an inheritance kept for you. I have been chosen. Christ is Lord. He is the One who has blessed you and you now heed the command to sanctify Him as Lord. So you do what you will O persecutor for you will not be lord of my life nor will the fear but Christ will be Lord in my life.

Here is the takeaway. Christian suffering is ultimately a Divine blessing providing an occasion to fearlessly sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts and proclaim Christ our Hope to the world. Another place we use the word sanctify is in the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:9. It starts off 'Our Father who art in heaven **hallowed** by Thy Name...' Hallowed is the same word as sanctify – set apart, lifted up – with no competitors for there is none like You. Hallowed is Christ in my heart.

Not only is this an occasion for me to reaffirm Christ as Lord in my heart, but this is a moment for us to say as Christ as Lord that whatever you do to me through persecution however it may come I will not fear or be agitated because I have a heart that is only designed for Christ to sit on the throne of my heart. So the perversity of irrational persecution by the evil one because of his absolute hatred of God's glory, his opposition to the majesty of Christ whom he could not defeat when He was on earth but whom he seeks to defeat through his people in varying degrees and times of persecution but whether by life or death we want people to know Christ is Lord.

When that persecution comes it is a double, Divine benediction and I open my heart and raise my hands to receive this blessing that I would not have chosen but He has chosen to give me to mature me, to banish fear and agitation in my life who will give me a peace that passes all understanding in my life. When Satan has done his most through this world all that has been done is it has given you an occasion to grow with Christ as Lord and it has given you a platform to tell the world Jesus is Lord and for them to see the Hope for sinners. It is a platform that you would have never had.

This is not some arrogant solution. We're not trash talking with Satan. I despise that when I hear that preached and the preacher says 'Satan I'm coming after you...' Michael the archangel didn't even do that. He didn't rebuke Satan but rebuked Satan in the name of Jesus. So we do away with self-confidence, resolution and arrogance that we're going to stomp around and stomp out Satan. Martin Luther was right when he wrote a hymn that said Satan is greater than us but greater is He that is in you, in your heart, by His Spirit as Lord. That is where our confidence comes for it comes in Him. In the fire He will be with us and the flood will not overcome us. What Satan has designed to diminish us will not succeed because of Christ who is Lord in our hearts.

I confess that I enjoy the movie Braveheart although there are three scenes that I don't look at so I enjoy watching the edited television version. I love the end where he has died and this part is historically accurate. His body was quartered and the four parts were taken to the four corners of the English kingdom to give a warning to all who would stand against the power of King Edward called the longshank. I love the line in the movie that said 'It did not have its desired effect.' It just brought forth another generation. Satan blows against the ship of my life with storms of persecution but in the bow is Christ and what he desires in persecution will not have its desired effect, not because of us, but because of Christ.

I enjoy taking people on the English Reformation tour where we go to Cambridge that birthed the Reformers and then we go to Oxford where they burned the Reformers. I love to take people to the road that at one time was ditch and was just outside the walls of Oxford. It was there in 1555 that two great Octogenarians, bishops of the English Reformation – Latimer and Ridley – were burned at the stake. As they were being tied to the stakes Ridley said to his captors 'Tie my bonds tight because I do not want to leave my post at the moment of trial, do your worst I do not want to fear.' Latimer hearing that turned to Ridley and said 'Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as shall never be put out.' A cross marks the place in that road.

Then I walk about a quarter of a mile away to go the old city jail where another Octogenarian who wrote three editions of the Book of Common Prayer, an uneven man, named Thomas Cranmer, was there to recant and the moment got to his heart with fear. He had actually signed a recantations of all the tenets of the Reformation but that was not enough for those who had intimidate him at that point. After I look at that city jail I will walk another half mile to the University Chapel at Oxford College that has a pillar where they notched out a place to build a platform. They built the platform to put Cranmer on so he could not only announce his signed recantation but do it personally. What they didn't know was what Cranmer was going to do when he stood on that platform built for him to recant. It was a platform that he used to say 'Before Christ my Savior I recant of my recantation for Christ is Lord and King of His church.'

We see both the weakness of the flesh and yet what the Lord will do upon the throne of a heart of a man to give him repentance to confess. Those who heard him in anger snatched him down very much like the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they took them to the fiery furnace, and took Cranmer back to the same place just months after Ridley and Latimer were burned, to burn him. There from the fire he declared Jesus Christ as Lord and then stuck his hand out and said 'May this hand who betrayed him be the first to burn. Do you happen to know the names of the people who put them to death? Yet people know who Ridley, Latimer and Cranmer are and you know the Savior whom they declared.

They thought it was a platform of persecution but it was an occasion and a platform for Christ to be exalted. It was a double benediction from the God of glory and grace. There is a

hymn that I love in the Trinity hymnal but it is not sung much. The title is My Anchor Holds and here is the first verse and refrain from it;

*Though the angry surges roll
On my tempest-driven soul,
I am peaceful, for I know,
Wildly though the winds may blow,
I've an anchor safe and sure,
That can evermore endure.*

*Refrain:
And it holds, my anchor holds:
Blow your wildest, then, O gale,
On my bark so small and frail;
By His grace I shall not fail,
For my anchor holds, my anchor holds.*

The Anchor is Christ as Lord in your heart. Who or what has your heart? I just saw an article in the Walls Street Journal that says forget the family that prays together stays together for now it's the family that cheers together stays together. There is the god of sports, the god of money but the Bible says you can't serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24). There is the god of power, the god of personal prestige, the god of your marriage... what has your heart? Really, who has your heart? If you come to Christ He will give you a new heart and He alone is to be enthroned upon it. Let's pray.

Prayer:

If you would like to pray with someone about the heart that Christ gives with His throne for Him to sit please contact us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to pray with you personally and confidentially. For those of you who have that new heart, have you, just like I do, allowed the pressures of this world and its threats, persecutions and false promises to let pretenders on the throne of your heart? Perhaps you may want to pray with someone about this as well and please contact us if you do. Sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart. Father, please hear this prayer for I know there will be no awakening, no revival, without new hearts upon which and in which Christ is enshrined as Lord and Savior. O Savior, here's my heart, come abide in me, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

GOSPEL BLESSINGS

GOSPEL COMMANDS

1. Personal pursuit of a pervasive holiness in life.
2. Sincere and heart-felt love for one another.
3. Cultivation of an appetite for God's Word.
4. A lifestyle of obedience stimulating praise to God.
5. Subjection to every human institution silencing the ignorance of foolish men.
6. ???

AN OVERVIEW

A CLOSER VIEW

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Christian suffering is ultimately a Divine Blessing providing an occasion to fearlessly sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts and proclaim Christ our Hope to the world. {note}