

PEOPLE OF HOPE – Part 2

Hope Embraced

Preaching passage: **2 Peter 3:10-11, 14, 17-18**

Subject: Since the Day of the Lord will come, how should we live

Complement: in holy conduct and godliness, growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Exegetical idea: Since the day of the Lord will come, we should live holy and godly lives, growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Preaching idea: **When you embrace Jesus and rest in His loving embrace, it changes everything.**

Purpose: To encourage my hearers to seek a personal life-changing relationship with Jesus that will lead to a life of holiness and godliness.

Summary paragraph: If you long to experience a holy way of life, in speech and actions, and manifest a reverent attitude of heart and mind as you wait for the glorious return of Jesus, draw ever closer to Jesus, experiencing a personal, life-changing relationship with Him.

Introductory comments before prayer:

This is part 2 of our series on People of Hope. We're studying Peter's second letter to followers of Jesus. We began this series by affirming that our hope in the coming of Jesus in glory is assured. That hope is not based upon our feelings, or upon the tide of popular opinion, or our mathematical calculations. That is in the coming of Jesus is based upon Jesus Himself. We trust Jesus. We believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who is come into the world, and when you trust Jesus you believe His promise—Hope Assured.

Now Peter will speak to us about Hope Embraced. He will challenge us to live holy and godly lives as we wait for the glorious return of Jesus.

Before we begin our study today, let's pray together.

(Young person comes onto the platform, kneels in prayer, and sings)

Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart, in my heart,

Lord I want to be more holy in my heart.

In my heart, in my heart,

Lord I want to be more holy in my heart.

Have you ever prayed that prayer? "Lord, I want to be more holy." Maybe you just stumbled and fell—again. I remember a time when I was sitting at the meal table with our two young sons. Christopher knocked over a glass of drink, and with some covert irritation in my voice I said, "Why did you do that?" As soon as the words left my mouth, I knew that I had said something foolish. "Why did you do that?" It was an accident. Now I had a choice to make. Would I try to cover up my inappropriate comment or apologize? I opted for the latter. "I'm sorry, Christopher. That was a foolish thing to say." "I forgive you, Daddy," he replied, "but you need to use it as a sermon illustration!" Well, it would certainly illustrate the text, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children" but it would also illustrate the need to be more holy in my heart. We've all had times like that, haven't we? Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.

Or maybe you were inspired by the life of a godly mentor, or you read or watched a biography of a great woman or man of God and you cried out, “Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart!”

I’m certain that the apostle Peter cried out, “Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.” He had times when he fell flat on his face, and he also had times when he witnessed the remarkable demonstration of a holy life. I’m sure that Peter prayed, “Lord I want to be more holy in my heart.”

In his second epistle to those of like precious faith, the apostle Peter also encouraged other followers of Jesus to live holy lives as they waited for the glorious return of Jesus. We can read Peter’s challenge in 2 Peter 3:11. The NKJV reads, “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.” The KJV says “in holy conversation and godliness.” The NIV puts it this way: “You ought to live holy and godly lives.”

I was interested in those two concepts: “holy conduct and godliness” in the NKJV, “holy conversation and godliness” in the KJV, “holy and godly lives” in the NIV. The word *αναστοφη* translated conduct (NKJV) or conversation (KJV) or lives (NIV) is used 13 times in the NT, 8 times in Peter’s epistles. This is an important concept for Peter. Here in 2 Peter 3:11 the noun *αναστοφη* is modified by the adjective “holy”—and translated as holy conduct, holy conversation, holy lives.

In 2 Peter 2, Peter speaks about the opposite of holy conduct, holy conversation. Referring to the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, Peter makes

this observation in 2 Peter 2:7: “and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct, filthy conversation, of the wicked.”

Is Peter just referring to speech here, to conversation, or to actions, conduct, or both? Peter uses this same Greek noun *ἀναστοφή* six times in his first epistle. We won't look at every reference. Let's just look at 1 Peter 1:15. “as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” NKJV (“in all manner of conversation” KJV) Conduct? Conversation? Both? What do you think?

I agree. Both. Conduct that includes conversation.

Speech and actions. My lexicon (Arndt, Bauer, and Gingrich) defines *ἀναστοφή* as “way of life” and cites Galatians 1:13 as an example, where Paul speaks about his former “way of life” in Judaism.

Since the day of the Lord will come, how then should we live? Peter's answer is simple: a holy way of life, both in speech and in actions. Let's look again at our verse in 2 Peter 3:11, because Peter adds another word: “.....and godliness.”

At first reading, “holy conduct and godliness” (holy conversation and godliness KJV; holy and godly lives NIV) sounded the same to me. What do you think?

The Greek noun here translated godliness is *ευσεβεία*. It's the same word used by Paul in that much quoted warning to young Timothy about those in the last days who have “ a form of *ευσεβεία*”, a form of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5). My Young's concordance translates *ευσεβεία* as piety or reverence.

I suggest that Peter is speaking here about the attitude of the heart and mind. We are called not only to a holy way of life, both in speech and actions, but we are also called to have a reverent attitude of heart and mind toward God. Some people may have a “form of godliness” but God sees the heart. God can clearly perceive whether or not that reverent attitude is genuine or not.

Since the day of the Lord will come, how should we live? The apostle Peter answers “a holy way of life, both in speech and actions, and a reverent attitude of heart and mind.” That makes sense to us, doesn’t it? God is holy. He wants us to be holy in all speech and actions, and to manifest a reverent attitude of heart and mind. But here is the big question. How? How can we experience that holy way of life and reverent attitude of heart and mind?

There is no doubt that it will involve intentionality on our part. It won’t happen by accident. But again I ask the question, “How? How can we experience that holy way of life in speech and actions and reverent attitude of heart and mind?” We’ve all met people who just try harder and harder to be holy and seem to fail time after time after time. We’ve also met people who focus so much on “holiness” and “right living” that they are harsh, demanding, and critical.

I received an e-mail recently from a Hope Sabbath School participant. This is what she told me:

“I need prayer-help! I had a heavy discussion half an hour ago with a church member who sees only the bad things in the church

and thinks that we all have to be sinless and perfect before Jesus comes! She thinks her duty is to tell people their sins and to teach them how to live the right way!”

We’ve all met people like that. I’m sure that many of them are sincere. But is that the way to experience a holy way of life? Unfortunately, it may have the exact opposite effect, driving people away in despair.

How can we experience that holy way of life in speech and actions and that reverent attitude of heart and mind that the Lord intends for us as we wait for His glorious return? I want to suggest to you that the answer is found in the last verse of Peter’s second epistle. 2 Peter 3:18 “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

In Hebrew thinking, knowledge is much more than information. Knowledge is relationship. Grow in your relationship with your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. A holy way of life and a reverent attitude of heart and mind are not found by embracing a set of ethical behaviors. A holy way of life and a reverent attitude of heart and mind are not found by embracing a list of rules and regulations. A holy way of life and a reverent attitude of heart and mind are found when we embrace Jesus. He is our Hope. He is our Savior. He is our Lord. So focus on Jesus. Draw close to Jesus. Nurture your relationship with Jesus.

Some months ago, a young mother visited our church website. She had watched Hope Sabbath School on the Hope Channel and discovered that she could

watch Hope Sabbath School on our website, www.forestlakechurch.org. She was just recovering from a battle with cancer, she was parent to two little children, and she felt spiritually disconnected. She had all of the Sabbath School study guides from the past two years, but they had never been opened. When she visited our website, she was delighted to discover that all of the programs from past lessons were also available. She watched one program each evening, covering a quarter's worth of lessons every two weeks: studies on Jesus, the atonement, discipleship, mission. She sent us this testimony: "My love for Jesus has been renewed!"
Hallelujah!

A renewed love relationship with Jesus changes everything. As you experience a personal life-changing relationship with Jesus, your life will be transformed. A holy way of life, and a reverent attitude of heart and mind will be manifested in your life that would be impossible apart from a personal life-changing relationship with your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior is a process—it's a journey. It doesn't happen overnight. But by the grace of God, it does happen. It must happen. Not to earn our salvation, but as an irrefutable witness to the fact that we have a personal, life-changing relationship with Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

How many of you are married? Do you remember back when you were just getting to know your spouse? It was almost 35 years ago for me and Bodil. I know, that's a long time ago, though in some ways it seems like yesterday. I was a 3rd year theology student at Newbold College in England. (Note for GC devotional: My major

theology professor was a very tall Norwegian named Dr. Jan Paulsen. I've always looked up to him, in more ways than one. He has often reminded me that he sounded defeated me in a college tennis tournament. He had a slight height advantage.) At the beginning of my 3rd year at Newbold College a daring young American college freshman arrived name Bodil. We first connected as part of a singing group. Then I asked her to sing with me at a youth rally in London, which required some regular and diligent practice in one of the music rooms in Salisbury Hall. I had no secret agenda, I promise. Then there was a week of prayer. We started staying behind after the meetings, talking together and praying. Before long, I was composing poems and buying flowers. I always checked my mailbox in Salisbury Hall to see if Bodil had written me a note. This was before e-mail and facebook and twitter. Back then, the web was something that a spider made. These were actual hand-written notes, complete with doodles and smiley faces! Even though I was busy with my studies, I made time to spend with her. I saved her a place in the dining room in Moor Close. We talked together and learned more about each other every day. I loved to listen to her stories, to share her hopes and dreams. As the months passed, I realized that everything was changing. Even my friends noticed the transformation. My behavior was changing. My speech was changing. Even the way that I thought was changing. That happens, you know, when you are involved in a life-changing love relationship with someone. Everything changes. That personal transformation doesn't happen overnight. It's a process. It's a journey. But the change does happen, and it's not a burden. It's a joy.

It's the same in our relationship with Jesus. When we experience an intimate relationship with Jesus, we experience personal transformation. Everything changes: our behavior, our speech, even the way that we think.

When we embrace Jesus and notice personal transformation occurring in the context of our relationship with Him, we won't walk around with a prideful, "holier than thou" attitude. God forbid. Peter closes his second epistle with these words: "To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."

We will never cease to confess with the apostle Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." We are a people of hope. Our hope is assured. And in the context of a personal life-changing relationship with Jesus, our hope is embraced.

And so I appeal to you, my brothers and sisters, if you want to be more holy in your heart, if you want a holy way of life in speech and actions, and a reverent attitude of heart and mind, **embrace Jesus today and rest in His loving embrace.** Spend time with Jesus today. Commune with Jesus today. Fall in love with Jesus again today. He is longing for you to live in His loving embrace today. So **embrace Jesus today and rest in His loving embrace.** That is the way to experience a holy way of life in speech and conduct, and a reverent attitude of heart and mind.

Then when you sing, "Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart" you don't need to be anxious or afraid. You can rejoice that the One who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it.

Who'll join me in singing that song as the prayer of your heart today? Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart. It will happen as we embrace Jesus and draw ever closer to Him. Why don't we slip to our knees and sing that song together right now. And then we can sing "In my heart Lord, and in my life Lord, be glorified today." And as we sing, **embrace Jesus today and rest in His loving embrace.**

Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart, in my heart

Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.

In my heart, in my heart,

Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.

In my heart, Lord, be glorified, be glorified,

In my heart, Lord, be glorified today.

In my life, Lord, be glorified, be glorified,

In my life, Lord, be glorified today.