



Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 45:18-25

New Testament Reading: Galatians 5:1-26

A Living Hope – Preparing for Persecution # 4

“The People of God”

1 Peter 2:11-12

Wayne J. Edwards, Pastor

The Jews to whom Peter wrote this letter accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord on the day of Pentecost.

- Being at odds with the Jewish Religious Leaders as well as the Roman Government, they fled to five different cities to avoid persecution.
- However, they discovered that those five cities were “pagan” cities where the people worshipped multiple gods and harassed those who disagreed with them.
- In his letter, Peter exhorted them to rejoice when they were persecuted, for they had been called to endure such suffering.

Two Timeless truths:

- Those God calls **to be saved** are also called **to serve** and, if necessary, **to suffer persecution** to defend their faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.
- Rather than expect the systems of the world to accommodate our way of life, **Christians should be willing to stand firm in our convictions as a witness to those persecuting us.**

“Probably the greatest tragedy of the church throughout its long and checkered history has been its constant tendency to conform to the prevailing culture instead of developing a Christian counter-culture.”

John R. W. Stott

- God has privileged us by taking us out of the kingdom of darkness and placing us in the kingdom of His dear Son, but the price of that privilege is to be so heavenly-minded that we lose all interest in worldly things.
- God has graced us by redeeming us from hell and making us citizens of heaven, but the price of that grace is to live as strangers, even among our family members.

To be prepared to face the persecution ahead, we must learn to live the “pilgrim” lifestyle.

- ***“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”*** (1 John 2:15-17)
- ***“I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are yours. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I have also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.”*** (From John 17:9-19)
- ***“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”*** (John 12:25)

Peter lists four actions Christians must take if they desire to live the “Pilgrim” lifestyle:

1. A Mindset to Adopt – 1 Peter 2:11 – *“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.”*

- Many Christians think we live in a Christian culture that is under attack by evil forces. However, the Bible says this world is under the dominion of Satan, and Christians will always be at odds with it.
- ***“Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly await the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*** – (Philippians 3:20)
- Rather than demanding equality among ungodly people, Christians must maintain a lifestyle of godliness before the ungodly, for our lives may be the only “gospel” they ever read,
- ***“Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men!”*** – (2 Corinthians 3:2)
- If our goal is to “silence the critics” and “witness to win the unbelievers,” the integrity of our testimony must be shown through our outward righteousness.

2. A War to Fight – 1 Peter 2:11-12 – *“Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.”*

- ***“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

God made man in His image with a:

- **Body** – “soma” – the container of the person.
- **Soul** – “psyche”- includes the mind, will, and emotions.

- **Spirit** – “pneuma” – man’s communication link with God.

Peter said our “fleshly lusts” war against the soul. The desire to sin starts in our mind, is fed by our emotions, and then allowed by our will, which affects our body and our spirit.

3. A Lifestyle to Maintain – 1 Peter 2:12 – *“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation!”*

- Even if they don’t accept Jesus Christ as their Savior because of our witness, they should admit that we are good people because of our “good works.”
- This is the “heart” of lifestyle evangelism – the purity of our hearts must be manifested in the quality of our lives and made visible to the world.
- Not that our “good behavior” will lead them to repentance and salvation, but it will convince them of the power of God to deliver them from evil.
- Rather than asking God to always locate us around those with “like values,” we need to ask Him to put us next to those who need to see the love of Jesus!

4. A Day to Remember – 1 Peter 2:12 – *“They may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”*

- Regardless of how those to whom we witness respond, God will vindicate our godly behavior before them on the day they stand before Him.
- Some will eventually be saved by God’s grace, and they will be thankful for our witness.
- Others will stand before God and try to point out our faults and failures as an excuse for their unbelief.
- God will remind them that we were not saved by our “good works”, or our “fickle faith”, but by the grace of God, which they had rejected.

**“He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”
Missionary and martyr, Jim Elliott**
