

The Reason He Had Hope – I Peter 3:13-17

I. Introduction:

- A. Do you have a sister, who used to be very close to you, but who now refuses to let you see her children, because you became a Christian, and she became a Mormon?
1. Or did you lose your job when you told your employer that you had been saved?
 2. Have you ever been teased for taking your Bible to work or school to read on your lunch break?
 3. Have you ever been spit upon as you spoke to an **old friend** about your **NEW friend** in Christ Jesus?
 4. In our part of the world persecution is relatively mild, but it still exists, and it is still painful.
 5. In other parts of the world there are people who are being tortured and slaughtered for their faith in Christ.
 6. *“If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.”*
- B. I am primarily concerned with **verse 15** this evening, but it’s important to consider the context.
1. As we noticed in earlier lessons, and as we just read: Peter is talking about suffering for God’s cause.
 2. He tells us to live in such a way that *“whereas they speak evil of you as of evildoers,”* they will eventually have to eat their words.
 3. Of course he was not talking about being ill-treated because of sin.
 - a. This is not because we have become obnoxious in our criticism of other people and their theology.
 - b. It is not because we are filled with self-righteous pride.
 4. Peter is talking about suffering for righteousness’ sake.
 5. It isn’t always the case, but the context of *“being ready to give an answer”* could very well be persecution.

II. Before coming back to verse 15 and its context I’d like you to turn to Acts 26.

- A. Paul had returned to Jerusalem after several years of missionary work in Asia, Greece and Macedonia.
1. He carried with him love gifts from believers in those foreign lands – gifts which they had given to be a blessing to their suffering cousins in the faith.
 2. But while in the city Paul was attacked by the Jews and nearly killed – nearly torn limb from limb.
 3. And eventually he was brought before Governor Festus and the Jewish King Agrippa.
- B. Let’s begin reading in **Acts 26:1** – *“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:*
1. *I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.*
 2. *My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.”*
- C. What I’d like you to notice is that **Paul** was doing exactly what **Peter** is telling us to do and for the same reason.
1. Paul was in the midst of persecution and suffering, when he opened his mouth in defense of his hope.
 2. And, as I say, it is in this same kind of situation that Peter encourages us.
- D. What is that *“hope”* to which Paul and Peter refer? Neither apostle tries to define it.
1. **Paul** doesn’t define it, because the man to whom he was speaking was an expert in Jewish theology.
 2. He simply says, *“Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly (or constantly) serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.”*
 3. You’ll notice that the word *“promise”* is in italics, telling us that it isn’t in the original language.
 4. So the verse could read: *“And now I am being judged for the **HOPE** of the **PROMISE** made of God unto our fathers: unto which our twelve tribes, used to live and serve God day and night, hoping to come.”*
- E. Our translators used the word *“promise”* because it makes an accurate comment about that hope.

1. The hope to which the Jews hoped and that for which Paul was being judged, was a **promise** of **God**.
 2. And as Paul tells us later in one of his letters, this *"hope of eternal life"* was something which *"God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."*
 3. Tying these things together we see that this hope is not an uncertain wish, but something guaranteed by the omnipotent God, but which we have not yet received.
- F. There is an interesting play on words here in Paul's statement.
1. He compares the **act** of hoping and the **object** for which was hoped.
 2. *"Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, HOPE to come. For which HOPE'S sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews."*
 3. The godly in Israel were hoping for the promise to come; and for this promise Paul was being judged.
 4. That was basically his defense.
 5. Paul was on trial for something which many Israelites had been expecting since the days of Abraham.
- G. That hope – which is our hope even though we are not of physical children of Israel – can be understood from three different points of view.
1. One is our **PHYSICAL RESURRECTION** from the dead.
 2. In the same breath in which Paul said, *"For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews,"* he said, *"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"*
 3. Agrippa, it appears, leaned toward the liberal, Sadducean interpretation of the Scriptures.
 4. Those people denied nearly everything spiritual and heavenly.
 - a. Generally speaking, they denied life beyond the grave.
 - b. And so they also denied that there is such a thing as a resurrection from the dead.
 5. To Sadducees, like Agrippa, life was all about enjoying their 70 years on earth.
 6. They followed the outward rites and ceremonies of Israel in order obtain God's best earthly gifts.
 7. As far as they were concerned, when they died, they were dead – finished – done.
 8. The Sadducean way of life is essentially the way that most of the people of the world live today.
- H. The second aspect, or the second way to think about this hope is as **SALVATION FROM SIN**.
1. Just like Christians today, the saints of the Old Testament had a hope of righteousness, and a hope not only **forgiveness** of sin, but of **deliverance** from sin.
 2. And that is the reason that they were looking for the Messiah.
 3. Two of those Old Testament saints are described in New Testament.
 4. **Luke 2:25** says, *"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.*
 - a. *And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*
 - b. *And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,*
 - c. *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:*
 - d. *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;*
 - e. *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."*
 5. Another of those Old Testament saints is described just a little later in that chapter – **verse 36**.
 - a. *"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;*
 - b. *And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*
 - c. *And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."*

- I. These scriptures bring us to the third aspect of our hope – **THE COMING OF THE SAVIOUR**.
 1. For ancient Israel, most people thought only of what became Christ's incarnation – His first coming.
 2. In Jesus' incarnation, when He first came in human form, it was to provide us with salvation.
 3. But that **salvation** will never really be complete until it is joined with **glorification**.
 4. And for this Christ Jesus must come a second time with power and great glory.

- J. The hope of the saint, whether in the Old Testament, New Testament or subsequent to the days of the Bible...
 1. The hope of the saint comes in three major segments:
 - a. Salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ – the Messiah.
 - b. The return of the Lord Jesus in glory.
 - c. And either the translation of the saints, often called the *"rapture,"* or the eventual resurrection of the saints to be glorified with Him.
 2. This explains the language of Paul in the book of **Titus**:
 - a. *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,*
 - b. *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, AND the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*
 - c. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."*
 3. This is the hope for which we are in hope.
 4. This is the hope for which we are in anxious anticipation.

III. Now let's return to **1 Peter 3**.

- A. *"If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;*
 1. *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*
 2. *Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.*
 3. *For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing."*
 4. About what did Peter encourage those saints to be ready to offer answers and explanations?
 5. Doesn't the verse tell us that it was to be able to explain their hope?
 6. And why were they suffering? Again, wasn't it because of their hope?

- B. We can exhort each other to readiness in the context of witnessing of the cross, the Saviour and of salvation.
 1. But the context of **this** passage is specifically our hope in Christ.
 2. Not only were they testifying of the past and the crucifixion, but of their future in the return of the Saviour.
 3. Not only were they witnessing and testifying, but they were actually living in the light of that hope.
 4. And that was bringing persecution upon them.

- C. Perhaps **1 John 3:1** can help us to understand.
 1. *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*
 - a. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*
 - b. *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."*
 2. The hope, which these people held so close to their hearts, led them away from their former sins and the life-style in which their former friends and relatives still lived.
 3. Their changed lives made them obnoxious to the sinners around them, even when they weren't trying to be obnoxious.
 4. Their hope-filled lives raised questions to which they needed to be prepared to answer.

- D. Paul in **Colossians 3:4** further helps us to understand what Peter is saying.
1. It speaks of our hope, telling us that Christ Jesus is soon to return.
 2. *“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”*
 3. And what is the context of that glorious statement?
 4. *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*
 - a. *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*
 - b. *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*
 - c. *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:*
 - d. *For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:*
 - e. *In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.”*
- E. Perhaps, before you were saved you would go out partying with friends, getting really drunk or high, and then committing fornication – things for which *“the wrath of God cometh.”*
1. Or perhaps you were a bully, terrorizing people who you thought were weaker than yourself.
 - a. Maybe you boasted to your friends about your shop-lifting skills, showing them things you had stolen.
 - b. Perhaps you were known to have a library of pornography before the internet developed.
 2. But then you were born again, and you immediately quit those sins.
 3. Not only did you stop sinning in these ways, but more positively, you set your affection on things above.
 - a. You began to love righteousness as much as you used to love sin.
 - b. You began to produce the fruit of the Spirit and looked for ways to demonstrate your love, joy & peace.
 4. You set your affection on things above – things which have a heavenly source and heavenly end.
 5. And you began to earnestly expect the return of the Saviour, actually telling others about the Second Coming.
 6. These things created mixed responses – joy in those who understood, but fear and even hatred in the hearts of the wicked around you.
- F. Peter is saying – he is telling us – to sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and prepare your minds and mouths to give an explanation for your expectation of Christ Jesus’ return.
1. In the light of Jesus’ possible return today, live in such a way that people will see a difference between the old you and the new you.
 2. Live in such a way that they will see a difference between you and themselves.
 3. And then when they ask you for an explanation, be prepared to give them an answer from God’s Word.
 4. You don’t necessarily have to force the issue, making yourself obnoxious in stuffing your righteous living down their throats.
 5. Just let your life and the Holy Spirit open doors and then walk through.
 6. Oh, and by the way, with that may come the opportunity to witness of Jesus’ death on the cross.
 7. *“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”*