

# A Visible hope

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Date: 24 February 2019

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[ 0 : 00 ] honored to be able to bring the Word of God to you today. As many of you know, we are continuing today through the book of 1 Peter with the title being Hope in Exile.

If you're new to One Harbor, we typically teach through complete books of the Bible and today's message is the third installment through this relatively small book found toward the back of the Bible. Just to give you a little background with Peter, Peter was one of the original disciples of Christ.

He walked and lived with Jesus during the three years of his ministry before Jesus was crucified, raised from the dead, and ascended back to heaven. Peter saw firsthand all of the miracles and heard all of the teachings of Christ. He did not have a hearsay experience. In fact, which is pretty cool to me because I'm a surfer, but Peter is the only other person to have walked on water.

Is that not super cool? I certainly can relate to him on many levels. He was very passionate and stubborn and often spoke before thinking, which landed him in trouble.

I can certainly relate to that, as you can ask my wife. There are two things. There are two things happening when we communicate with each other. First, there's the words that you are speaking and the intended message.

[ 1 : 16 ] But the other half, which is probably more important, is what words is the other person, what are they hearing, and how are they interpreting the meaning of those words? As I mentioned to my wife, Shelly, we've been married for 13 years and dated almost five years prior to being married. So you think we'd have this communication thing on lockdown, you're right? No.

Not at all. This is like, in fact, just the other day, as a matter of fact, she was asking me something and I interpreted her as trying to attack me. And so, yeah, she had no intentions of trying to attack me, obviously.

She would just ask me a question. So it led to a pretty interesting discussion, to say the least, of which I lost. But anyway, whatever.

Peter is famous in the Bible for experiencing these super high moments of bravery and courage followed by moments of utter cowardice. And, for instance, in the book of Matthew, chapter 16, Jesus tells Peter in front of all the other disciples, in front of all of his peers, that his church, Jesus' church, is going to be built on him.

Peter is the rock that he's going to build him on. And then, five verses later, five verses later, Jesus refers to Peter as Satan due to his lack of faith and the need of Jesus dying and then being resurrected from the grave.

[ 2 : 38 ] Peter is also the disciple who cut off the ear of one of the men that had come to arrest Jesus. Vowing to fight to the death to protect him. And then that same night, denies he even knows Jesus to three separate people, including a young girl.

In the end, Peter does become a faith-filled powerhouse, proclaiming the good news or gospel of Jesus Christ to thousands of people, performing many miracles through his own faith in Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Peter is, in this book, Peter is writing to a group of churches throughout the Roman Empire that have experienced rapid growth with new converts and are walking through what it means to be a Christian or follower of Christ.

Many of us today have a picture in our head of how this works out. I would dare say that many of us say it looks like a to-do list or better yet, what not to-do list.

I would say that if you are here and not following Christ, that would probably be the biggest hurdle to you asking Jesus into your life. You are concerned with all the stuff you will not be allowed to do or say or even have.

[ 3 : 43 ] Peter starts this letter by anchoring the people in their identity. They are a new creation. They are exiles of this world, but they have been fully adopted into the family of God through their hope in Jesus.

Today's passage is getting to the practical side of things. When you understand your new identity and the powerful implications this has, then there should be some change that occurs. Even though he does get practical, he never strays far from who they are through Christ.

We are going to read 1 Peter 2, 1-12, and it goes like this. So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up into salvation.

If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good, as you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For it stands in Scripture, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become a cornerstone and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

[ 5 : 04 ] They stumble because they disobey the word as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

This is the word of God. Peter is using a ton of metaphors and quoting the Old Testament in these 12 verses. What he is trying to say is that these people and us today have been born again into a new hope, a new life, and this has implications for how we live and mature.

He is urging us to constantly be striving for maturity in Christ. He uses imagery such as newborn infants longing for spiritual milk, living stones, cornerstones, and then we have chosen race and royal priesthood and holy nation.

[ 6 : 24 ] All of these honestly could have its own sermon without blinking an eye. So there's a tendency to being too vague in times like these or there's a tendency to preach a 90-minute sermon.

Neither of which I wish to accomplish today. Okay. So let's start with the easy stuff. All right. He starts with a list of stuff we should not be doing. There are no metaphors, no parables, no gray areas, just a good old-fashioned list.

Right? Verse 1 it says, so put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Boom! There it is. He is saying that because of the gift of salvation through the grace of Jesus Christ.

We should be different. We should treat others in a different manner than that of the world. So let's work through this list and while we do this I'm going to ask you to ask the question, do I act like this to others?

One of those self-inflection times. So the first one is malice which means ill will or spite. Do you hold a grudge? Are you a cynical person?

[ 7 : 30 ] Do you feel like others are out to get you? Just as I explained about my conversation with my wife. So obviously I have a problem. Deceit. This is having a manipulative behavior.

Not being fully honest. It was just a little white lie, you know, no harm, no foul. Do you have an agenda for your relationships? And then there's the biggie.

Hypocrisy means actor or portraying something or someone you are not. This is the big argument you hear from non-Christians when speaking about the church. And you know what?

For many of us they're absolutely correct. You act good so that you can feel good about yourself and look down on other sinners because they are bad and you are good. Reality is if that is our mentality and then we are worse than they are.

At least they're not living a lie. A southern preacher once said when he described in hypocrisy be what you is and not what you ain't because if you ain't what you is then you is what you ain't.

[ 8 : 37 ] Amen, brother. That's what I'm talking about. Envy. The next one on the list there. You have a resentful attitude towards others' possessions, qualities, or even luck.

This is making everything about you. When something good happens to others you are not happy for them. You actually grieve for yourself. This is very subtle and easy to fall prey to.

It is a lie to our hearts but can be very, very dangerous. And then slander. Slander is to talk down or about, to degrade the reputation of another.

Here's the buzzword for slander. Gossip. Gossip. Peter very plainly says to put away all of those. I hope this list is one of those glaring moments when you realize that a drastic overhaul needs to happen in how you treat others. It may even require some of us to go and ask forgiveness from those we have offended.

[ 9 : 36 ] Even if they don't have a clue you still need to repent. This is a heart issue and one that will change the rest of your life and your effectiveness as a Christian.

Just like Jesus taught and lived out Peter is not concerned with how we look dress or even act but how well we put away all of these destructive behaviors. It's a heart issue.

Imagine if we could be completely free from malice deceit hypocrisy envy and slander. We would be the nicest people we know. Great co-workers friends neighbors and family members.

We would truly be the light in a very dark world. A person where hope can be found. This is the difference that all people around us should recognize. Your attitude toward your boss should be different in the way you graciously assume the best of others and how you quickly forgive others when they offend you instead of holding a grudge.

Don't misunderstand this list to be a thumbs up for morality or us to try harder in being a moral person. No, he points us right back to who we are because of what has happened to us through Jesus.

[ 10 : 49 ] It is only because of the encounter we had with Jesus and having a new identity through Jesus that we have a new purpose as God's people. Within St. Peter used an interesting metaphor to help describe this change.

He uses a picture of living stones. Verses 4 and 5 it says, As you come to him a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Alright, so we need to work through this to help our brains understand. We have a different context than the original audience obviously. The terms stones, spiritual houses, priesthood really don't mean much to us today in today's world but it really shows a glimpse of who we are which then shows us how and why we should live different lives before meeting Christ.

We live differently because God is in us and he is revealed through us. This picture is all about the temple. The temple in those days was a huge part of what it meant to worship the God of Israel. This was part of the covenant that God formed way back in the beginning. This was the way God chose to be with his people to dwell with his people was in the temple. Everyday Jews never, never expected to have a personal relationship with God.

[ 12 : 15 ] They knew the priests would offer sacrifices for their sins and be the mediator between God and them. There was always this person in between God and them themselves.

The original temple however was destroyed by another nation an invading nation and many Old Testament prophets spoke about the temple being rebuilt which would allow for the presence of God to return. They would speak about this cornerstone.

Peter actually quotes Isaiah in Old Testament book here in verse 6. It says, For it stands in scripture behold I am laying in Zion a stone a cornerstone chosen and precious and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

Isaiah is saying that this cornerstone the new temple would be built on not an actual stone but a living stone God's chosen king. Peter is emphatically saying that the new temple is built on Jesus Christ.

Isaiah went on to say that this cornerstone would be the ones the builders rejected. The religious leaders of the day during Jesus' time emphatically rejected Jesus and his good news. By demanding his death they were saying he was a false cornerstone.

[ 13 : 26 ] He was actually a liar is what the religious zealots of the day were saying. But God thank God the ultimate general contractor if you will knew the only foundation the new temple could be built upon and never be destroyed was and is his son Jesus.

Now this is the really cool part. This is what I really like. As we come to him the living stone the foundation of this new temple Jesus we we become living stones built into a spiritual house a holy priesthood.

The temple is no longer a physical building you and I go to and worship God. No when we come to Jesus you and I we become the temple on mission throughout the world.

How cool is that? N.T. Wright put it like this the scattered community to which Peter is writing are part of this new temple. God is no longer to live in a temple in Jerusalem but in the spiritual house which made up of living stones is being built all over the world.

God wants after all to fill the whole world with his glory. Peter believed that all who belonged to Jesus had now been brought into that people of God that true temple. The one true God was now living in them the temple had been rebuilt not in Jerusalem but all around the world.

[ 14 : 44 ] Peter is saying that through us people will encounter the glory and the presence of God. We are all priests that serve as mediators between God and the rest of the world.

When we put off all malice and envy and deceit and hypocrisy and slander and put on the love of Jesus when we live out our lives full of grace when we become the light in a dark world when we present hope in a world where less and less is found we bring the glory of God to the world.

That is something to be excited about. So if this is true well we should look different. We should act different. We are a part of the holy temple of God with Jesus as the foundation the cornerstone.

He goes on to say in verses 9 and 10 but you are a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who calls you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. Because we have received grace and mercy from God we are redefined.

[ 15 : 52 ] Through Christ we are a chosen race regardless of our ethnic background or skin color. We are part of a new people group the people of God. We are a holy nation no matter what your passport says.

We are a people with purpose to proclaim the excellencies of him who called me and you out of darkness and into his light. We live in this world but we are not to become like the rest of the world. We live in this world but we don't belong to the world. Verses 11 and 12 says beloved as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds and glorify God. That word sojourners means people that are passing through.

This is not our home. This is not our final destination. And we see the word exiles. Peter is calling us we're resident aliens if you will.

[ 16 : 58 ] Meaning we are living in our towns cities and neighborhoods but our true home is somewhere else. He also says that we are living among the Gentiles another name for non-believers.

Prior to Christ coming Gentiles described basically any non-Israelite any non-Jew. After Christ the term changes in meaning and describes any person that basically does not believe Jesus is Messiah.

We have a purpose and identity rooted in another world but we still live here. We are on mission not kicked back on some beach with a fruity drink with an umbrella waiting for Jesus to return. We're on mission people.

We just helped hope is alive. Buy a house and seven acres of land in Carteret County. Why do we do that? Why did we raise over \$400,000 to help him?

Because we are surrounded by people of this world that are dying every day due to substance abuse and overdosing. We are commissioned to bring hope to the hopeless.

[ 18 : 01 ] They need to know that Jesus is the author of hope. They need to know that sticking a needle in their arm or taking another pill or drink will never fill that void. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the light.

Hope is alive closed on that house a week and a half ago. Five guys from Oklahoma moved here the next day and they have now accepted two men into their program this weekend. Isn't that awesome?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I don't care if you live in a million dollar home or in a government subsidized apartment.

I don't care. This pandemic is everywhere and we are on mission to fight it with everything we have. We are called to fight for those who can't fight for themselves.

Period. And I'll say this. If you're here today man you're struggling with substance abuse please come and talk to me or Jesse after the service.

[ 19 : 03 ] We're not here to judge you. We're here to help. We love you. We are called to live out this kingdom culture but one of the big obstacles you and I face is our constant bombardment with the culture of this world.

Everywhere. This means that we need to be diligent and we need to use some serious wisdom and intentionality in how we act and behave in this world. One thing that is very easy and honestly a real danger for all of us to succumb to is assimilation.

I mean when someone moves to ENC Eastern North Carolina we expect them to accept our way of life our values our culture right? They become one of us.

Right? You know what I'm saying? For Christians assimilation would mean that we look no different than everything around us.

We accept the values of this world their way of life their culture. I know it's terrible but I mean look at your mascot it's a devil I mean come on.

[ 20 : 25 ] I'm not saying God's a Carolina fan but what color is the sky? For the original audience of this letter this would mean they would accept and embrace the values of the Roman Empire the peace and economic prosperity provided by Caesar will be all they would ever need.

We would lose what distinguishes us from the world and look no different. Sadly this is true for many Christians today and the world sees us for being the hypocrites we truly are. We have lost our hope we have lost our faith that Jesus is more than enough.

The other real danger that we can fall into is called separationism. We fear that if we mingle with the sinners of this world then their sin can rub off on us like some kind of communicable disease.

Christians have created this bubble environment that prevents this infection from occurring. We must listen to Matt Redman you know because he is truly anointed by God. obviously. Only movies produced by Dove are acceptable.

Our kids must certainly attend Christian schools or even better must be homeschooled. That is the ultimate protection from the world. We assume that everything outside my bubble must be of Satan and therefore bad.

[ 21 : 45 ] Now however honestly we are going to throw away some good stuff with the bad if we take that approach. Take for instance the North Carolina Seafood Festival or the Mum Festival in October. They are both great opportunities to enjoy our local culture and environment and have a good time but every year I see some guy with a bullhorn telling people they are going to die and go straight to hell if they don't repent.

I typically react in one of two ways. Number one I want to snatch that bullhorn away from that guy and tell him he is an idiot. Or number two I want to hide and not let another person know that I am a Christian like this guy is proclaiming to be.

Peter is saying that either one of these choices separationism or assimilation are wrong. We are sojourners in this world keeping their conduct among the Gentiles honorable by embracing a counter cultural way of life so that people come to glorify God.

A letter written this is awesome a letter written by an anonymous Christian in 150 AD describes the heart of this passage of scripture so well. Listen to these words. Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality language or customs.

They do not inhabit separate cities of their own or speak a strange dialect or follow some outlandish way of life. With regard to dress food and manner of life in general they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in whether it is Greek or foreign.

[ 23 : 13 ] And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens but labor under all the disabilities of aliens.

Any country can be their homeland but for them their homeland wherever it may be is a foreign country. Like others they marry and have children but they do not expose them. They share their meals but not their wives.

They live in the flesh but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth but they are citizens of heaven. obedient to the laws they yet live on a level that transcends the law.

That is powerful. Powerful right there. These Christians they weren't assimilated or separated. They were immersed in the culture and in many ways were not distinguished from the locals yet somehow seemed different in a way that attracted others.

We should not try to be strange. I mean honestly what we believe in is weird enough. I mean think about this. He was from a virgin birth. Right?

[ 24 : 21 ] Died for me. He died for me and you. He rose again and he is coming back to rule for all of eternity. Try to tell that somebody who doesn't have a clue about Christianity.

They are going to call you a weirdo. They are not separated but there is something very different and attractive. They don't fall into the sins of their culture. They are known for being generous with their resources but very stingy with their sexuality.

This is the opposite of the culture of the day. Promiscuous with their bodies and stingy with their money. First century Christians were known for being promiscuous with their money and stingy with their bodies.

It was the exact opposite of what was normal during the Roman Empire. They were not separated or assimilated to the world.

They were instead God's people in the world. This means as Christians we must be intentional and thoughtful. We are not called to embrace everything and yet we certainly do not reject everything too.

[ 25 : 20 ] There are things we must be able to receive things we must reject and still others that must be reformed. For example college basketball.

This is certainly an aspect of our culture in North Carolina. it is also never mentioned in scripture. But we can receive it.

Must we reject it or does it need to be reformed? Seems like we can accept it but what if you're a Duke fan? just saying.

It seems like on the surface this is a part of our culture that we can receive. However before you came to Christ think about this before you came to Christ if heavy drinking was associated with the game maybe during the game outbursts of almost uncontrollable anger happened maybe your identity was wrapped around your favorite team and you find it difficult to be friends with Duke and NC State fans if so well there should be some aspect of reform or redemption if you plan to attend or watch these events.

Other things should outright be rejected by us as Christians. Drunkenness. There is no such thing as Christian drunkenness. There is no such thing as Christian pornography Christian adultery or Christian fornication.

[ 26 : 49 ] There is no way to redeem or reform sexual sin to make it fit into a Christian life. No way. Other instances involve unethical business practices that are made out of a spirit of greed.

Some businesses operate with this mentality and if they claim to be Christian then those practices need to cease. Owning a business or working for a living is certainly something that we should and can receive but often times we must reform our work practices and mentality.

Our motivation for our work should be different. Many of us are motivated to work hard for selfish gain or fuel the never ending love of money or possessions.

As Christians we must redeem this mentality repent and change to work first for the glory of God. It is not a sin to own a business or have money.

We need good ethical business men and women in the church. The sin occurs when our heart motives are not aligned with that of God. Musical styles are another topic of our culture that can be reformed and then received.

[ 27 : 55 ] I grew up being taught that certain styles of music were bad due to the electric guitars or the drums. Yeah that was John Birch's first time ever playing electric guitar and I think he already has an idol.

I'm just kidding. He was loving it. He was having a good time. It was awesome. Made me lose my place man. What's up with that? Oh so my day sure this is probably going to age me a little. It was it was Carmen or Sandy Patty or Burst. Right? I mean come on there there are tons of great music available that may not be classified as Christian but does that make them bad? On the other hand music and media can have a powerful effect on you and your mindset. We must be wise and intentional when choosing the music and media we expose ourselves to. If these items are leading you to anything other than Christ well I encourage you to reform this area of your life as a follower.

This process of receiving rejecting and reforming different areas of our culture is something we are meant to always be doing. Always be doing. It's not a one and done thing.

[ 29 : 10 ] As we grow in maturity this should happen non-stop almost like breathing. I never have to tail my diaphragm to contract and therefore inhale a breath of air. The same thing should be true of us as mature Christians.

The process is just something we do. It's just something we do. It's who we are. You may be sitting here and realize you just accepted a part of our culture that should be reformed or rejected. In that area you are no longer in exile.

You have become assimilated. It is so easy and I am sure most if not all of us have fallen prey to this tactic of the enemy. Fortunately Peter just doesn't leave us with a list of what not to do.

He shows us what will keep us centered and grounded. We live faithfully as God's people when we are fixated on Jesus. Verses 2 and 3 says, Like newborn infants long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up in salvation if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

When we are focused on Jesus more than on the world we can be faithful exiles. Shelly and I have 5 kids. 5 kids.

[ 30 : 21 ] That is what I said to you. Yeah. And as infants they are pretty simple. Each one of them they eat they sleep and they poop.

And sometimes more than one occurs at the same time especially the first and the third or the third. My experience is that when they cry the loudest it usually involves hunger and their desire for milk. That is the only thing that will satisfy that child. There is no swing there is no bouncy chair there is no cuddles nothing is going to suffice except for mama's milk. Peter is saying that when we have the same craving for the word of God as an infant has for his or her mother's milk then we can remain sojourners and exiles in and among the Gentiles.

Many of you if you are first time parents don't realize this but your baby could not care less about the color of the nursery. Okay. The really nice 4 in 1 crib you just purchased or the ever popular trendy onesie that reads I love mommy or daddy which we all know is dad.

I mean come on. I mean not to say anything but all 5 of my kids first words were dada. Yeah.

[ 31 : 49 ] We must come to realize that Jesus is the only source that can satisfy our longings. Until he becomes the center of mine and your longings then we will continue to struggle and fall short of this process of receiving things rejecting things or reforming them so that my lifestyle in this world may be pleasing to Jesus and Jesus alone.

This lifestyle is hard and you will be tempted so many times to just go with the flow. You must see that Jesus is worth it. this is why we never get tired of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We will continue to proclaim his goodness and his mercy and his grace over a never ending list of things we should not do. There are tons of things we should not do and I have addressed some of them today but when we focus on those things instead of Jesus we can easily slip into moralism and works based gospel instead of focusing on the only one who deserves and earned our full attention and devotion.

Jesus paid it all. Period. How valuable are we to him? A hundred dollars? A million dollars? How much? Something more costly than any amount of money.

He paid for my sin. He paid for your sin with his own blood. He was rejected by man and died a horrible death to pay the penalty of sin for you and me and yet he became the living stone.

[ 33 : 11 ] The cornerstone. He is the only one that has earned the right to have our lives fully devoted to. Verse 4 says as you come to him a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious.

His precious blood was shed for you and me and when you know that you will come to him. You will recognize that he and he alone is precious.

As the band comes up Jesus is worth rejecting aspects of this life that we would rather receive. He is worth building our whole lives upon.

Verse 6 says for it stands in scripture behold I am laying in Zion a stone a cornerstone chosen and precious and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

If you are a follower of Christ we must recognize that we are God's temple dispersed throughout the world. We must recognize that we are called to live in a way that means we may lose out on some things.

[ 34 : 18 ] It means we may be rejected by some of our friends and family. People may slander you and people may shame you. We must remember that in the eyes of Christ we will never be shamed.

we must remember that Jesus Christ willingly let his body be broken willingly shed his blood because we are chosen and precious.

We are the living stones of the temple of God. Jesus was rejected by many so that we may be accepted by God. As we build our lives upon him may we continue to be sojourners and exiles in and among the Gentiles.

Before we take communion just take a few moments to think about what I've just presented to you.

If you need to go and ask for forgiveness and repent to somebody make it happen before you come and take communion.

It is so important. If they're not here then make it a priority to go and do that. If you have hurt somebody if you have slandered if you gossiped if you've done those things go and ask forgiveness.

[ 35 : 29 ] God is faithful and just to forgive you but it is not way more important. It is just as important to ask forgiveness from the people that we have offended. So take a few moments and consider that as we come up and take communion.

Amen.