

Faithful christian living 1 Peter 1v13-21

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[0:00] Well, in August 2014, Kevin Garrett, who we just mentioned, was arrested by local authorities and placed in detention.

As a follower of Jesus, along with his wife Julia, they sought to serve the people of Asia, bringing practical aid and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with those that they met.

On Thursday of this week, Kevin was released after nearly two years' imprisonment and reunited with his family. When I met Kevin a few years ago, he shared this verse about his work and ministry.

It comes from Philippians. He put it up on a screen and he read, For it has been granted to you, on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also suffer for him.

And Kevin then went on to explain that both he and his wife Julia knew that to serve Christ where they were would mean opposition and persecution.

[1:17] They understood clearly that to be a follower of Jesus Christ meant that in some way you will get hit.

Now that's the big message of 1 Peter. Have a look at chapter 1, verse 1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, that is God's chosen people who belong to God, but are strangers in the world and have been scattered throughout.

Peter is writing to believers who, on the one hand, belong to Jesus, but as a result of their belonging to Jesus, do not belong in this world.

In fact, look at the end of verse 6 of chapter 1. They have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. They have been misunderstood.

They've been excluded. They've been accused wrongly. They've been abused and mocked. Because they love Jesus, opposition and persecution is their daily experience.

[2:36] Now, this is something we have to face up to ourselves. If we are followers of Jesus, this will be our experience.

We might not have to leave our home or country. We might not suffer prison like Kevin. But to be a Christian means we will get hit. One writer put it like this.

We have become outsiders, just as Jesus was an outsider. We are marginal in our culture because Jesus is marginal.

The cross is the ultimate expression of marginalization. And to follow Jesus, to follow his example, is to experience marginalization and hostility.

So the big question we want to ask ourselves today is, how do we live in this kind of culture? How do we survive in this kind of world?

[3:42] Well, rather than conform our beliefs to fit in or compromise our behavior to be accepted, we are to live our lives as God's children in this world.

Two big things we're going to look at. Here's the first one. The commands to live as God's children. Look at verse 13.

Therefore, so in view of the hostility we face, in view of the trials and the struggles, verse 13, prepare your minds for action, be self-controlled, set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

That's the big command of verse 13. Set your hope. Be clear of your hope. You see, living life as a Christian now is going to be tough, but the future is glorious.

So we set our hope on that grace that is to come. Now we've got to understand that hope in the Bible is not how we understand hope. I hope that Chelsea will win the league, or I hope that it's going to be dry tomorrow.

[5 : 06] Those things are uncertain and not guaranteed, especially if you're a Chelsea supporter. However, the hope that is to come, the grace that we are to receive, is absolutely guaranteed and totally assured.

That's what hope in Scripture is. It is guaranteed. That's what he told us in verse 3. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth, this new beginning, a fresh start, into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, never spoil, never fade, and it's kept in heaven for you.

Because Jesus rose from the grave, defeating our death, our future hope is guaranteed.

Later today, Mayo are going to play Dublin in the All-Ireland Final. Now suppose Mayo knew they were going to win.

Somehow, they just knew that victory was theirs. It was guaranteed. They would still have to go out and play and compete and tackle and score.

[6 : 29] But no matter the hits they take, no matter the intensity of the fight, even if they went behind in the score, they would keep on going because they knew victory was assured.

Well, that's how it is for us. Our future is guaranteed. So as we live in this hostile world, no matter the hits that we take, no matter how fierce the battle, we can keep on going because our victory, our future, is sure.

Now the danger is, and what can happen to us is this. We can take our eyes off our future hope. We can become overcome by the struggling and the trials and the difficulties as a Christian.

And we can begin to drift and opt out. So he gives us this command, set your hope on the grace that is to come. How do we do that?

Well, look at verse 13 again. Therefore, prepare your minds for action. Engage your thinking intentionally and deliberately.

[7 : 48] Start thinking about what God has promised us. Saturate your thoughts with the glory that is to come. In other words, we are to fill our minds with the truth of God's amazing promises.

We are to prepare our minds, verse 13, and be self-controlled or some of the translations have it, be sober-minded. To be sober-minded means to be in control of your thinking.

Rather than being influenced by the world around you, we are being influenced by what God has to say in his word. I watched a chick flick once.

Only one of them. Fifty first dates, if you can remember it. I think I was there. I can't remember anyway. We'll not go there. Bad, bad, bad to go there.

And in it, anyway, the story of it is, is a wife who has an accident and loses her memory. She can't remember who she is or those who love her. So every morning when she wakes up, she plays a video.

[9 : 00] And in the video, her husband speaks to her, reminding her of who he is, that he is her loving husband, and that she's got a wonderful daughter who she loves.

And he explains all these things, all these truths to her. So as she begins each day, she's reminding herself of the truth of who she is, and she's able to live out her calling and her life as she should.

Now that's what he's telling us here. Our minds are to be filled with the truth of God's word. We need to play the video of the gospel story over and over again to our minds.

We need to tell it to us. We need to meditate upon it. We need to hear God say to us, You are my child. I have loved you and chosen you from before the creation of the world.

I have died for you. I have given you an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. You have a glorious future. Set your hope on the grace that is to come.

[10:07] So that's the first command. Be clear of your hope. And the second one is this. Be holy like God.

Look at verse 15. But just as he, that is God who called you, is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written, Be holy because I am holy.

Now, holy in this context means to be separate and distinct. So if God is holy, that means God is set apart.

God is different from everyone else and everything else. He's full of purity, full of beauty. There's no influence of evil and there's no hint of sin.

Now, do you see what we're called to? If we are God's children, we are to become like God. In other words, we are to pursue a life of holiness.

[11:13] Verse 16. Be holy because I am holy. Now, in your Bibles, you'll see there's probably a little letter at the end of it and you'll see there that it's actually a quote from the book of Leviticus.

Leviticus, that book in the Old Testament, one of the books that we usually tend to avoid because to us, well, it's a book full of strange laws that God gives to his people Israel.

He's rescued them from slavery and then he gives them all these laws about what they can eat and what they can't wear, where they can go and what they can't do.

And through all of these laws, God's people are being trained every single day. They're being reminded every single day that they were different. They now belong to God.

So when they sat down to have their food, their breakfast or their lunch, when they got dressed in the morning and put on certain clothes, when they went out to work, the things they could touch and not touch, they couldn't get through any part of the day without this reminder that they were separate, that they were different, that they belonged to God.

[12:32] So as they went out amongst the nations, all this training would remind them that they were to behave as God's people. They were different. Now the same principle applies to us.

We are God's people and we are to train ourselves to be holy. We are to be separate and distinct, not by the food we eat or the clothes we wear, but by our behaviour.

Look at verse 14. As obedient children, as obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance, but just as he who called you be holy, so be holy in all you do.

We're to be different by our behaviour. When you watch a great match on television, like Dublin and Mayo this afternoon, you watch the skill of the players.

They don't have to think about what to do. In the intensity of the battle on the pitch, it all becomes instinct. It's almost habit.

[13:48] It's habit. Because they've been putting in the hard training through the months and through the winter, they just perform. It's just natural. Now, in the same way, as we pursue a life of holiness, as we train ourselves to become like God, when the hostility comes, in the midst of the opposition and the fight on the pitch, as it were, we will obey.

It will become our natural instinct. It will become our habit to obey Christ. Rather than conform to the standards of this world and fit in and live that way, our habit will be naturally to obey Christ.

In other words, if we are not training ourselves in holiness, if we are not seeking to obey Christ, when the hostility comes, when the trial comes, we will conform.

We'll buckle under the pressure. And we'll begin to modify our behaviour so that we do fit in. And we are accepted. So two very clear commands to God's children.

Be clear of your hope. Get your minds in gear and remember what is to come. And the second command, be holy like God.

[15:17] Train yourself, discipline yourself to become holy like him so that you can stand strong in the heat of the battle. The second big idea is this, the motivation to live as God's children.

You see, training to be holy, preparing our minds for action, sounds like hard work. And I hope we sense that. It is hard work.

It's going to be tough. And because we're called to do this, we need the right kind of motivation to follow these laws, to follow these commands.

So we have two motivations. Here's the first one. Our future judgment. Look at verse 17. Since you call on a father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

Yes, God is our loving father who chose us before the creation of the world, who loves us deeply, is also our judge.

[16:41] He is our father who judges each person's work impartially, completely fairly. One day, every single one of us here will have to stand before the father and give an account for our lives.

Everything that we've ever said, everything that we've ever done, everything that we've ever thought, our most public deeds and our most private acts will all be unveiled and laid out before the father.

And we will have to give an account for our life. Why we did this and why we didn't do that. So because of God's coming judgment, look at the end of verse 17.

Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. The fact that there's a future judgment should motivate us to live rightly today, to follow out the commands that he has given us.

In Matthew 10, Jesus sends his disciples out into the world to be his witness. And as he does, he says this.

[18:02] He says to them, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. That it's going to be dangerous. It's going to be hard. And then he said this.

Do not be afraid of those who can kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid or fear the one who can destroy both hell, both soul and body, in hell.

You see, we fear what people think of us. We fear, what will people think of me if I say what I believe?

We fear how people are going to treat us if we talk about our faith in Jesus. No, says Peter. Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

Don't be fearing the world. Don't be fearing people's opinions of you. It doesn't matter what people think of you. Rather, fear our Father who is judge.

[19:10] You see, being God's children does not give us this license to live as we please and think it doesn't matter. It does matter.

God takes seriously that calling. He says, I've called you to be holy, to live different, to be my children in this world. So as children of the Father, we want to take that seriously.

We want to please our Father. We want to do what's right as a demonstration of our love for Him. That we belong to Him.

So be motivated by our future judgments. But also, as we look towards our future judgment, we should also look back to our past redemption.

look at verse 18. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect, chosen before the creation of the world.

[20:38] Now that's referring back to a great event in the Old Testament. The Exodus. That great act of salvation when God redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt.

God came and He rescued them from their cruel bondage to Pharaoh so that they could come out and belong to God and be His people. And central to that redemption was the blood of a lamb.

Let's remind ourselves of that story. Keep your finger in 1 Peter and go back to Exodus chapter 12. The story here is what's called the Passover.

Exodus chapter 12. So God has heard their cry. They're in slavery and He has come to rescue them. And at the heart of their rescue, the heart of their redemption was the blood of a lamb.

Chapter 12 verse 3. So God speaks to Moses and Moses speaks to the people. Verse 3.

[21:56] He says, Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family one for each household.

So every family takes a lamb. Now read down at verse 5. The animals you choose must be year old males without defect, without blemish.

And you may take them from sheep or the goats if they hadn't lambs. Take care of them until the 14th day of the month when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.

Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and the tops of the door frames of the houses where they eat the lambs. Now why would you go putting blood all over your front door?

It seems rather gross to us in our age to think of getting a paintbrush out and slapping blood all over it. Well let's see the reason. Verse 12.

[23:09] On that same night God says I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn both men and animals and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt.

I am the Lord. The blood that they've painted on the doors will be a sign for you on the houses where you are and when I see the blood that you've put on the doors I will pass over you and no destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

Go back to 1 Peter. You see the people knew that they were just like in some sense the Egyptians. They were rebellious and sinful.

They too deserved God's judgment but God in his grace provided a way. So we can picture the scene the father of the house takes the lamb and he slaughters the lamb he slits the lamb's throat and as he does so he's saying this lamb dies instead of me and my family.

As the blood dripped onto the floor it was a reminder that the lamb loses its life so that they might have life. Judgment falls not on the people but on the lamb a substitute.

[24:37] Now says Peter take all that picture with us and come back to 1 Peter and verse 18 and 19. This he says is what God has done for us in Christ.

We are people who deserve judgment but Christ the ultimate lamb who was without sin without blemish without defect has died in our place.

When Jesus went to the cross as the drip as the blood dripped to the ground he was giving his life for us so that we might have life.

The judgment falls not on us but on Jesus the substitute. All of this means look at the end of verse 18 this means that we have now been redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers.

As we were born into this world we were born with a sinful nature a heart that's rebellious to God and he's saying I've now rescued you from that from that empty way of living and I've given you a new way to live you've now become my children.

[25:51] You see when we face hostility in this world when we feel like outsiders when we are shut out because of our faith when we're misunderstood because of the stand we take when we're accused wrongly when we experience this opposition and persecution we will be tempted to look for an easier way but remember he says to give up and to go back is actually to go back into an empty way of life the acceptance that the world offers is empty it will never satisfy you the belonging that the world gives you is false there's nothing there for you it's going back into slavery it's going back under a harsh master again but Christ has freed you from that and given you a new life therefore verse 21 through him you believe in God who raised him from the dead and glorified him and so your faith and hope are in God we've been rescued from an empty way of life so don't go back to it it will destroy you and kill you rather look to the life that Christ gives you which satisfies you and fulfills you and gives you that glorious inheritance so as we think about these commands that we are to live to set our hope on what is to come to be holy like God we need our motivation our future judgment and our past redemption it's a little bit like driving a car and I'll finish with this illustration you picture yourself driving on down the road as you're driving you're looking out the front you're looking through the screen to what's coming but at the same time you always have an eye on your little mirror to see what's happened behind or what's going on and if you keep looking out there and you keep looking back then you'll drive safely and it's going to go right now in the same way that is what we are to do as we journey on with the Lord we are to look towards our future judgments but we are to look back in the mirror to our past redemption we are to look back and remember all that Christ has done for us so that we can keep on going not in fear of the sense that he's never going to accept me but he will accept me because of

Christ and because I will face him as judge I will seek to love him and please him so we have our focus on the future and on the past and that will give us the motivation to keep going forward as God's children let's pray together thanks to him and to be Thank you.