

Gospel Hope for a Holy People

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Preacher: Kevin Murphy

[0 : 00] Okay, good morning. It's wonderful to be with you again, and I'm very excited to continue this series that we've called The Splendor in the Furnace as we journey through 1 Peter together.

For those of you that are back from summer vacation, welcome back. It's good to have you. For those of you that are visiting, welcome. We're so pleased that you're with us this morning. Now, last week, Chris kicked off fantastically this series going through the book of 1 Peter.

And he reminded us of what's going on here. Peter is writing to a bunch of Christians in the northeast part of modern-day Turkey, and he's writing to them because they are discouraged.

They are being persecuted, they are being discriminated against, and they are being ostracized. And it was around this time that Nero is emperor of Rome. A few years later, three or four years later, Nero is going to crucify Christians, hang them up on crosses in his garden, set them alight to burn as entertainment for his guests when he has parties in his royal gardens.

So the Romans were, and Nero in particular, was adamantly against the Christians. And if the Christians weren't being directly persecuted, they were being discriminated against, ostracized, because they wouldn't honor the cultural gods.

[1 : 16] The company had things against them, their colleagues would ostracize them, or the family would discriminate against them because they brought shame and dishonor on the family. They wouldn't honor the family gods.

And so Peter writes this very, very important letter to them. And this is his main point. He says, don't be surprised when this happens to you. Don't think that something strange is happening to you, because this is what it means to be a Christian.

This world is not your home. You are a different people, and you belong to a different home. Your true home and your true people are where Christ is. And so in this time, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

And so as Chris reminded us last week, he said, you are a different people. You live with a different hope, a hope which does not perish, spoil, or fade. And therefore, you have a different view of suffering and hardship.

And as a result of this, you live with a different anticipation of joy. A joy that's not based on circumstances or the situation around us, but who we are in Christ.

[2 : 19] And so that framework is going to shape this whole letter and our understanding of hope and suffering and hardship. And we live in an age of great entitlement.

Many people think we are entitled to a comfortable and easy life. And one of the consequences of that is in our day and age, most people feel like a victim. Does that make sense? And politicians love to exploit this.

On the campaign trail, you deserve a better life. A better life for all. Politicians love to exploit the fact that so many people these days feel like a victim.

But as Christians, we're not tricked by that rhetoric. We know that our life and our hope isn't found in this life, but it's found in Christ and who He is. And if you're a Christian, you're life in Him.

And so that was kind of introduction and last week. Now, the question is, what does that actually mean? How does that shape the way that you go to work tomorrow or you pursue a relationship or you parent your kids or you engage on the sports field?

[3 : 22] What does that actually mean for our everyday life? And so in light of this, Peter's going to give us two instructions today. First one is a short one. We'll spend most of the time on the second one.

So, first thing, first instruction, we're going to look at verse 13 to 25 is this. Fight for hope. Okay? Fight for hope. One of the things that's good to know as we read through the book of Peter is that Peter's obviously a Jewish believer.

And so in his mind, the whole Old Testament is right there as he's writing this letter. And particularly the image of the Exodus. The fact that the people of God were delivered from Egypt, as slaves from Egypt, set free by the blood of the Lamb, and became sojourners, pilgrims, exiles out of Egypt on the way to the Promised Land.

And so Peter's got this imagery in his mind as he writes this letter. And he applies this. And throughout the book, he's going to refer to Christians as sojourners, exiles, pilgrims on their way to their inheritance.

And so in verse 13, he says this. Therefore, therefore, in light of everything that we've said about our hope and our home being in heaven and not in this world, therefore, preparing your minds for actions, being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[4 : 47] Now, that phrase, prepare your minds for action, it literally means gird up your loins. Okay? And the picture here is back in the day, I guess even in the Middle East today, men and I guess everyone used to wear these long robes, right?

And so the men, if you had to be prepared to go somewhere or to run or to move quickly, you would tie up your long robes and tuck them into your belt so that your legs were free so that you could run.

Okay? Does that make sense? You get the picture? And so that phrase was, gird up your loins, tie up your robes, tuck them into your belt, get ready for action. And so Peter says, gird up the loins of your minds.

Get ready. Be prepared. And the phrase he's quoting is Exodus chapter 12, which is the night before the people of God leave Egypt. Moses comes to the people of God and he says, tonight is Passover night.

Tonight the blood of the lamb is going to be shed. Tonight Pharaoh is going to set you free. Gird up your loins and get ready to leave Egypt. And so Peter's quoting Exodus 12 and he's saying this.

[5 : 55] Be prepared. Get ready. Set your minds for action. In other words, be ready for who Christ is and what he's calling you to do. And secondly, he says, be sober minded.

In other words, don't just go with the flow. Don't just see where your emotions take you or how you feel about life today or tomorrow. In light of the fact that your hope is not in this world, be prepared, be intentional, be diligent.

Set your minds on what? The hope that is in Christ Jesus. Friends, in our culture, every day our culture is intoxicating us with a message of where to put our hope.

If our children get the right education, get into the right schools, the right university, their future will be secure and we can be at peace. Every day our culture is telling us that if you work hard enough and get that promotion, you'll be somebody.

Every day our culture is telling us that if we do enough overtime, our bosses will look favorably upon us and our career will be on track. If we buy the right clothes, wear the right accessories, shop at the right places, we'll be recognized as someone sophisticated, someone in the know, someone acceptable.

[7 : 08] And Peter's telling us that if we set our hope, if we set our identity, if our heart's rest is found in these things, it is what he calls futility. It's like putting all your life savings in the stock of a company which you know is about to go bust.

It's not only futile, it's going to lead to heartache. And so Peter says, what should we do? Be prepared. Be sober-minded. Set your heart fully on the grace that will be yours in Jesus Christ.

Okay, so there's the first command. In light of everything that Chris told us, in light of the fact that our hope is not in this world, but it's in the coming Christ, set your hope on that Christ.

Second command, and this is the main thing we're going to look at today, is pursue holiness. Pursue holiness. Look at verse 14 with me. It says, because we are a different people with a different home and a different hope, therefore pursue holiness.

Verse 14. Sorry, let me just find it here. I'm in the wrong book. 1 Peter. There we go.

[8 : 16] I was wondering why this looked different in my Bible today. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but just as he who called you is holy, so you also be holy in all of your conduct.

Since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy. Now, what does this word holy mean? Well, as Christians, and if you've been in church circles, you probably would have heard this word a lot.

When we think of holy or holiness, we sometimes think of somebody who's very pious, somebody who's very religious. Maybe somebody who has a certain air about them, someone who looks down at others, or someone who thinks that they are better than other people.

But in the Old Testament, which is the seed of the gospel, the basis of the gospel, and the scriptures that these people would have had, if something was holy, it meant two things.

Firstly, it meant something was set apart, something was distinctive, different from that which was ordinary, particularly different from that which was dirty, or unclean, or evil.

[9 : 22] So there was something distinctive about it, set apart for it. But secondly, it was set apart for God, for his glory, for the praise of his name. To somehow make a statement that God is different, and therefore this is meant to be a picture, resembles something of God's distinctiveness.

So for instance, in the Old Testament, the Sabbath day is regarded as holy. It's set apart, it's different from the endeavors on the other days of the week, and it's set apart to glorify God, for the worship of his name.

In the Old Testament, the priests were considered holy. They were set apart, there was something distinctive about them, different from just the rest of the community. They were set apart for the praise of God's name.

And the pinnacle of this is where, in Deuteronomy 14, God says to his people, the nation of Israel, you are a holy people to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the earth to be his chosen, treasured possession.

So the nation of Israel, there's something distinctive about them, set apart from the rest of the nations. Not that they were better than, or more moral than, not that they were more righteous in and of themselves.

[10 : 32] There's something about them that God said, I want you to be distinctive to make a statement about who I am. Now look at what Peter says here. If you are a Christian, this morning, a follower of Jesus, as he who called you is holy, you be holy in all of your conduct.

Know that this world is not your home. Know that your hope is not found in the things around you. Because your true home is found in Christ and your inheritance with him in the Lord. And therefore, he calls you to be devoted, set apart, distinctive, to give yourself wholly to the Lord.

See, we live in a city that unashamedly demands our devotion, right? Are they right? Your workplace demands your devotion. Your family demands your devotion.

Either your children or your parents or both at the same time, right? If you're part of a sports team, that probably demands your devotion as well. Or, and let's be honest, church can do that as well, right?

Sometimes you might feel like, hey, work's all right, but church, they're asking a lot of me. Anyone feel like that? Okay, you don't need to lift up your hands. That's not what Peter's asking for here.

[11 : 43] Peter's not saying, hey, work asks for a lot. Family asks for a lot. Now, give a lot to church to make sure that you're a well-balanced, well-rounded individual. That's not what he's saying.

He's saying, lift your sights higher than that. In everything that you do, in all of your conduct, whether you're at the office, whether you're negotiating a deal with a supplier, whether you're at CG, whether you're on the sports field, whether you're going on a date with someone, in everything that you do, go into that situation with this realization, realization, I am set apart, I am distinct, devoted to Christ in this moment.

And so, friends, what would it look like if tomorrow you go to the office, and while you're there at your desk working, or you're at the negotiating table, in the back of your mind, you're thinking, I'm set apart for Christ in this moment.

What would it look like to go on a date with someone, and you like them, and you hope that they like you, and in that moment, you know, I belong to Christ. I'm set apart, I'm distinct for His glory.

Even here at the dining, the dinner table. What would it look like to go after a job or a promotion, and knowing that this thing doesn't define me, but actually in my heart, I'm set apart for Christ.

[12 : 57] I'm devoted fully to Him. What would it look like to handle money, either the way we spend it, or the way we save it, knowing that you're set apart for Christ. And so Peter says, in your life, as you travel as an exile in this life, as you go on this pilgrimage, whatever you do, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, when you didn't know who God was and who you are in God, but rather, just as He who called you is holy, so you be holy.

Be set apart, distinct for Christ, since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy. And Peter here quotes a little phrase from the book of Leviticus, Leviticus chapter 19, be holy, for I am holy.

Now, the book of Leviticus is a tricky book, right? I remember when I was probably seven or eight years old, one morning, I've got a clear memory in my head, coming downstairs, and it was about half past five in the morning, I walked past the lounge, and I saw my dad there, in the same position my dad was in every morning at half past five.

He was on his knees, the Bible opened to him in prayer. And so I went to him, and I was interrupting him, and I thought, let me be like my dad. And so I got a Bible and said, Dad, I want to read the Bible.

What should I read? For some reason, he told me to read Leviticus. I don't remember a single bit of it, reading it, but for some reason, he thought that was a good idea. But actually, I don't know how much sense it makes to an eight-year-old, but actually, Leviticus is an amazing book of the Bible.

[14 : 26] It's a difficult book to get our head around, because it seems like there's lots of laws, but it's a brilliant book. And the main theme of Leviticus is this. Chris helped me with it this week. God wants to set apart his community through his word, that they will be a distinctive community from every other nation in the known world.

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis write it like this. It's quite a long quote, but it's good. Let's listen to this. They say, Leviticus was intended to create this distinctive people, shaping every aspect of life, both individually and corporately.

It was not just about what people did in the temple. It's about what they did in the marketplace. This distinctiveness, this holiness, knows no boundaries. It defined relationships, marriage, work, finances, leisure, and politics.

Holiness is as much about what you do on a Monday morning on the factory floor as it is what you do on a Sunday morning in the church service. Holiness is as much about the kind of neighbor you are as it is about the kind of church member you are.

Holiness, distinctiveness, is as much about who you are when you're holding a steering wheel as it is when you're holding a Bible. Just like Leviticus, Peter spells out what it means for the church to be distinctive in every area of life.

[15 : 53] But the headline is this. Be holy because I am holy. Be distinctive because I am distinctive. And so for those of us who are Christ followers, this is what it means to be exiles.

Not to be holier than thou. Not to be arrogant or bigoted. It's to see that God has got a calling to be distinctive and to reflect something of Him in our world. Be holy because He is holy.

Now, in the rest of the passage, Peter gives us three reasons why we should do this. Three reasons to pursue holiness. But before we get there, I want you to take notice of something.

Not one of these three reasons has anything to do with earning your acceptance before God. Peter doesn't once say, be holy, be distinct, and then God will look upon you favorably.

Or God will be pleased with you. Or God will then accept you. You see, the difference between Christianity and every other religion, every religion says, be holy and then the gods will accept you.

[16 : 49] Do right things. Follow the eightfold noble path. Follow this Dharma, this teaching. Be holy. Do the right things and the gods will accept you because of your holiness. Jesus Christ says, come to me in faith and repentance.

I will accept you. And then, go and be holy like me. See the difference? So Peter's going to encourage us to pursue a life of holiness, but not because he wants us to earn our acceptance before God.

That we get from Jesus because we believe that he died on the cross. But once we do that, he says, now come and be like God. Pursue holiness. Does that make sense? Okay. So three reasons to pursue holiness.

First is this. Because you have a new father. Is that what I said? Because you've got a new father. Okay. So Peter's already told us, as Chris mentioned last week, you have a new home.

This world is not your home. Now he's going to tell us, you have a new heritage as well. You have a new family. Look at what he says in verse 14. He says, as obedient children, okay, there's the important word children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but just as he who called you is holy, you also be holy.

[17 : 58] And then in verse 17, he says, and if you call on him as father, conduct your life with holiness. As Asians, I want to say we, because I consider myself a Hong Konger, we, but you, understand this better than many people from the West, right?

That something of your family, your family shapes who you are, right? Who you become as a person is instinctively tied to your family and your family background.

In biblical language, to be somebody's child doesn't just mean that they brought you into the world biologically. It means that they've shaped who you become. It means that you are like them.

You take after them, okay? So for instance, in John chapter eight, Jesus is discussing some stuff with some religious leaders. And Jesus says to them, you're speaking just like your father.

And they say to him, well, Abraham is our father. See what they're doing there? They're claiming solidarity with Abraham. They're saying, Abraham's our father. We are children of Abraham. We are just like Abraham.

[19 : 08] They recognize that, that the one that you claim solidarity with, the one who you say, we are his children, that, that means you like that person, okay? And so they say, Abraham is our father.

We are just like him. And Jesus then gives them the ultimate insult because he says, if Abraham was your father, you would do the same things that Abraham did. But actually, you're children of your father, who's the devil.

And your will is to do your father's desires. And the next thing that happens, they pick up stones to stone him. See, Jesus has just said something radical. He's given them the ultimate insult.

He said, you're just like your father. You think your father, you're children of Abraham. You think you're just like him. Don't you realize from your conduct and the condition of your heart that actually you're children of the devil and they are riled.

They want to get stones and kill him. Now friends, look what Peter says here. He says, let your conduct, not only be that of exiles, that from another world, but that of obedient children to your true father.

[20 : 10] In verse 17, if you call on him as father, then let your conduct be like him. And, and this is what God has always said to his people. That as Christians, not only is this world, not our home, not only do we have a new home, but we have a new heritage.

We have a new family. We are born again into a new family with a new father and we have a new DNA inside of us. And therefore, the nature and the character of this God, of this father, should become something of our nature and our character.

And what is this father like? Well, he's many things. He's supremely just. He's sovereign over everything. He is glorious and majestic, but he is supremely holy.

Absolutely holy. He is utterly distinctive. He is set apart in a class by himself. Unequaled, unrivaled. 1 Samuel chapter 2 says, there is no holy one like the Lord our God.

There is no one besides him. Friends, this is the staggering claim of the Bible. That there is one true God. He's not just one of a plethora of gods. Little with here, Jesus here, others there.

[21 : 17] There is one true God. And he is distinct from all other gods, all other religions, in all creation. There is no one and nothing like him. Unrivaled, unequaled.

He is not slightly better than us, slightly more intelligent than us, slightly more powerful. This God is not made in our image. He is not a pious old man with good morals.

He is utterly and gloriously, supremely, holy. And he has no equal. He is ultimate reality. Everything else will fade away. Everything else will come to pass.

Everything else is finite. But not Yahweh. He is from everlasting to everlasting. And there is no God like him. He is utterly holy. And one day, every single knee will bow down in the face of his holiness.

And Peter says, if you are his children, be holy like your father is holy. Now, does that mean we must be distinctive, that we are unrivaled and unequal and we are infinite?

[22 : 24] No, of course not. But it does mean that something of our nature and our character is distinctive. It's set apart, that we reflect something of his character, that we don't live for the things of this world, but that we know that our hope and our home is with him.

Friends, for those of us that are Christians this morning, do you and I live this way? Do we go to work or social gatherings with this conviction that we are children of a holy God? Do we go wholly devoted to him?

Friends, does the distinctiveness of the holy God drive and our motivations shape our dreams and our desires? Are there some practices, some habits, which more closely resemble our former ignorance?

For those of you that are not Christians this morning, I want to ask you, how would this change your life if you were to become a child of this father? How would it change your life if you were to become a child of the one true God, of ultimate reality, of truth himself?

How would it change your life if you were to come to know him? Friends, today Christ is inviting you to become a child of the living God, of the one true holy God and to come and find your hope and your home in him.

[23 : 38] First reason, if you call on him his father, be holy for he is holy. Second thing is this, be holy because you were bought with a price, bought with a price. In Genesis chapter 3 in the Garden of Eden, remember Satan comes to our forefathers, our grandparents, Adam and Eve, and he says many things to them and one of the things he says is, he says, I know God said to you don't eat of this tree and don't eat this fruit but come on, let's be real.

He says the reason God said that is he doesn't want you to be happy. He doesn't want you to be free. If you really want to be free and you really want to be happy, just take a bite. It's not going to do any harm.

Well, Adam and Eve believed the lie and they gave themselves to their own glory. They devoted themselves to what they thought would make them happy. And what would give them freedom but the consequences were catastrophic.

The result is that rather than being free, they became slaves to their own desires, slaves to sin, slaves to destructive patterns of behavior. Rather than becoming happy, they were miserable.

Rather than becoming full of life, they became children of death. But not only that, because they were our forefathers of all humanity, everybody who's born is born as children of theirs under their headship and therefore we walk in their footsteps.

[25 : 02] We follow their same conduct. And so we are caught up in their sin, we are their children and our lives follow their same patterns. And so listen to how Ephesians chapter 2 describes it.

This describes me and you before coming to Christ. It says, You see, friends, the problem with sin is not just that one day we will face judgment or one day we will go to hell or one day we will pay the price for our sin, though those things are all true.

That's not the only problem of sin. The problem of sin is that today it enslaves us. Today we become children of our forefathers. Today we become enslaved to our destructive patterns of behavior and to our own desires.

What Peter calls are futile ways of living. We become children of disobedience. And so the hope of the gospel is not just that we get out of jail free card for one day down there.

The hope of the gospel is not just life insurance to keep us out of hell one day there. That is true. The hope of the gospel is that today you get a new father, you get a new life, but you're also bought out of slavery.

[26 : 20] Look at what Peter says here. He says, live with fear and trembling, live devotedly, purposely, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers.

You know what a ransom is, right? A ransom is someone that is caught, enslaved, and you pay a whole pile of money to set them free. Peter says, you were ransomed from your former way of life.

You're set free. You are a new person. Friends, the Bible tells us that in our heart of hearts we are just like our forefathers. We followed in their footsteps. We live for our own glory. We pursue the high life and now the high life catches up with us.

And the consequence is that we are slaves to sin. We are trapped. I don't know if you ever feel like this. I echo Paul's words in Romans 7 where he says, the things I want to do I cannot do and the things I don't want to do I end up doing.

Who will deliver me from such a body of death? Thanks be to God. And so Peter says here, we were ransomed from that futile and destructive way inherited from our forefathers.

[27 : 25] How? Not with perishable things such as silver or gold or stock options or houses but with the precious blood of Jesus. Friends, Jesus Christ didn't just pay our parking ticket.

Jesus Christ didn't just pay that restaurant bill. Jesus Christ didn't just pay what you owe to the inland revenue department. He paid, he bought our lives out of death and he paid it with his blood.

Maybe an analogy will help you. Imagine this. Imagine you come from a very wealthy family. Your parents are oil barons. They're worth tens of billions of dollars and you've got a younger sister and your younger sister likes to live it up, right?

And so she's always out clubbing and at these parties and those parties and someone comes to you and says, the people that your sister hangs out with aren't the best kind of people in the world and I think, you know, there's rumors that they're involved in narcotics trade and human trafficking and I think you should speak to your sister and warn her.

And so you do, you go and speak to her and she doesn't want to listen, right? And so you're keeping an eye on her but one day she goes out, she doesn't come back that night, the next day you're looking for her frantically, going everywhere where she likes to go, you're calling her friends, calling her phone, can't get hold of her.

[28 : 49] You go to the police station one day, two days, three days, on the fourth day you get a ransom note. We have your sister we want a hundred million dollars. Okay?

Your first response, this is ridiculous, we don't negotiate with terrorists, you say all the usual things, right? But pretty soon you realize this isn't the movie, this is real life. And so you sell a couple of extra barrels of oil, sell some stock options, you get the money together, you wire the transfer into a Swiss bank account and tell you where your sister is and you go and you find her and she's set free.

She's fine. You ransom her from slavery. Now tell me this, that next weekend, are you going to go to your sister and say, hey, are you going to hang out with your friends again?

Do you want me to drive you down to town? I'm sure you're missing your friends and you haven't seen them for a while. I know they're not the greatest people but do you want to go hang out with them again? Of course not, right? And if your sister comes to you and says, hey, will you just take me to my friend's house?

I think I'm sure it was some bad mistake, I'm just going to hang out with them again. You're going to say, are you joking? You're never going to see those people, right? Why? Because you've been ransomed from that way of life.

[29 : 59] You've been saved. You've been bought out of slavery. You don't dare go back there. You're a new person and now you give yourself to a new way of life. Friends, this is what Peter's saying. You are a distinctive people.

You are a holy people. You've been bought with a price, bought out of your former way of life. Don't go back there. Don't go back there. Friends, if you're a Christian this morning, hell was once your destiny but now you're a child of the holy living God welcomed into his family with an imperishable hope and eternal home welcomed for you and everything you are and everything you have is because of him.

Because of him. Friends, the reason you and I can go to work tomorrow with hope in our hearts, the reason that you and I can survive when a loved one passes away, friends, the reason that you and I don't need to be crushed by a bad medical report, friends, the reason why you and I can joyfully and wonderfully give ourselves to Christ is because everything we have if you're a follower of Jesus and everything you are is because of him.

He's paid the price. He's bought your soul and you're free. Remember the words of that old hymn. When I surveyed the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and poor contempt on all my pride.

And so were the whole realm of nature mine that were an offering far too small, love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all.

[31 : 31] Friends, this is what Peter's urging his listeners. And this is still God's word to us today. That we will be those who live with a different hope, who walk to a different drumbeat, who put our confidence not in the things of this world but in our eternal home because Christ has purchased us and bought it for us and secured it for us.

Be holy because you're bought to the price. Third thing and finally, be holy because your life will bear fruit. Look at verse 22 to 25 with me. Peter now is going to give us one specific application of this phrase, be holy for God is holy.

Okay? And this is what he says. He says, having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

Okay? So he says, you want to be holy like God is holy? Love one another sincerely, earnestly from a pure heart. Okay? Is there any other way to be more like God than to love one another?

Remember Jesus, the greatest command, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And the second greatest is like it, love your neighbor as yourself for on these two commands hang all the law and the prophets.

[32 : 42] You want to be like God? Love other people. Okay? Sincerely, earnestly. So Peter gives a specific application. Be holy like God is holy. How? Love one another earnestly and sincerely.

Then he says, then he gives the reason. For, or since, you have been born again, born to a new family, the new father, not of a perishable seed, but an imperishable one, one that will never perish through the living and abiding word of God.

For, all flesh is like grass and its glory is like the flower of the grass. The grass withers, the flowers fail, but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the good news that is preached to you.

Okay? Almost coming to an end now. Peter here quotes Isaiah chapter 40. In the book of Isaiah, the nation of Israel are in exile.

They're away from the promised land. Things are not going particularly well for them. They wish they could be back with God's people and God's land. And while they're there, they're wondering, God, is your word unfaithful?

[33 : 46] Are you not able to keep us like your word said? We thought you were faithful. God, should we trust you? Are you really going to do with us what you said you would? And so Isaiah writes them in chapter 40.

He says, comfort, comfort for my people in exile. And then he says, all other kingdoms, all other words are going to fail. You trust Nebuchadnezzar, that word is going to fail.

You trust Babylon, that word is going to fail. You trust your own expertise, that word is going to fail. All other kingdoms is like the grass of the field. Here today, tomorrow is going to be thrown in the bin.

But the word of the Lord proves true. So while the people are in exile, Isaiah says, God is faithful. You can bank your life in it. Trust him. Now Peter writes the same thing.

And he says, don't you realize you're in exile? You're exiles in this world. This world is not your home. You're being persecuted, you're being ostracized, you're being discriminated against. But don't lose hope.

[34 : 44] Because every other word is like the grass of the field. It's going to fail. But there is a word that you can bank your life on. The word of the Lord remains true. And so this is what he's saying.

So in this world, pursue holiness. Be distinctive like your father. Love one another earnestly. And when it seems like this is a hopeless endeavor, when it seems like this pursuit is never going to bear any fruit, when it seems like it would be far more expedient to blend into culture, to take a shortcut, to look after yourself, to not be distinctive for God, but just to look after your own interests, remember this.

This word will not fail. This word may look like a tiny seed. It may look like nothing impressive. But this seed is imperishable. It will never fail.

Remember Mark chapter 4, Jesus says this. He says, The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed. I think we've got a little picture there. Which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds in the earth.

And yet, when it's sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants. Jesus says, Don't you realize your life is like a seed that's got to be planted in the soil? It's got to die there.

[35 : 58] It's got to become obsolete. But it will bear fruit. It will bear fruit. And friends, this is what Peter's saying. When you're tempted to give in and blend into culture, don't do it. When you're tempted to give in to your desires which are counted to God's will, don't do it.

When you're tempted to live for yourselves, don't do it. Pursue holiness because you've been born again, born of a new life. And it may seem insignificant. At times, it may seem like it's holding you back in your career.

At times, it may seem like this seed is never going to bear fruit. Friends, every other word that you're tempted to bank your life on is like the grass or the field. It's like a flower in a vase that next week is going to be thrown in the bin.

But the word of the Lord proves true. You can bank your life on it. It will bear fruit. Friends, this is what Peter is saying to these first century Christians and this is what Christ is saying to us in Hong Kong.

They were persecuted, discriminated against, ostracized. They may have been tempted to sell out, may have been tempted to blend in, pursue a comfortable life. Peter says, don't do it.

- [37 : 05] Don't sell out. Don't give up. Christian, you fight the fight for hope. Christian, you fight to pursue holiness because you have a new father in heaven and he's called you to be like him because he's bought you with a price, the precious blood of Jesus and because this word, this seed is an imperishable seed.

It will not fail. It will not falter. It will not give up on you. You've been born again of an imperishable word and the gospel gives you an imperishable hope because of that word. It may look small.

It may look insignificant. But you can bank your life on it. You can hope on it. Don't give up. Don't sell out. Don't pursue comfort. Fight the fight of holiness until you reach your true home.

Let's pray together. Oh, Father God, we confess, God, that it's so easy to listen to the word of our culture, to be intoxicated by its message.

But God, you call us to be sober. You call us to fix our eyes and our hearts on you, God. Oh, God, as a church community, we pray, won't you, won't you by the Holy Spirit, God, come and open our eyes to see you freshly, to fight for hope and to pursue holiness, God.

- [38 : 28] I pray that we as a church and every Christian in Hong Kong will be distinctive. Oh, God, come and help us to be holy. I pray we'll be set apart for the praise of your name, God.

I pray that, God, we're not better than, more morally superior. I pray there'll be something about our devotion, that we give ourselves to you wholeheartedly.

We walk to a different drumbeat. God, come and help us, I pray. God, won't you come and dislodge the idols in our hearts, God. God, I pray that those things that are holding us back, those things that are telling us to trust in them.

God, won't you loosen the grip on our hearts? Won't you melt them away, little God, that we can trust you? Friends, some of you here this morning maybe are not Christians.

You've never become a child of this glorious Holy Father. You may think you're a child of your own ideas. You may think yourself an independent thinker.

- [39 : 34] Don't you realize you're a child of your culture. You've been shaped by your culture and your society. Friends, if you're not a Christian this morning, the one true God is calling you and inviting you to Himself to put your hope in Him.

He's inviting you to, He's offering to pay the ransom for your soul, to buy you out of a futile way of living, to give you a new hope and a new home, a new family and a new heart.

Why don't you come and do it this morning? Maybe He's been calling you for a long time. Maybe today's the day.

Come and surrender. Friends, for those of us that are Christians, maybe the areas of our lives we've been holding on to, why don't you come and surrender those to King Jesus.

ask Him to let His holiness come and permeate even that area of your life. Your relationship with your parents, your relationship with your children, your relationship with money.

- [40 : 45] Christ, come and make us holy. Come make us set apart. Make us distinctive for your glory, we pray. Amen.