

“Hope and Humiliation”

Christ and the Christian Life

Various Scriptures

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Jeff: Our heavenly Father, we are thankful for this day. There are many reasons to be thankful, the Lord Jesus Christ not being the least of them, but the greatest. We're thankful for the spiritual blessings, all of the spiritual blessings that we possess in Him. We're thankful, Lord, for His humiliation and for His exaltation. And we're thankful that we live and move and have our being in Him and because of Him.

Father, as we gather together today, we think of the various people that have been mentioned. We think of Tom. We think of Dick. We think of Sarah. And we certainly think of Bruce. And we pray, Father, for each one of them, asking that You'll bring healing to Sarah, and Father that You'll enable her to care for her children and to be a good help meet to her husband. Father, we pray for Bruce. We ask that You will continue to strengthen him in such a way that You will bring him back to us on the 15th. Father, we pray and ask that You will not only heal his body, but Father we pray and give you thanks that you are able to strengthen his character even more through times like this, as Romans 5 tells us. Father, we are thankful and prayerful for him and for the situation, and we ask that You would bring him back.

Father, we certainly pray for Tom. And we lift him up to you, asking that Your hand would be upon him not only for physical well-being, but also for salvation. We pray, Lord, that You'll bring him to yourself, as we know only You can do. And Father, we're thankful for Dick and for his ability to be here. We pray, Lord, that You would continue his healing as well.

We ask all of these things, asking all of them, knowing that Christ is sufficient for all of these needs and so lifting them up to Him. And we pray them in His name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Well let me ask you to turn to 1 Peter. We'll be moving there in just a minute. And I'm going to have you move around in different passages today. So I may just have us take a look at each passage before we arrive there rather than read the entire first chapter of 1 Peter.

So let me tell you what it is that we're going to be doing today. This is our outline for today—a long outline; lots here. But we need to ask a question. How should we then live? And I'll talk to you more about what that means in just a minute. But we're going to define *hope*, what it is. Then we're going to talk about five things that arise from 1 Peter.

If you look at 1 Peter—and I'll mention more about this in just a little bit—but if you look in 1 Peter there are five instances where hope comes to our attention. And each of those five instances provide us with a new insight into what hope is and how it functions in our lives for our good.

First of all, we're going to look at *being born to hope, aiming at hope* in the grace of God. We're going to draw down on *hope's resources*. We have an *example* of all of this.

“Hope and Humiliation”

And then we have a *reason to hope*. So those are the things that we’re going to look at today. That’s our outline.

Today’s passage is 1 Peter 1:1-25. Now I’m not going to have us read that. But here’s why I put that up on the board, and here’s why I draw it to your attention.

I draw it to your attention because if you look at 1 Peter 1:1-25, one of the things that you notice is that the first three instances of hope occur in this chapter—in the beginning, in about the middle, and at the end. And then the other two instances of the five, remember, occur in chapter 3.

So there are five instances of hope. Three of them occur in 1 Peter 1:1-25. We’ll look at those instances as we get there. That’s the passage that we’re going to focus in on because of those three instances of hope.

Well, first of all, let’s ask ourselves a question. How shall we then live? Now what do I mean by that? Well we’ve been talking a lot about humiliation, the humiliation of Christ and how the humiliation of Christ is really something that we’re involved in. How so?

Well let’s think about it for just a minute. Let’s refresh our memory. What is the humiliation of Christ?

Well we said what it was not when we gathered together the last time or the time before that. You remember that is not a teenage girl putting her shirt on inside out and having the tag dangling forth like that, you know, and then meeting these three handsome boys here and feeling that she has made quite an impression on them, and then going home and looking at the mirror and seeing that tag dangling out in front of her. And then what does she say? “I’m humiliated! I’m embarrassed!” That’s the kind of thing we usually think of when we think of humiliation. We usually think of embarrassment. And that’s not the first thing we ought to think about when we think about the humiliation of Christ.

When we think about the humiliation of Christ we ought to think about a status change. Remember, Christ who was highly exalted took upon Himself the form of a servant, functioning in that way, making Himself obedient to the Law even to the point of death on a Roman cross.

Now it’s at that point that you see where the humiliation as we think of it enters the picture, because a Roman cross was a humiliating, shameful death. And so there is a sense in which embarrassment and shame and humiliation in that sense enter into the picture.

But it enters into the picture because of Christ’s status change. Now I’ve said to you before that we walk in the humiliation of Christ. You saw it in the book of 1 Peter. I’ll just mention it to you now, and if you want to talk about it later or have questions about it then please ask me afterward. But the book of 1 Peter begins talking about the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow, the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ.

In chapter 5 verse 1 it mentions the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. And then at the very end of the book it says that it is for us to *“humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He might exalt you at the proper time.”* That’s the structure and the outline of the book.

“Hope and Humiliation”

And then in the middle of the book there are three places where he tells us that if you suffer you are blessed. Think again of humiliation and exaltation. If you suffer humiliation, you are blessed—exaltation. Or at least you catch glimpses of exaltation along the way.

Now when you think about 1 Peter in that way, what ought you to do when you go into the bookstore and you see the title that’s there, with thousands of others just like it, and it says, *Your Best Life Now? (Laughter)* You ought to remember 1 Peter. 1 Peter says that I can only catch a glimpse of the exaltation that Christ has for me now. But I catch a glimpse of that when I walk with Him in the way of humiliation. The best life now is to follow Christ in His humiliation. And that’s not what those books have in mind.

Now the question is this. Here’s the question for us today. If that’s true, if what I’ve said to you is true, and better yet if what Peter has said to us and the way I’ve explained it to you is true, then the question for us is how shall I then live? How do I live in the midst of that situation, knowing that I ought to be treated better than I do get treated, because I am a child of God? I am a son of the living God. And yet the world treats me as if I am a servant. How do I live in that situation? How do I live in those circumstances?

Well the answer is that we need a renewed mind. I mean, hinged on all of this is the fact that I need a change in my thinking. Now this is not the power of positive thinking. That’s not what this is at all. In fact Peter is going to tell us exactly what this is.

He says this. Check this out. In 1:13 he says that you need to prepare your minds. You need to “*gird up the loins of your mind.*”

Now we’ll think about that more in just a minute. But think about the idea of being told that you have to prepare your mind, that you have to gird up the loins of your thinking. And then in 4:1 he says this. After talking about Christ and His suffering he says “I want you to arm yourselves with this way of thinking. I want you to think about life in terms of Christ’s suffering because it’s your pattern now.”

And then what does he talk about? In 1:13 and 5:8 he says, “I want you to be sober-minded. I want you to be serious.”

Now I’m not going to land here long. But the interesting thing is that this word has the idea of being sane. He’s telling us to be sane in an insane world. Sanity means that we think about life in Christ as humiliation now, exaltation later. So “*be sober-minded.*”

And then he says this in 1:14. “*Do not be conformed to your former ignorance.*” Now the thing I love about this particular passage is that it’s in the passive, which means this. Don’t allow yourselves to be fashioned after ignorance.

You know, we talked a little bit about this maybe a couple weeks ago. Maybe it was during our time in *Devoted to God*. But do you remember what we said? We said that the world around us can have an influence on us that we don’t even realize. And because we’re not fighting against those influences we can allow ourselves to be placed into boxes that the world has for us in terms of our thinking, in terms of our behavior, and we just allow it to happen.

And he says, “Don’t be conformed to that former type of ignorance.” Don’t be fashioned after the ignorance that the world has for you. So all of this happens in 1 Peter. He’s telling us to renew our minds, to be renewed in our thinking.

“Hope and Humiliation”

Now the question is how. How in the world are we going to do this? Well I’ll tell you what. In order to answer that question, we first of all need to answer another question. But I’m going to give you the answer now. Here it is. The answer that Peter has for us is *hope*. Hope is the way that we live now. Hope is the way we live in humiliation.

We live in hope. Hope of what? Hope of an exaltation. Remember, that’s what Peter says at the end of the book. He says, *“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you at the proper time.”* And all we have to do is remember that in chapter 1 he told us that He brought Christ at the proper time. And we then remember that the One who had enough wisdom to bring Christ at the proper time will exalt me at the proper time. Again it’s one of those situations where my trust, my hope, is placed in God, the God of all wisdom. So I am to hope in the midst of humiliation, to hope in God that He might bring about my exaltation at the proper time.

But we’re getting ahead of ourselves. And we need to ask another question. What is hope? Well we’re going to think about those three texts that appear in 1 Peter that I mentioned earlier, those three texts that appear there. And they help us with hope. But I want us to talk about hope for a minute before we get into those texts.

What is hope? I think that many people think about hope in terms of a wish. I really wish that the sun would shine on my birthday in three days. That’s a wish. But we often equate wish language with hope language. Do you know what I mean?

That’s one way of looking at it. That’s a way of looking at it that we know of in our own culture.

There’s another way of looking at it that really finds its roots in Greek culture. But I’ll tell you what. It’s a way that it’s looked upon now, even now in our culture.

Remember the old Greeks and Pandora’s box. Remember Pandora? She was the girl who was given the box, probably more like a jar, and she was told not to open it. And remember what she did.

Participant: She opened it.

Jeff: She opened it. Daggone women! *(Laughter)* You know, I’m telling you! *(Laughter)* You young men, do not take that out of this room! *(Laughter)* What’s said in this room stays in this room, all right? *(Laughter)*

Now Pandora opens the jar. And do you remember what crawls out of it? All kinds of evils crawl out of the jar.

Now here’s the interesting thing. The interesting thing is that the last thing to crawl out of the jar is hope! Hope is the last thing to crawl out of the jar. And you know what we say. We say, “Why?” Why is hope in the jar with all kinds of evils? And then this is the answer we give. We say, “Well it’s because you need it!”

But you know what? Friedrich Nietzsche. Ever heard of him? Friedrich Nietzsche was really an expert in pre-Socratic philosophy. And I’ll tell you what he said. He said this. He said that the reason that hope was put into Pandora’s box was not because we needed it. Hope was put into Pandora’s box because the gods knew that if we were exposed to all of those evils we would kill ourselves. And the gods said, “We don’t want them to kill themselves because then we won’t have playthings to toy with. So what we need to do is give them hope to string them along from one evil to the next.”

“Hope and Humiliation”

And Friedrich Nietzsche said this. “That makes hope the greatest of all evils.”

Participant: Whoa!

Jeff: Now let me just say something to you. That was Friedrich Nietzsche interpreting pre-Socratic philosophy. Now that’s a pretty pessimistic way of thinking, isn’t it?

Is that alive and well today in America? Oh, it is! Yes, it is!

Participant: The last election. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right. So you bring up Nietzsche and you’re all of a sudden in politics. How did that happen? *(Laughter)*

Anyway, so when you think about hope, you can think about it from a variety of different angles. And they’re all wrong. You’ve got to look at God’s word in order to understand what hope is.

Ted: Jeff?

Jeff: Yes, Ted?

Ted: I don’t know if all the guys are following this, but for Nietzsche the last thing that he would call hope is the greatest evil because Nietzsche would say that there is no meaning in life.

Jeff: Sure.

Ted: For Nietzsche there is no ultimate meaning in life. So therefore for you to hope in something means you’re hoping in nothing. So you’re deceiving yourself if you have hope, because there is no hope. That’s what Nietzsche would say.

Jeff: Yes, he would concur with this. Not that he would believe in the Greek gods, but he would concur with the idea that this just strings us along from one evil to the next. Thanks, Ted. Anybody else? Yes?

Participant: It’s the idea that there is actually false hope, and he’s calling it hope.

Jeff: Yes, that’s absolutely right. Anything else? Good stuff. Thanks, guys. Okay, so what is hope? Well this is an acrostic I made up, using the word *hope*. Hopefully, *(laughter)* it will communicate what the Biblical idea of hope is.

First of all, it’s a *human response*. Hope is a human response. It’s my response, it’s your response to the situation at hand. It’s a human response *out of God’s love for us*. In other words, it’s my human response. But it’s my human response rooted in what God has done for me in Christ.

So it’s a human response out of God’s love for us, *placing our eyes on Christ*, which is very important. You will not have hope unless you have your eyes on Christ. And then the *e* is *enduringly*, everlastingly, for the duration.

So hope is a human response. It’s my response to a particular situation out of God’s love for me that places my eyes on Christ enduringly. That’s the way you ought to think about hope, I think. Does everybody who is taking notes have it? Good, okay.

Now the first thing that I want us to notice in one of those first passages is *born to hope*. It’s 1:3. Listen to what it says. “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*” And he goes on.

Let me say this to you, brothers. You are born to privilege. You are born again to what kind of life? Well if you were to turn to chapter 2 and look into those first twelve verses

“Hope and Humiliation”

in chapter 2, you would see what kind of life it is that you’re born into. You’re born into royalty. You’re “*a royal priesthood, a holy nation.*” It says in that set of verses that you’re “*a people belonging to God*” because you are pleasing to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

I’ve mentioned this to you before. But it’s important not only because of where it’s situated in 1 Peter, but also because it’s true! We are born to privilege! We have, in the eyes of our God, a high status as His sons, all right? Now that, it seems to me, is important, because when we’re in the way of humiliation, to think in the way that chapter 2 tells us to think about ourselves is important because it reminds us of our identity. It reminds us continually of who it is that we are by virtue of being united to Christ. I am pleasing to God in Jesus Christ. I am “*a royal priesthood.*” I am “*a holy nation.*” I’m, “*a spiritual house.*” I am built upon the rock of Jesus Christ. And many will trip over that rock and stumble and hurt themselves, but I won’t because my house is built upon Him. That’s the idea.

And in the midst of humiliation I need to remind myself of those sorts of things. So hope reminds us of our identity. When we place our eyes on Jesus Christ it reminds us of that.

So there are two things I want you to notice. Under this point, first of all I want you to notice that *hope is ours by birth*. It’s ours by birth. You can say it any way you want to. It’s one of the fruits of regeneration. It’s one of the fruits of my union with Jesus Christ. It is my God-inspired response to salvation, however you want to say it. But I was born to it.

Now this is the interesting contrast that you need to think about today. You don’t need to work up hope. You were born to it; it’s yours.

But there are hope theorists today. You know, there’s that positive psychology movement, because psychology has been negative in the past. So there are guys who are psychologists who have come along and said, “Hey, we need to be more positive about what we do.” So hope theorists come along. Hope theorists define hope in a way that says that hope is a perceived capability to derived pathways to desired goals.

In other words, what is it? We can distil it down. I’ll tell you what it is. According to their theory, it is something that you manufacture. It is something that you create.

And that’s not what the Scriptures say. The Scriptures say that you are born to this hope. You’re born to it.

Now the second thing I want you to notice—and it is absolutely vital that you get this—you are born to hope, but hope needs cultivation. You know, I want you to think about it like any other gift or talent. You have to cultivate it.

Let’s think about Sidney Crosby for a minute. Stay with me, Tom.

Tom: I am.

Jeff: All right. *(Laughter)* Sidney Crosby. The guy has enormous talent. But think about what his life as a hockey player would be like if he did not have the work ethic that he has. Think about if he didn’t spend all that time in his mother’s basement shooting the puck at a goal, but hitting a dryer instead. Think about what kind of talent he would have.

“Hope and Humiliation”

You know, the commentators would be saying something like this. “You know that Sidney Crosby, he could be something if he just worked in the off season.” But that’s not what they say. They say that he’s a great talent because he cultivates his talents and his gifts in the off season. Talents and gifts have to be cultivated.

You know, I want to tell you one thing that drives me batty. We’ll get into a presbytery meeting, and there will be a guy that preaches. And the guy is a student. And the guys will say, “Oh, you did so great! You were awesome!”

And I think to myself, “Don’t tell this guy that he has already arrived, because he hasn’t. Surely he has a gift. But it’s a gift that needs to be cultivated.” So I’ve trained myself from now on to say to a seminary student, “That was a very good student sermon.”

Participant: Wow!

Jeff: A very good student sermon, because I don’t want him to lose sight of the fact that he needs to cultivate the gift that he has. That’s what I’m talking about.

You can say, “I’m born to hope, but I really don’t feel very hopeful.” You’re not cultivating it.

You know what? Here’s the interesting thing about Christianity. The blame always rests on you. It always rests on you. You can tell me that I’ve got faith because I’m united to Christ. But you can have little faith. You will have a whole Christ who saves you, a Christ whose grace is greater than your sin. But if you don’t have that sense of being saved, that assurance of being in Christ, it’s on you! Why? Because faith is your response. If you don’t feel very hopeful, it’s on you.

Now the great thing about it is that God has said, “If you want more faith, come to Me. Ask! If you want to be hopeful, come to Me. Ask!” That’s the idea. Go ahead.

Participant: Since you started to talk this morning, and while I have the chance, it’s this word *awesome*. We use that word in the world way, way, way too often. That word should be reserved for God, the word *awesome*.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And that flies out of people’s mouths in all kinds of situations. They use that word *awesome*.

Jeff: Yes. So it needs to be cultivated. Here’s the question. I don’t remember what point this is. *(Laughter)* *Aim your hope at the grace of God.* 1 Peter 1:13. Does somebody want to read 1 Peter 1:13?

Participant: *“Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind. Be sober and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

Jeff: All right. Now we talk about cultivating hope. The question is how do we do that? Well we *aim* at hope.

I grew up in a family of hunters. And I want to tell you something right now. They were crack shots. I’ve got to tell you this first, though. Our idea of target practice was citing in your gun three days before hunting season started. That was target practice. So we would go out and set up the can, set up the target, whatever. But we’d cite the guns in. And my dad always wanted to take very few shots. “Cite the gun in with as few shots as you can.”

“Hope and Humiliation”

And I’m going, “Dad, what about target practice?”

And he goes, “What do you think we’re doing?”

I want you to know something. My great granddad, my granddad, my dad would go out. They would see a deer. They would throw up. Bang! It was done. I would go out. I would see a deer. I’d throw up. The deer would keep on running. (*Laughter*) I didn’t get the g. I needed to practice. I needed to practice my aim. I needed to practice holding the gun steady. I needed to invest time in the gun and in shooting, and I never had that opportunity.

You need to cultivate hope by aiming it. Now how do you aim it? We’ve already talked about how you aim it. You use your mind. And how do you do that? You “*gird up the loins of your mind.*”

Now that’s an interesting way to think, isn’t it? Let me tell you where that comes from. In the Old Testament, what you would do is that if you had a long flowing robe, you needed to move; you needed to run. For instance, it’s like the Exodus. You would take your robe and you would tuck the hem up into your belt. So it would come down to about your knees rather than your feet so that you would be able to run without being encumbered, without tripping.

Now what do you think this means when he says, “*Gird up the loins of your mind?*” Let me tell you what he means. He means *knock off the loose thinking.*

Now you and I both know what that means. We know what it means to think loosely. We know what it means to have stray thoughts and to entertain those stray thoughts. We know what it means to think down pathways we ought not to think down. And what Peter is saying is that those kinds of thoughts will not cultivate hope. Those kinds of thoughts will only cultivate a hopelessness. You need to rein in your thinking, or as Paul talks about taking every thought captive to Christ. That’s what he’s talking about here.

And remember, he doesn’t stop there. He talks about having sober thinking, clear thinking. He talks about remaining awake, paying attention.

And not only does Peter talk about this, but other writers of the New Testament talk about this. Paying attention, focusing in, being sober-minded. That’s what we need to do. And that’s how we will aim our hope on Jesus Christ and the hope that He has come to reveal to us.

I think that’s so important for us to keep in mind, because I want to tell you something. We are living in a world that does not do that for us. We’re living in a world that wants to tell us—well, think about it!—you know as well as I do that we’re living in a world right now that has embraced Darwinian evolution. And it has said to us that there really is no purpose to this whole thing.

And so what do we find? We find all kinds of behavior emerging because there is a purposelessness to society. And you know what? That leads to the nihilism that Ted mentioned earlier, the idea that there is no real point to anything. There’s no real meaning to life. And so that must mean that every behavior is acceptable. Every behavior ought to be tolerated, and I can do anything that satisfies every evil desire that I have.

That’s not what Peter says. Peter says that there is a hope. And we need to fixate our hope on the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ at the proper time.

“Hope and Humiliation”

Well if that’s the case, then we need to do something else. We need to *draw down on hope’s resources* in order to do this. And this is 1:21. Does somebody want to read 1 Peter 1:21?

Participant: *“Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”*

Jeff: All right. *“Your faith and hope are in God.”* Now I want you to think about this for a minute. The God who caused new birth is the resource of hope. You see how all of this ties into the principles that we have already laid out. If God is the One who brought about new birth, then we go to Him for the hope, because He is the One who has caused us to be born to hope.

Now how is it that we access the resources of hope? Well, remember what we said when we talked about sanctification? When we talked about sanctification, we said something really important. We said that this is not magic. I didn’t get to the end of the series in talk #9 and finally pull out the magic bullet and say, “Now, for those of you who have persevered and waited, here’s the real secret.” No, that’s not what we did. We said that you need to access these resources. How? By reading the promises of the Bible, by looking to Christ in situations where you’re not automatically drawn to Christ, by following Him, by actually doing what He says to do. That’s how you draw down on hope’s resources.

You know, I was thinking about this on the way here today. I was thinking about difficult situations. And I was thinking about people who find themselves in difficult situations in life. They’ll say, “You know, those situations made me who I am today.”

But you know what? There’s a Christian version of that. The Christian version of that is in Romans chapter 5. The Christian version of that says that when we encounter those difficult times and we respond rightly, when we read the promises of God and look to Christ, when we follow Him in the midst of those difficult times, guess what begins to happen. As we emerge from those difficult times, our character is proven true. And then we are able to stand on what God has done for us because of what He has said He has done for me in the Word.

And it’s not this abstract sort of thing. I’m a rough guy because I went through the winter of 1972. No, we’re able to stand because of our God and what He has done in us to this very day. You see, that’s the kind of difference that I’m talking about. You need to draw down on the hope that is in God.

But then he gives us an example of this. Look at the example. It’s in 1 Peter. It’s in chapter 3 and it’s in the first six verses. Let me read this very quickly.

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see their respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear. But let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which in God’s sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed

“Hope and Humiliation”

Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.”

You know, one of the first things I do when I read this at home is that I instruct my wife that she is to call me “lord.” *(Laughter)*

Participant: And then you open the door to the bathroom.

Jeff: And after I get up off the floor,-- *(Laughter)* Now listen, men. How do we make sense of this passage? Let me briefly tell you. There’s so much here. Let me just tell you briefly how we make sense of this passage.

Remember that they’re in exile. And you have to take on board Greek and Roman culture at this point. One of the things that you have to remember is that all of the domestic books of the day said that a wife, when she marries her husband, the husband’s friends become the wife’s friends. And the gods of that husband are his gods. And therefore his gods become her gods.

You have to start from there. Now one of the other things that we’re told is that some of those domestic resources of the day say to the men, “Don’t let your wives go out all frilled up without you, because they’ll probably do things that they’re not supposed to be doing.” And so when you take on board those cultural ideas, what Peter is saying is this. He’s saying that when you come to worship with us, don’t adorn yourselves. Don’t give your husbands reason to be suspicious. Just come as you are. And when you get into trouble for coming as you are, you will be getting into trouble for coming to a Friend that is not his, rather than being in trouble for the suspicions he has of you for the way you look.

I mean that’s basically the idea of this passage. Look at what he says. He says, “*For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by submitting to their own husbands.*” In other words, ladies, submit where you can. And where you can’t, that is, in going to worship the living God, then entrust yourselves to God.

But this is an example of all that we’ve talked about. This is an example of a renewed mind. This is an example of aiming hope. This is an example of cultivating that hope. This is an example of that. And I think it’s very valuable for us to think about.

But there’s a last thing that I want us to think about. It’s *the reason for hope*. And it’s in 1 Peter 3:15. Does somebody want to read 3:15?

Participant: “*But in your hearts always honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do it with gentleness and respect.*”

Jeff: Okay. Now I want you to think about this for a minute. What does he tell them? He tells them, “In your heart set apart Christ as holy. Sanctify the Lord in your heart.” In other words, let me put it like this. You are being bombarded every day by hopelessness. And what you need to do in your lives is to create that place in your heart where it is impenetrable.

Why? Well because the world is not going to take away our salvation. But the world is going to try to take away the assurance of your salvation. But that’s why you need to set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts.

“Hope and Humiliation”

But not only that. The world is going to tell you that it's hopeless out there, that you ought to be pessimistic, and that if you are optimistic, that's a good thing. That will contribute to society. But you really don't have anything to be optimistic about. Again you need to create that area in your life where you remember again and again that the Lord is God over all things and that there is reason to hope. You were born to hope.

You may not now be in an estate or condition that reflects that. But you will be. So you need to set Christ as Lord in your hearts.

Now what if we don't? Or what if we don't cultivate it? This might be a better way to put it. If you don't, then you'd better bet the Lord for salvation. But let's take on board the fact that you're a believer and you don't cultivate this hope. What then?

Well I want you to consider the Stockholm syndrome. There's an interesting thing at this point. In 1973 there was a bank robbery in Sweden. There were hostages taken. And later, when those hostages were set free, those hostages were asked to testify against their captors. And they refused to do so. They actually had empathy for their captors.

Now this is what psychologists call the Stockholm syndrome, where the captive begins to develop a sympathy and an empathy for his captor. Their dependence rests upon those captors, and so they develop a sort of intimacy with them.

Now I want you to think about something for a minute. Doesn't that in its simplest form sometimes reflect how we behave in this world? We begin to think that we depend upon the world and the world's institutions, and the world's financial commerce and the world's programs and the friends that are in the world. We begin to think that we need the world. And so we develop a sympathy for the world that we ought not to develop.

And the question that I have for you is this. Is your sympathy with the Lord or is it with the world?

Remember what 1 John says. 1 John says that if you're friends with the world, you can't be a friend of God.

Participant: Right, yes.

Jeff: And so the question has to be this. Are you ready to give a reasoned defense? I mean, think about it. Gentleness and respect are the order of the day when you're giving that reason. You don't want to be mean. You don't want to be known as the idiot Christian who is just so mean. You don't want to be known as that. You might be known as that, but not because you are mean. It's because the cross offends. But you want to sanctify the Lord in your heart and work out of that with gentleness and respect toward all.

Now I want you to know something. When you do that, you'll be Brave Men. Do you like that? *(Laughter)* You might not look like that on the outside, but you'll look like that on the inside. *“For He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”* And that is the reason for hope.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Do you have any questions or thoughts that you want to work through? Yes, Don?

Don: It's just amazing to me, Jeff, how I've gotten into a few conversations last week with people, just trying to probe where they are spiritually. And it's almost like they want to be in a state of hopelessness.

“Hope and Humiliation”

Jeff: Yes.

Don: As soon as I mention Christ or the Bible, as I did to one person I was talking to last week, he said, “Oh, I was raised in the church but I don’t go anymore. I can’t stand all these denominations not getting along.”

And I said, “Well, that’s something we need to explore. But do you read the bible?”

“No. The Bible is full of contradictions.”

Jeff: Yes.

Don: “Well, can you give me an example?”

“Well I can’t think of anything right off the top of my head.” It’s amazing that they almost want to be in the state of hopelessness. I mean, we know that Romans 1 is the reason for that. But it’s interesting.

Jeff: Yes. Absolutely. And it’s because it’s been cultivated for several generations now. Yes?

Participant: Like Don was talking about, I was doing an errand for my wife. A lady in the grocery store was talking about the eclipse. And she said, “Well the world is going to end on Monday.” (*Laughter*) And I looked at her and the Holy Spirit said, “Speak this.” And I said, “That’s okay. I know where I’m going. And I know why.” And she went, “What?”

And we had a chance to speak in the dairy section. Like Don said, all of a sudden she went into denominations or whatever. She wanted to be hopeless.

Jeff: Yes, but I want to tell you something. I was with my grandmother who is eighty-eight years old. We were out to dinner and we were talking about the eclipse. And she said, “You know, back when stuff like that would happen and I was a kid, everybody would just go to work. I don’t know what the big deal is.”

And I got to thinking. And I thought to myself that if you live in a world that’s totally naturalistic, you need elements of the supernatural to feed that desire for hope that they don’t have.

Participant: Amen. Right.

Second Participant: One of the reasons that people object to being Christians is that they were brought up with a vision of Christianity which I could tell exalted the world and avoided humiliation.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: So they had inordinate expectations. Everything has to be wonderful all the time.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: Therefore they say that it didn’t work.

Jeff: Absolutely.

Participant: It’s a simplistic question, but I’m interested in your response. Is everyone born of hope, including those who are not born again? And if not, why not?

Jeff: Yes, that’s a great question, and that’s not a simplistic question. I think that everyone is born with a desire to hope. Look, let me put it like this. Fallen men and women have a desire for a happy ending because of the Garden. The Garden was the promise of a happy ending, and they failed. And what we’ve done is that we have

“*Hope and Humiliation*”

contented ourselves, we’ve adjusted ourselves as a culture to bad endings because that’s what we’ve been told.

Have you noticed that? It used to be that every movie would end with a happy ending. Now the only movies that end with happy endings are the Hallmark movies, right?

Participant: Yeah.

Jeff: But every other movie has a bad ending. It has a twisted ending, an ending that leaves you dissatisfied. And I think that’s an accommodation to what we’ve been taught. But no one likes it. And if somebody says, “Ah, I like that!”, he’s a liar, because everybody wants a happy ending because they’re related to Adam. And they want what Adam failed to achieve.

So everybody has a desire for the happy ending, which means that everybody wishes for hope. But the believer is really born to hope. He’s really born to hope and has hope as a birthright and can cultivate hope.

Participant: Can you speak really quickly about the effects that this world has on a Christian, because they can be very, very subtle? Even in the Christian realm there are certain things we don’t talk about because it’s taboo. Who am I to say what movies or music or whatever you should be listening to or watching? Can you speak to that a little bit?

Jeff: Yes. You know, this is the thing that is not easy, okay? You’re right. So let me try to put this as simply as I can. Seriously, I wish I could be—but this would be another nine-part series.

So we can tell our kids “Don’t do this, don’t do that.” And there are times when we have to tell them that. They have to be told no, right?

But I think it’s far better—and this is one person’s opinion—I think it’s far better to give them the equipment to analyze, so that they might even enjoy something, parts of which they have to disown. I think that’s better than saying, “No no no no no no no!” I have friends who say, “no no no no no no no!” And then they realize the inconsistencies of saying no to everything, and so they have to back up and say yes to some things they said no about. And then they have to make up reasons as to why they’re saying yes now and no earlier.

I’ve always tried to do that. So my son wanted to read *Harry Potter*. He actually wanted to watch the movies. I realize that I may be stepping on a land mine. But here goes.

He wanted to watch the *Harry Potter* movies. I said, “Here’s the deal, son. Before you can watch any Harry Potter movie, you have to read the book. And we have to read the book together. And we have to talk about the book.”

So for instance, we sat down and we talked about *Harry Potter* and the view of magic that’s in that book. And one of the things that I told him was the difference between magic in *Harry Potter* and magic in, say, Tolkien or Lewis. There’s an ultimate good over the good, right? And there’s a real evil. But in *Harry Potter* it’s just the user. Magic is this neutral thing that is used for either good or evil. But it’s neutral.

So we worked out of that and said, “Here’s the view of this ultimate power in this book. And here’s how it’s different from other books that we want you to read and enjoy

“Hope and Humiliation”

reading. And we want you to know that when you read this book, you have to read this book with a discerning eye. So there are things about this that you can't take on board. We want you to read the story and enjoy the story. But you can't take this view of magic on board with you. And in fact here's what the Scriptures say about magic," and so on.

So I think that the best thing to do is to try to give your child tools for discernment. If you have to say no, say no. And I think we have to say no. And when you can say yes, say yes. But when you can say yes with qualifications, you can do that, too. That's my view on it.

I'll tell you what. This was a long time ago. This was almost twenty-five years ago. When I had my first church, I worked for two weeks with my wife in a child care institution, like a day care. I went to the lady and I said, "I have two weeks between jobs." I said, "Can you use me?"

And she said, "Oh, yeah! There are a couple of rules you have to remember. One of the rules is that we don't say no to children."

Men: Wow!

Jeff: "We try to redirect them. We try to reason with them." For two solid weeks that day care heard nothing but, "No!" (*Laughter*) No-no-no-no-no-no! (*Laughter*) They were so glad to get me out of there! (*Laughter*)

Participant: Preach the gospel.

Jeff: Yeah, right. Anyway, all right. Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank You for this day. We pray that You'll continually bless to us the riches of the Lord Jesus Christ and His grace. Help us to hope in His appearing. And Father, cultivate that in us more and more. We ask it in His name. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)