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Fall Conference 22; 1 Peter 3:15-18
GPBC
9.10.22

Introduction – The text for our conference is 1 Peter 3:15-18. Read. The primary theme being the last part of v15. Read. As believers, we need to always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks for a reason for the hope that is in us. In other words, from the world’s perspective, from the viewpoint of the unbeliever, there should be an undeniable, recognizable, distinguishing mark upon our lives – and that mark is hope.

Truly for the believer, a great, unshaken hope always resides and should always be visible. Christ our Savior lives within us and never leaves us. The Word of God as ultimate truth directs and assures and comforts us. The Spirit of God indwells us and guides us. God is our Father and He sustains us and watches over us. The gospel empowers us and lifts our hearts beyond the temporary hardships of life. However dark the day may be, however troublesome the trial, however heartbreaking and difficult the situation, we have something the world does not have and cannot give – we have hope that is certain and sure.

And in our day, the world needs the hope of the gospel more than ever. Our post-christian culture has rejected and forgotten the only solution and answer. People wonder and scurry to find some kind of meaning. When you remove salvation in Christ, you’re only left with what the world can offer – pride, wealth, popularity, sinful pleasure – and while they might succeed in distracting us from our issues and problems for a season – they will simply never suffice. Eventually, anything that replaces God will lose steam, leave you empty, left in a sea of despair and destruction. Sin will finally leave you without hope.

And even more tragic is when the world’s influence and answers begin to creep into the church. The allure and charms of what appears to be fun and freedom get our attention, convince us of its empty promises, and finally turn our eyes and hearts to lesser things. The world’s quest becomes our quest, scriptural truth is traded for worldly ideology, and everything else begins to take priority over gathering with the saints to worship and fellowship. We live in a day when anxiety and depression are skyrocketing in the world and in the church. We’ve lost our center. We’ve lost focus on our hope.

I. It Begins in the Heart

- a. In order for the church to return to and revive the only hope this world has, it begins in the heart. When I think be prepared to give a defense for the hope that is in you – I think apologetics. I think we have to research biblical history, science, and philosophy so we can have answers. Yes, we need to be equipped with answers to the questions and objections of unbelievers. But notice, it's not our knowledge that grabs their attention. It's our hope. It's that thing we possess that cannot be accessed in the world. It's not foremost how much we know. It's how alive is our faith.
- b. It's the hope of the gospel that lifts our spirits through the storms and sufferings of this life. It's the hope of the gospel that lifts our eyes when stand by the grave and when our time comes. Paul says in 1 Thess 4, as believers, when we stand by the grave of a fellow believer, yes we grieve, but not as those who have no hope.
- c. That hope is the gospel. That hope is Christ. Yes, it will renew our minds with the knowledge of the truth, but it resides in our hearts.
- d. When we've lost our hope, we need a heart check. That's where salvation begins. In the new birth, God gives us a new heart. A heart that is free to do what it is meant to do – love God! A faith that resides only in the head, a faith that merely agrees with biblical truth, will never save the soul or transform the life.
- e. But when faith in Christ takes hold of our hearts and we surrender our all to Christ, that's when we find life, and that's when we find hope. Hope for this day and hope for life everlasting.
- f. So this conference and this text that is meant to equip us as believers to keep the faith and shine the light in the darkness around us begins in the heart. We need a heart check. V15 points us in the direction for a heart check.

II. Christ-honoring Affection

- a. You honor what you love or who you love. That's why Peter says "in your hearts honor Christ the Lord."
- b. There is only one place adequate for the Lord of glory to sit in our affections – first place. Something else is always clamoring to take our chief affections away from Christ. It may be self, it may be a

relationship, a spouse, children, pursuits, pleasures. And those things can distract and cloud and clutter our affections.

- c. One of the dreaded side effects of placing another foremost in our hearts, is that our hope dwindles and shrivels. And no one is asking us for a reason for the hope that is in us because it appears we are just like them. We don't have hope either. And we claim to be believers, so it stands to reason to the unbeliever, I guess there's no hope to be found.
- d. How do we return to Christ-honoring affections? It really is getting back to the fundamentals of following Christ. Spend quality time daily with God in His Word. Open up your heart to Christ in prayer constantly. Talk to Christ about everything. Let what is pleasing to God guide your every motive, thought, word, and deed. (wwjd) Gather with the saints. Ill. Tony Evans. And finally, to honor Christ in our hearts – meditate deeply on the gospel. (devotions, sermons, songs)
- e. Last Sunday I preached from Matt 27 and we meditated on the death and burial of Christ. When we spend time truly thinking through all that Christ sacrificed and endured in order to save a wretch like me, you can't help but love Him for it!
- f. 1 Cor 1:27-29

III. Christ as Holy Position

- a. In your heart – that is with your affections – honor – put Him first – Christ the Lord as holy. Holy means separate, distinct, different from anything else. Everything else and everyone else comes up short when compared to Christ. He is holy. He is far greater, far better, far more satisfying. He is unique. He's the only Savior. Our only Substitute. He is holy.
- b. Christ is not a ticket to heaven – He is God. The Almighty. Creator of all things who holds all things up by the word of His power. He is Lord. He rules the heavens. He rules the earth. He is sovereign over all. He is holy.
- c. Let that be the standing position of our hearts, the resting position of our hearts. Christ as holy. You see if we will simply regard Him as He is, see Him as He is, He will always take His rightful place in our hearts.

d. It's not only about loving Him – it's about worshipping Him. When we are loving Christ and worshipping Christ, we are honoring Christ. And when we do, there arises in our hearts an indomitable hope. A hope that doesn't fade when persecuted or when tried. A hope that doesn't disappoint when tested. A hope that endures through our final breath. A hope that shines bright enough for the world to see. In fact, so much they will want to know what is our hope and where did it come from!

Conclusion -