

## We Live For His Name's Sake!

Last week's message was from 1 Peter 2:10-11 'Sons Of The Living God'. As we saw, Peter continued to distinguish between the People of God, and the rest of the world. He took us back some 720 years before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the book of the prophet Hosea, as he lays hold of that prophecy as having been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. Even interpreting God's Words through the prophet from Hosea 1:10. "In the place where it was said to them, you are not my people, they will be called sons of the living God." And 1 Peter 2:10: "Once you were not a people but now you are the people of God." I explained they were "not a people" because they were not a nation under one head or authority. The true People of God were spread throughout the whole world.

But as God rejects physical Israel, Hosea 1:4-9, He preserves spiritual Israel. Hosea 1:10-11; Romans 9:25-26: God still honours His covenant promised to Abraham! Yes his descendants of the promise, (spiritual Israel), "will be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore." And as they are called in through the gospel they are brought together, they are made "to be a people," a nation, under one head, even the Lord Jesus Christ!

We saw in Hosea's first child called Jezreel, which means to scatter, God would scatter His People because of sin and rebellion. But in mentioning the second Jezreel, the picture is of the scattering of the seed of the gospel, the Word of God. As His people are harvested for the Kingdom! Yes all non-Jews "were not a people but now we are the people of God. Once we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy." Mercy from God through Jesus is what distinguishes us from the rest of the world. I explained that "we receive mercy." We don't earn it. No, what we have earned, rather, are those "wages of sin: death."

But "we have received mercy" from God! V11 we are to "live as aliens and strangers in this world." Yes we should appear so different in our character and behaviour as we honour God, that we are like creatures from outer space to the world. "Abstaining from sinful desires that war against our souls." There is indeed a war which is taking place in the life and soul of all true believers. Romans 7:15-25: "The things I want to do I do not do. No that which I hate I do." So we are to be on guard against all of those lusts and desires, that Satan uses to reel us in!

And so now we continue in the letter 1 Peter 2:12-15: "We Live For His Name's Sake'. So having just urged his hearers to (v11) "abstain from sinful desires that war against our souls," because there is indeed a war which is taking place within the heart, mind and soul of all true believers, (that war which takes place between the old and new nature, Romans 7:15-25) Peter now basically gives us our main reason for being on guard against such things! Yes it is for obedience, because we are called to adhere to and abide by all that Christ teaches, which is what we profess according to God's word.

But may I suggest, that our chief goal for doing all of these things, is found in v13. "Submit yourselves, for the Lords sake." King David writes in Psalm 23:1-3: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul." We have that idyllic image of the king as a young shepherd boy. In the heat of the day, the shepherd knows of those places where there were green pastures, sweet waters and safety for the sheep. Places where he could sit down out of the oppressive heat, with good shade and where he could rest from his labours. Where he could be quiet with his thoughts, where he could, as in Psalm

46:10 "be still," stop striving, "and know that God is God." And through those reflections, those prayerful reflections, v3: "The Lord restores my soul. He guides me in paths righteousness, for his Name's sake." Yes, "He guides me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake." Glory be to God. David writes. All praise and honour belong to you O Lord! One of the greatest indictments against the church throughout the ages has been, that we don't live what we profess. As I expressed some weeks ago, we are a bunch of mask wearers. Saying one thing and doing another. And of course this is true of all of us to varying degrees at times. Perfection doesn't come this side of heaven. We are forgiven not perfect. Praise be to God that He is merciful, remembering not our screwups. But friends, no one picks up quicker on this inconsistency than the unsaved!

Brethren, when Darlene and I were working at Burrill Pines, we had a group of mostly Christian men, (well at least they professed to be Christian) staying in rooms 5,6 and 7 for a pre-marriage weekend: better known as a Bucks weekend. But knowing the man who was to be married personally, and having read him the riot act, I was given his assurance that everything thing would be OK. Well, come about 5:00 or 6:00 o'clock on Saturday evening, I get a knock on the door from one of the van owners telling me that those men in rooms 5,6 and 7 are out of control. 'You need to do something about them. Aren't those men supposed to be Christians?' And this complaint was coming from a pagan man. So I had to race around and physically separate some of these men, order them out of the rooms, and I wanted to throw them out of the park. I didn't, but I wanted to. They had been drinking so I didn't. To say the least, I was bitterly disappointed and disgusted by them all. As I was thinking and fuming about the whole situation, with the night being yet to come, (and the nights were always the worst in the caravan park) to my surprise, one of the older men, full of remorse and contrition came knocking on the door to apologise. He explained that the Sunday morning of those weekends, someone only usually gave a devotional from the Bible. Would I like to do it? Of course I accepted the offer but as you could well imagine, I didn't get much sleep that night, as I wrestled with what the Lord would have me say to them. But after much soul searching in prayer with my thoughts, the only thing that the Lord placed upon my heart so clearly, was Romans 2:24, which Paul takes from Isaiah 52:5: "God's name is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you."

Now if you remember, blasphemy is not so much about what we say, though certainly we are not to take the name of the Lord in vain. "For the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name." (Exodus 20:7, the third commandment). Blasphemy, is more about how we live! So I had to say to these professing Christian men, along with their Pagan friends among them, 'do you think your actions have honoured the Lord this past day? Since Jesus is present in the midst of His People, have you given glory to God in what you have offered Him this weekend?' Well as you can imagine, no one said a word!

Friends can you see? That we never do greater disservice to the cause of Christ, than when pagans are moved by God to chastise us. Yes, when we as professing Christians have to be pulled into line by nonbelieving pagans, in regard to our words or behaviour, as to what is acceptable in those societies in which we live. "My name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Hear again, the God-breathed words of King David. "He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Yes for the sake of the Name of the Lord! For God's reputation!

Psalms 20:7: "Some trust in Chariots and some in horses, we trust in the Name of the Lord our God." Psalm 29:2: "Ascribe to the Lord, the glory due His Name." Psalm 34:3: "Glorify the Lord with me, let us exalt His Name forever." Psalm 66:1-2: "Shout with joy to God all the earth, sing the glory of His Name, make his praises glorious." Psalm 103:1: "Praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being, praise His Holy Name."

Beloved, do yourselves a favour and do a word study on the places where the Bible speaks of God's Name. Because continuously, the Name of God is lifted up. The scriptures speak of the temple being built as the place where God would put His Name. Where His Name would dwell. "Awesome and mighty is His Name" we read. We are called by Peter to do these following things, to live our lives in such and such a manner, "for the Lord's sake." And as David wrote. "He guides me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake!"

1 Peter 2:11-12: "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires that war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." What is he talking about? He is talking about our witness. Our testimony. Not that of our lips but of our lives. In 2 Peter 2:5 Noah is called "A preacher of righteousness." And yet as I have explained before, we do not and cannot find any of his sermons. And why is this? Because they don't exist. Because Noah didn't preach with his lips. He preached with his life! Yes he preached with the labour of his hands, and the testimony of his character as one who obeyed an honoured God. He preached the longest continuing sermon that we know of: 120 years of building a ship in a place that was hundreds of kilometres from the sea, and in a time in earth's history, where it had never even rained before. The deep springs of the earth under God's hand, came up and nourished and watered the lands we are told. Yes Noah preached faith. He testified to his faith and to the Name and glory of God. Even "For His Name's sake." Yes, "Live such good lives among the pagans, that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds."

I don't believe we can even begin to imagine what Noah endured for all of those 120 years. His family too. He didn't do this alone. They wouldn't have been spared the ridicule. Not by any means. We all know the venom and the vehemence that Satan can instil in the hearts of the unsaved. Even sadly, sometimes from family and friends. Let alone the contempt of our sworn spiritual enemies! Do you remember the words of the people at the trial of the Lord Jesus? "Crucify him, crucify him!" "Why? What crime has he committed?" But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify. Crucify!"

Beloved, the reality is that how we live among the pagans, truly does testify to whom do we belong. It's a sobering thought isn't it. How do we live? And who do we live for? They are the questions. Yes for whose sake do we live? Notice that it says. "That though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds." Peter is telling us, that though the false accusations against you might fly, it matters not. Because the testimony of an upright life like that of Noah, (and of course, far more so the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ) ultimately, cannot be evidenced against!

Do you remember the words of the Centurion who had witnessed it all? Even as Jesus cried out from the cross. "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." And finally after His Work of salvation was done. "It is finished." Yes when he had witnessed that dreadful darkness that fell upon the world. When he had felt the earthquake. Do you remember his words? "Surely this man was the Son of God." Dear friends, never was a man more falsely accused than was the Lord Jesus. He was. Pure in heart. And pure in soul. Even eternally so. And yet when all was said and done, what was said of Him? "Surely this man was the Son of God."

Oh, by God's Grace and Mercy that it could be said of us brothers and sisters! What's different about them? Yes what's different about them, is that they are "sons of the living God." They've been with Jesus! "Live such good lives among the pagans, that though they accuse you of doing wrong they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." There is apparently two main schools of thought about these words. "On the day he visits us." The first being, that Peter is talking about that great day. Yes that great and dreadful day when the Archangel Gabriel will sound that

celestial trumpet, as the sky appeals back like a scroll, and all the saints past and present are gathered together from the four corners of the world, and caught up together on the day of rapture in the air with the holy angels, and the end of all things old has come. And the beginning of the glory that awaits the faithful ones, arrives with the great "Coming of the son of man" of Daniel 7:9-14. And we read: "As I looked, there were thrones set in place, and the ancient of days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow, the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him, 10,000 times 10,000 stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time. In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a Son of man. Coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the ancient of days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power, all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his Kingdom is one that will never be destroyed!"

Oh, a trillion hallelujahs we will cry, as we look into the eternal Face and glory of the Risen. Returned. Redeemer King. The creator of the universe. Yes the eternal fire and glory of the face of God! And we are taken into the Father's Presence to behold such things that no man has ever even begun to imagine. The pains and sufferings of this world and this life are all gone. Gone are the illnesses, gone are the anxieties and worries. Gone will be the doubts and fears of forever believing we are unworthy. Gone will be such things when we look into His Eternal Face. "On the day he visits us." "When every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!"

But there is another school of thought concerning these words of Peter "On the day he visits us." Yes this glorifying of God "On the day he visits us." And it is, that because of our testimony of Christ, about what He has done for us, and what He continues to do in our lives. Those changes that He has brought about in us, and those transformations of us, since He has "Called us out of darkness into his wonderful light" (v9). That through the testimony of all of these things, that we be falsely accused of evil and wickedness by some, the truth and evidence of what Jesus is doing in our lives cannot be denied!

So not only will those things vindicate us before the Pagan world, in the reality of how He has "visited us," by pouring His Spirit into our hearts and transforming our lives, even like the Centurion before the Cross of Jesus, the pagans too, will be forced to confess, within the transformation of their own lives, that "Jesus Christ is Lord." "On the day he visits us!" So "the day that Jesus visits us," is when He brings us from death to life. And by His Grace and Mercy, every time that people see the evidence of Christ in us, "He visits" them also. Praise God that it may be so brothers and sisters!

Now friends, I would like to believe that the truth of these words lies in a combination of both of these views. But I shall leave that with you on your own mining for gold, within the Word of God. But I would love to hear your thoughts. Write them down. Share them with me. Remember it is always that "Iron sharpens iron."

Peter continues in v13-15, which I am just going to touch upon briefly, having already used v13 as the key to the message for this morning. V13: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men, whether to the king, or to the governors." Friends again, why do we as believers adhere to this? First and foremost: "For the Lord's sake." For our testimony and witness of Jesus. His Lordship and His Authority in our lives! There is one reason that we might not abide by

the rule of those or authorities over us. Only one. And that is if that authority countermands that which God has called us to obey. Paul clarifies this subject which Peter touches upon here, in Romans 13:1-4: "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authorities is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong.

Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath, to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." Les Stewart made an observation many years ago. That bad government is better than no government. Over the past two years we have experienced both good and bad government at times. And I guess along with most you, (forgetting what Peter and Paul's point here is) I've belly-ached with you all at times. But the truth is that most of the time, flawed people are most likely just doing their best. And we are called by God, to hold them up in prayer!

And in Romans 13, we are given another imperative to abide by and uphold the governing authorities. "They are all established by God!" To disregard the authorities of the day, (again unless they countermand what the Bible teaches,) but yes to rebel against the authorities of the day, is to count God as our enemy. According to Paul and Peter!

Friends, as you have heard me say many times, God leaves no thing to chance. Indeed chance, does not exist in the universe of God. There is no infinitesimal part of the entire universe where the power and authority of God does not hold sway. If this is true of the birds of the air and the beasts of the field and their heads up on your head, how much more so then, the governing authorities which regulate humanity under the Sovereign Rule of God! We must recognise and submit to all state sanctioned authorities, because these come from God. Either for blessing, or for discipline. For riches or for wrath. But ultimately, all for our good! But if we disobey them for conscience sake in the light of God's Word, (which they would have us cast aside with the spirit of the age), we stand always, upon the Promises of God. Because we "fear not him who can kill the body. But him who after the body is dead, can cast the soul into hell." Yes we trust in the Promises and Plan of God for our lives!

Look at v15: "For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men." What is he saying? Well it goes back to v12 about "living such good lives among the pagans, that though they accuse you of doing wrong." We saw in Ruth some time ago, that godly character triumphs over the most extreme prejudice. Peter is saying the same thing. The thing that shuts the mouths of all gossip and the slander and ignorance against Christianity, is righteousness and integrity. Of course I mean humanly speaking! If we want to know what God's will is 100% of the time. Do what's right. It's that simple! The attacks of Satan from without the church are stopped dead in their tracks, when God's people are beyond reproach. Christ's gospel is not about politics. It's not a political movement to become part of. Jesus is not about winning elections. Even though He is the ultimate authority over all elections. He places all people in all positions of power and authority. From the highest office in the land to the lowest. But He is not about winning elections no. Because they will all come and go. That's what the first six chapters of the book of Daniel teaches. But no, Jesus is not about winning elections, He's about winning souls, which will live for eternity!

So as we began this morning, I explained that this passage tells us that we live and testify, "For His Sake." For the sake of the Lord! For the Lord's sake! For the sake of the Name of the Lord! The Lord's reputation as it is reflected in His People. This extends to every part of our life. So that we "Silence

the ignorant talk of foolish men. So that even pagans, would give glory to God on the day he visits us.”

Let's pray.