

Feb 16<sup>th</sup> 2014: 1Peter series #9: 3:1-17 "Living in the Light of the Gospel"

Once again this morning we are looking at a passage from 1 Peter and it's a very practical passage. It talks about marriage relationships, relationships within the church family, and relationships with the non-believer, and it contains some very obvious directions for Christians of all ages to follow.

Yet rather than focus on those directions today, I simply want to address the **What question** behind this passage. What was Peter's number one reason for addressing these issues? Was it simply because all these churches had, as we discovered last week, a good number of women with non-Christian husbands and it made him think of marriage matters. Or were these churches so badly plagued by bad marriages and internal squabbles etc that he felt he had to deal with them? All that was no doubt part of it.

But I tend to feel that Peter's overriding reason for addressing these issues and indeed writing his letters in the first place was his urgency and passion for the Gospel to be preached before the Lord's return in power.

Peter and the other Apostle's and most of those early church leaders had walked with Jesus on this earth. Peter had seen Him die upon a cross and been one of the first at the empty tomb. He had sat with the risen Lord and eaten a meal. He had seen Him ascend into the clouds. He had experienced the miracle of Pentecost and preached the first Gospel sermon after which about 3,000 believed in Jesus as their Lord. He had lived through the Gospel story before he came to belief, and now he passionately wanted others to believe it too.

But as well as this passion to see the Gospel believed, Peter had this urgency about him. Because he reckoned as many others did too, that Jesus would return very soon. In fact we know that many felt that Jesus had said that He would return before John the Apostle died.

Peter talks a lot about the coming time when Christ will be revealed and the judgment will begin. There are ten references to either the coming again of Jesus or the salvation that is waiting to be revealed.

This was the driving force behind everything Peter did. He knew Jesus was God the Son and he passionately wanted others to believe that too. He also

sensed that Christ's return was not far off and wanted every believer to live out the Gospel in their daily lives as a priority so that others would be challenged to believe in Jesus while there was still time.

This is most obvious in what he says to the wives of non-believers in 3:1

***Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives***

Peter does not write as a Social worker or a counselor. His intention is not to give people advice on how to have a happy marriage, cope with being a slave, or how to survive when you are persecuted.

He wants these believers to live their whole lives in the Light of the Gospel. To judge everything they do by the impact it has on those around them. To ask themselves, "Will this behavior or these words or this attitude put people off following Jesus or will it give even the most antagonistic reason to think that my Christian faith could perhaps be true.

His whole intention is that the Light of Christ will shine out through believers.

When they face suffering it will shine out because they face suffering as Jesus did.

When they fellowship with other believers it will shine out because they work hard at being sympathetic and compassionate and forgiving. Not giving the outsiders the opportunity to deride the Gospel because of the way church people act.

In their Marriages it should shine out because they reveal this extra element in them that declares that although they face all the same problems as everyone else, believers in Jesus will seek God's power to overcome them.

So the challenge Peter gives us today is about using everything life throws at us, and everything life has blessed us with to shed the light of the Gospel. It doesn't matter what reaction we receive. Others may react badly or well to us.

But God can only use our lives to save others from judgment if Living out the Gospel is more than a few minutes here and there. To express the message of God's love must be our most important purpose always.

And the reason for this?? People need Jesus. They may feel content with what they have but the life they have will never be enough, and we must, like Peter, passionately believe that.

And further more, the time for us to do something is limited. Limited by the years of our life but also by the return of Christ. We dare not face Him one day knowing that we have not Lived all our days in the Light of the Gospel.

I have shared before this story but I am still moved by that final scene in the film Schaeffer's List.....

What do you need to do before you die with your life, to make it truly count for Jesus. For Peter's readers it was as simple as changing their attitude towards their suffering. Working harder at their marriages. Showing Christ-like love to one another and to those whom they met everyday.

What about you and me.

The other day I was given this piece of paper \* Ways To Be Missional", and its opening paragraph reads like this. If you are serious about impacting the world around you for Jesus then maybe this bit of paper can help you begin.

The final advice of Peter to us however must come first. 3:15

**1 Peter 3:15-** (CEV)

***<sup>15</sup> Honor Christ and let him be the Lord of your life. Always be ready to give an answer when someone asks you about your hope.***

