

TOWARD SPIRITUAL FAITHFULNESS in 2019

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RENEWED SPIRITUAL FAITHFULNESS FROM 1 PETER 1

Before Christmas, Pastor Jeff led us through a short series in 1 Peter called Following Christ Today. I loved that series and wanted to come back to it for 3 reasons. 1) There was a super powerful and timely message about pursuing spiritual faithfulness that I think deserves to hold our attention for a little longer. 2) The new year is a great time to examine yourself and plan changes. I think the message of 1 Peter is the perfect way to help us do that. 3) I personally CRAVE spiritual faithfulness. Not just from me. I want to grow in spiritual faithfulness AND I want you to grow in spiritual faithfulness, because if you're growing in spiritual faithfulness, that helps my spiritual faithfulness. And so on. **There's about 37000 people in Campbell River**, maybe 2000-6000 of them are followers of Jesus. That leaves about 31000 separated from their saviour and bound for hell. But if the followers of Jesus are growing in faithfulness I know that's going to impact and influence those who don't know him yet. So I'm really eager to dig in and see how we, the Kingdom of God in Campbell River, faithfully advance in our purpose and mission in 2019...

Our central passage is going to be 1 Peter 1:13-16. We'll get to it by reading all the from verse 3.

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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, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being *guarded* through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice...

Good News! God loves us! And even though we deserve his condemnation — he is merciful! How merciful is he? He took all the punishment we deserve for sin on himself. And the whole inheritance of heaven that he deserves for his righteousness, he gave it to us. You can't beat that!

And notice that it's kept in heaven for you being guarded through faith... At first look it might look like it's saying that our inheritance is being guarded. But what it actually says is "you who by God's power are being guarded." We're the ones being guarded, not the imperishable inheritance. But this letter was written to people who were very probably going to be killed for their faith. (**Track with me on this, because if you've never noticed this before, you might miss it, and it makes up a fair chunk of what's so thrilling about this message.**) Why are we being guarded if we get it when we die.

Galatians 4:1-7 helps us out here because it explains the purpose of a guardian when talking about an inheritance is not to guard the inheritance, or guard the heirs from bandits until they get the inheritance, but to be a trustee of the inheritance until the children come of age. We're guarded because we're children and we're being prepared by our faith to receive an inheritance that is bigger than we can currently handle.

When I showed that detail to Maggie last night she said, "Like children being guarded from dessert?" — Yes! Our faith in 2019 is preparing us for a God sized dessert that is literally too big for this world. Our hearts are being stretched, and our wisdom is being enlarged the glory that awaits. That is good news! — You think you're gonna name it and claim it and get your best life now. You can't even handle your best life now!

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... though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (THAT'S GOOD NEWS!)

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, (that's what it looks like to be) obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

How can Peter talk about inexpressible joy to a group of people that are in danger of being fed to lions and hung on flaming crosses? Because he knows the outcome of their faith is really REALLY GOOD NEWS! To Peter the wait (the rest of his life) is just a "little while." The trials he faces face (alienation, exile, and persecution) is just the preparation process that results in praise, honor, and glory more precious than gold at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The things that we experience in this life now, in 2019 produce in us the heaven sized praise, and glory, and honour that is too big that it doesn't fit inside the limitations of this world! Praise God, rejoice! You can't even express the joy of this reward!

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Concerning this salvation, **the prophets** who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that **they were serving not themselves but you**, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Look, you're in good company! Before you held this hope those who came before you held it in faith too. They're your example now you keep the faith as you prepared for the joy that awaits you.

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Therefore, **preparing your minds for action**, and being **sober-minded, set your hope fully** on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "**You shall be holy, for I am holy.**"

To summarize Peter in 1 Peter 1: Knowing **how great God's mercy** is; knowing that he has **finished the work of our salvation** in Jesus; knowing that **we have an unfading inheritance** in his kingdom; knowing **the example of faithfulness** that has gone before us; now that you know all of these things, set your hope fully on Jesus who is coming to deliver you into the promise of God.

» SET YOUR HOPE - THAT'S NOT A PASSIVE THING

Jesus followers of Campbell River in 2019, today you are being prepared for your inheritance. That is the active outcome of your faith until Jesus returns. — » be about it! Peter tells us to be doing your faith in 2019. That's how we grow in faithfulness in 2019. We set our hope like setting a dial inside you to long for the praise, glory, and honour of God's Kingdom come.

Unset hope is hope that flips and flops to whatever seems good at the time. If we don't intentionally set our hope, we'll naturally hope in the things that are passing away. Peter says "Enough of that! It's baby stuff." You're being guarded as children of God to grow up into a heavenly inheritance. Are you sitting on your butt, hoping for mild weather until Jesus comes back? No! We've got things to do, we've gotta prepare our minds for action. God's got big thoughts to occupy you, heavy lifting involved. You don't have time for pondering the hope of a sexual encounter, or what you could do if you were divorced, or if you had more time for video games, or drinking and eating, or shopping, or TV. When your mind is prepared for action you act on the things you prepared for. — That's an active faith.

Be sober minded. That means, don't let your mind become intoxicated with kind of things that dull your senses to the joy of Christ's victory. You don't have time for squishy foggy thoughts about your future. You're an heir of the universe. You've got REALLY BIG THINGS on the horizon.

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Luke 12:35 says "stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning." 2 Corinthians 7:1 says "keep your body and your spirit clean. Working toward complete holiness" Philippians 2:12-13 says "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you..." Philippians 3:13-14 says "Forget what lies behind, strain forward to what lies ahead, pressing on toward the goal. 1 Timothy 1:18-19 "Fight the good fight, holding onto the faith and a good conscience. 1 Timothy 4:7-9 says "Train yourself for godliness..." "Toil and strive because of the hope you have in God." Over the last few weeks, I've been meditating on 20 more scriptures that say the same thing.

THE DANGERS OF LEGALISM & LICENSE

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Now before we get to excited about what we're gonna do for Jesus in 2019 let's get real about 2 potential dangers. Legalism, and license.

If you like rules and the thought of doing more spiritual things in 2019 excites you, might be a legalist. Here's the thing about you legalists, you think you win based on your performance. So don't forget that you were loved and cherished by God in the thick of your ugly self-centred sin. And if you did no spiritual discipline in 2019 it wouldn't put a dent in the inheritance Jesus has paid his life for you to receive for free. You can't make it any better. Spiritual Discipline is about enjoying it while you wait.

If you're definitely not a legalist and prefer hearing messages about just being yourself you might be licentious. That means you basically give yourself a license to do whatever you think is good. Here's the thing you licentious people, you think the praise, glory and honour of God can be reduced to something small enough for you to attain. You like things to be wild and organic. But don't forget that there is a whole army of wild things around you trying to steal, kill

and destroy your faith. Like the birds and the thorns in the parable of the soils. If you want something organic to grow in the midst of the wild, you need to exercise discipline and tend to the soil that God is sowing to.

REFRAME THE QUESTION

Both the legalist and the licentious reduce either their sin, or the holiness of God to try and make the things they do look better. So instead of asking, what can I do to get a little better in 2019. We ask;

How can I know more about the hope I have in Christ?

How can I open my eyes and ears more to riches of the kingdom of God.

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“What doors and windows of my soul □can I fling open to the wind of God’s Spirit in 2019, □and close to the spores of my dead sin left behind □in 2018?”

THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

To answer that question, we’re going to take a super practical and quick look at some Spiritual Disciplines.

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1) Listen to God. 2) Speak with God. 3) Share with others. There’s actually lots of them, I just put them in these 3 categories to condense them for time. So now we have 3 practical ways to open the doors and windows of your soul up to the wind of God’s Spirit in 2019. They’re not magic rituals that make God love us more. God already loves us completely. They’re activities practiced by the prophets, and Jesus, and apostles, and regular people who have put their faith in the promises of God like Lydia, the retailer who made a practice of meeting with the girls by the river for prayer and so became the doorway through whom the gospel was introduced to Europe in Acts 16.

LISTEN TO GOD

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When Jesus fasted for 40 days, he reminds us in Matthew 4:4 that “man does not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” One preacher paraphrases it, “If you have to choose between breakfast or the word of God, choose the word of God.” If you’re not sure if you have time to eat or listen to God consider this. According to a study done in 2015 the average Canadian takes in about 10 hours of prepared content every day. Newspapers, emails, TV, Facebook, and 1000 other things are competing for our attention. Let you eyes and ears be so filled with the voice of God, that the voices of the world can not compete for your hope.

How can you set your hope in 2019 in the Spiritual Disciplines of listening to God: Reading and listening to God’s word. Studying the bible. And abstaining from morally neutral activities that dull your sensitivity to the voice of God. If you’ve never been able to get a hold on this before, start small. Find ways to take in a portion of the bible you can digest. Get a bible app on your phone and read the verse of the day. Leave a bible open on your dresser and read a

paragraph before you fall asleep or when you wake up. Read a book or listen to a podcast that helps uncover the truth of the bible while you drive to work. Regularly say no to things, not because they're bad, but just to keep your mind tuned to God. Turn off your phone off in the morning until you've spent time listening to God. Leave the radio off when you jump in the car to meditate on what God is doing in your life that day.

If you're already in the habit of listening to God and you want to fling open another window for the wind of the Holy Spirit in 2019. Commit yourself to a certain amount of time or length of scripture everyday. And spend half the time you devote to meditate on what you take in. Systematically break from things that you tend to get attached to. Like food! Fasting is a way to make your physical appetites low, to help your spiritual appetites grow. If you find yourself hoping in a regular vacation or your daily couch time after work more than the promises of God, find a way to replace the that for a time with something else for a season.

SPEAK WITH GOD (invite up the band)

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When we think about speaking with God, we're talking about turning our listening around so we don't just hear God, but we reflect his truth back through our own thoughts and words. In Psalm 42:5 King David says "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation" When he's struggling to find hope, he speaks to himself the truth God has given to him
How can you set your hope in 2019 in the Spiritual Disciplines of speaking with God: Secret Prayer: Worship / Confession / Petition. Bible Memorization/recitation. Journalling

If want to start this habit but you don't have much practice, start small by: Asking God to fill you will his Holy Spirit and lead your day before you get out of bed, or while drinking your morning coffee. While reading the bible, *plan* to stop and speak with God, Praising him for what you're learning about him. Confessing sin as it's revealed in his truth. Asking him make his promises real in your life. When you find a bible verse that resonates with you, and make put it somewhere you will see it over and over again for the month or the week. Say it aloud when you see it for the first time that day.

If you're already in the habit of speaking with God and your want to fling open another window to wind of the Holy Spirit in 2019. Keep a journal of of your prayer, and the things God is revealing to you in scripture. Write a weekly devotional based on the truth God is working into your heart.

Now, I don't think anyone would disagree that these practices are helpful. But sometimes we never start them because we don't know how or when. So we're actually going to start right now. The band is up here to help us listen and speak to God for a few minutes. They're not going to sing, they're just going to help drown out the din of distractions around us.

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Take this time to listen to what God might be saying to you about how you can set your hope on him this year. Speak with him. Pray and maybe even write down something that comes to mind about how you can set your hope on him in 2019.

SHARE WITH OTHERS

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Ephesians 4:15-16 says "...Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." How can you set your hope in 2019 in the Spiritual Disciplines of sharing with others: Selfless Service. Stewardship of Time, Talent, & Treasure. Public Prayer: Worship / Confession / Petition.

Selfless Service: In John 13, Jesus assumes the role of the lowest form of servant when he washes the feet of his disciples. And when he's done, he tells them all to follow his example. When we serve others selflessly, we become like Jesus and we're growing into the faith that fits the inheritance prepared for us.

If you need a way to start small in this practice. Find a charity that serves the underprivileged in the world. You might give money or time or something else. But, whatever you do, don't tell anybody about it. Don't expect anything in return at all, not even gratitude. As you as you expect something in return, it's not a selfless service, its a trade.

If you're already in the habit of selfless service and your want to fling open another window to wind of the Holy Spirit in 2019. Become a true friend for someone in the community that can't pay you back for the favours you do for them.

Stewardship: In Acts 2:45 and 4:34 the early church begins to live out the promise of God when no-one in the household of faith had any need because whether it was service, or money, or possessions, God's people shared everything that they had. Because the people belonged to God they considered everything they owned to belong to God. That's called stewardship.

If you need a way to start small in this practice. Take a piece of paper and make three columns; time, talents, treasure.

Draw a big circle around all of it and write "belongs to God." Make a habit of coming to it and finding something you can share that month.

If you're already in the habit of stewardship and your want to fling open another window to wind of the Holy Spirit in 2019... Do the same thing with the paper and column for Time Treasure & Talent. But share it with other disciples in a small group, and see how you can collaborate your time, treasure and talent in a way that reflects your hope in Jesus.

Public Prayer | Worship, confession, petition: Hebrews 10:25 says "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." Throughout the whole bible God continually compels his people to listen and speak to one another with truth and grace.

If you're looking for a way to get started in this, you've come to the right place. Right here every Sunday someone who loves Jesus and loves you stands right here to speak the truth and grace of God into your life. There's another person that stands here to sing the grace of God. And when they're singing. You're invited to sing with them! As loud as you want! The louder the better because your not just singing to God. You can sing to God anywhere, but here when you sing, you proclaim the wonder of God to other people who also need to set their hope on Jesus. Meet with a small group during the week for long enough to hear the confessions and petitions of others. Listen to the way God is working in their life, and pray with them so that can learn from the way God is working in your life.

If you're already in the habit of public prayer and you want to fling open another window to wind of the Holy Spirit in 2019. Find people to disciple, and be disciplined by. Make an effort to find people who you can bring along down the path of life toward Jesus, and people who will bring you along their path as they grow in faith. Eat together, and remind each other of God's promises in the regular rhythms of daily life.

A little while ago, 2 friends said to me. We want to be faithful to Jesus, but our friends aren't believers. They tell crude jokes and they like to get drunk. How do we get along with them without compromising our faith? In Matthew 11:19 and Luke 7:34, Jesus, the God man is accused by the religious leaders of his day for being a friend to sinners. Jesus actually got along better with the sinners of his day, than he did with the so-called gatekeepers of the faith. Why?

Because Jesus didn't need to turn his nose up at sinners to keep his hope set on heaven.

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He listened to God, He spoke with God, and he shared with others.

It's something anyone can do. This week while preparing this sermon I found one small way to spend a little more time with Jesus, when I'm putting my daughter to sleep. I usually play a little game on my phone. 2048 This week, I started using that time to write a few prayers into my phone. It cost me nothing and the joy I gain is building my faith for a joy bigger than this world can contain. So I hope you can find little practices like this in 2019 so that your hope is set fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And your joy in your inheritance will grow every day this year.