

Introduction: Pg. ____

Reopening Plan...

HOOSIERS... "I'll Make It..."

[[This morning as we get into God's Word, I want to speak personally and pastorally for a few minutes. I know this season has been difficult for every single one of us in various ways and to varying degrees. From my personal experience and from the countless "How are you?" conversations I've had over the past 2 months, I know we have all suffered physically, relationally, emotionally, spiritually, or ALL OF THE ABOVE!

The first few weeks of the pandemic were quite difficult for me. I did not have my typical energy or zeal for life. As I was regaining my strength, others shared that their struggles were intensifying. Perhaps, right now... you would raise your hand and say: "Pastor Tanner, that's me right now. I'm absolutely sick of this. I am relationally depleted. I am going crazy at home. I am tired of my weekly highlight being a trip to Wegman's. I need my hair done. My kids amazing but crazy. I am done adulting!"

There is no doubt that this virus has punched humanity in the mouth... and as a pastor and fellow human being with my own limitations, I want to say a couple of things to you.

#1) You are not alone. We are all in this together, and we, as Redemption Hill Church, are here for you! Do not hesitate to reach out to us to let us know how we can pray for you and support you. It's as simple as texting the word CONNECT to the number on the screen.

#2) We have to fight back. This is so true, not just in this COVID-19 season, but with any challenge... we will be tempted to shrink back in passivity, rather than taking action and fighting back.]]

What is your general posture right now? Are you leaning back or leaning forward? Are you marching onward or cowering back?

We're calling this series "Keep Moving" because Peter is writing to people who consistently faced the threat of opposition and tempted them to cower back in commitment to Christ. That's why writes these words in 1 Peter 3:13-17 to embolden them to keep marching forward.

Read 1 Peter 3:13-17

"Take the Shot"
1 Peter 3:13-17

1. Expect opposition in your zeal for good. (3:13-14)

Context: Time after time Peter has encouraged us to reflect the character of God in everything we do: "Be holy" (1:16), "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable" (2:12); "live as servants of God (2:16); and most recently in 3:11. — "turn away from evil and do good."

When Peter says in verse 13, "Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?" we should pause and ask: "Am I zealous for what is good? Am I passionately pursuing a life that looks like and loves like Jesus?"

When someone's life is marked by zeal, they will have 1) an intense focus. They don't get distracted by lesser pursuits. 2) They have an abundance of energy & 3) enthusiasm. In other words, they not only go at something with all of their strength, but they actually enjoy it when they do so! 4) They will be moved to sacrificial action.

The life of Christ was marked by zeal! Isaiah 59:17 says zeal covered him like the clothes you wear. It's what people saw when they looked at his life.

Be zealous for good! Extend God's love. Don't wait for someone to reach out to you. Reach out to them! Don't wait for someone to serve you. Find ways to serve them!

- And here's the good news. Most people will be grateful for your kindness. That's why Peter asks rhetorically in verse 13: "**Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?**" The expected answer is... that's right: "NO ONE!"
- But Peter also knows that their zeal for good would be opposed by some. That's why he goes on in verse 14 and says, "But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed."
- You say: "It makes no sense that someone would get upset about someone doing something good." Yes, it does.
- Pic: Turning on the light in a dark room... Light startles the darkness. Our good works can be received like that... Our good works expose the error and folly of the darkness around us.

So Peter says, "Some may oppose you. Some may abuse or alienate you, BUT DON'T LIVE IN FEAR! He gives two huge reasons.

#1) Don't fear opposition because no one can ultimately harm you?

- We are forced to ask the question: in what sense does Peter mean, "no one is going to harm them?" Peter is not referring to physical harm or suffering in this world. He is referring to ultimate harm and judgment. His statement has the ring of Romans 8:31: "If God is for us, who can be against us?"
- Because we belong to Jesus, nothing can touch our eternal destiny. Jesus has the last word in all of our suffering. But not only that...

#2) Don't fear opposition because suffering actually brings us blessing!

- Verse 14 promises blessing for those who suffer for doing what is right in the eyes of God. Peter echoes Jesus in Matthew 5:11-12 when he said, "*Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely **on my account**. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.*"
- Suffering brings blessing because our suffering accomplishes something. The Bible says suffering for our faith #1) demonstrates our faith is legit (1 Peter 1:6-7); #2) helps us know Christ more [Phil. 3:10]; #3) shows people Jesus as we "follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21); #4) brings eternal reward (Mt. 5:12); #5) makes us more like Christ (1 Peter 4:1-2); #6) brings the blessing of his presence (4:14), and finally #7) the ultimate blessing of glorifying God (4:16).

T: Then as we move into verse 15... He takes it a step further by saying, God will not only see you through the opposition, but God will...

2. Turn opposition into gospel opportunities. (3:15-17)

Let's pick up at the end of verse 14 again..., "**Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts 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,**"

When we live with a zeal for good works and a confident faith in spite of opposition, there will be opportunities for us to answer questions like: **Why do you do what you do?** Why do you consistently put others before yourself? How do you endure suffering with such a profound hope?

That's how God turns opposition into opportunities

I want to understand a few things about this very important verse...

- When Peter says: "being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you."
- The word "defense" here is *apologia*. This doesn't mean we apologize for our hope. It means to offer explanations or give good reasons for what you believe and how you live. It's a legal term. This is what lawyers do when they represent clients before Judge and jury.
 - And this happens in everyday life. We're not talking about some grand debate but the informal circumstances and conversations you have with the people around you!

1 Peter 3.13-17. Sermon Title.

- We need to be prepared to provide persuasive answers to the most common questions and objections to Christianity like: Why would a good God allow a pandemic? Don't all roads lead to God? How could a loving God allow people to spend eternity separated from him? Doesn't science disprove Christianity?
- A great resource for exploring these questions is Tim Keller's book *The Reason for God* or almost anything written by Ravi Zacharias, an Indian-Canadian Christian who passed away this week.
- You say, "Tanner, I'm **already overwhelmed**. Thanks for the discouragement!" Notice that Peter does not command we have an answer for every question. Never be afraid to say, "I don't know. I'm not sure. I'll get back with you on that." We are simply **expected to tell our story** and share why Jesus is our hope.
- You have a story to tell!! You know how you came to place your hope in Jesus and you know how he is changing your life!

But it's NOT just WHAT we share, but HOW we share it!

1. Be prepared. Verse 15 says, "always be prepared." "always be ready." (NAS, NLT). Listen, we have to be ready to take the shot! That comes from spending time with God daily. Walking in his ways... Being filled with his Spirit.
 - {Pt 2} Hoosiers... Take the shot.
2. But we do so... "**with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience**" For too often, we have a greater concern for winning an argument and extending God's love to people. This means taking the time to LISTEN. This means speaking with a heart full of love and compassion. Anything less betrays the Jesus we represent!
 - UTAH?

When we do so, verse 16 says, we will have a clear conscience and no one can charge us with wrong.

You say, "Pastor Tanner, help me out. I want to be ready to tell people about my hope, and I want to do so in a way that represents Jesus."

Do you want to know the secret? Here's the secret that will take you from watching everyone else taking the shot to getting in the game and contributing to the victory.

Verse 15 ONE. MORE. TIME. "But in your hearts HONOR CHRIST THE LORD AS HOLY."

It's only when we honor Christ as Lord, when we set him apart as the one we're living for day by day, that we will have the love and the boldness and the freedom and the readiness to share the hope within us. Keep spending time with God. Keep worshiping. Keep drawing near. Keep praying for God's work to fill you!

The times I walk closest with God are the times I'm most effective representing him to the people around me.

The Point: Opposition becomes opportunity when we honor Jesus above all.

Conclusion:

As we close our time today, let me ask you: Who is it your life that needs to hear why you hope in Christ? Our message is too good and too important not to share. We believe that Jesus really is God, that he really saves, that he really was resurrected, and that he really changes lives today and forever!

JANILLE...

If you follow Christ, who can you share his love with this week?

If you do not yet follow Christ, perhaps today is the day you hear God inviting you to say yes to Jesus...

Gospel...

Text Jesus to the number on the screen.