

## Live Your Hope As Strangers <sup>1</sup>

‡ in reverent fear (v.17)  
‡ dearly redeemed (vv.18-19)  
‡ resting in God (vv.20-21)

It got fixed on a fishing trip of all things. Even fishermen want to fit in. If you were in a place of power, say the State Capitol or the White House, you'd feel it then. If there were some really smart people around, it would sure make you want to be able to at least talk intelligently. Wanting to belong is so normal among family, friends, neighbors. But if you are a lowly, poorly educated fisherman, it won't take much for you to try to defend yourself. And if a good friend of yours is really in trouble, maybe you'd think, while you're safely sitting here at least, that you'd be brave and speak up for him. But then some loud mouth comes after you in front of everyone, so maybe you crumble. If your friend turned and looked at you, then got killed, all your swearing before to be loyal and true, would just make it hurt worse than ever. You can always catch more fish, but a dead friend you denied even knowing?

So if you're a fisherman and need some down time, you go fishing. Take some buddies along, so much the better. All night you catch nothing. So some stranger on shore says, "**Throw your nets on the right side of the boat!**" Why not? Nothing else is working! A huge haul and now you're remembering some good times with your friend. Then one of your buddies says, "It's him!" No hesitation. You're in the water headed to shore. Fish on the Barbie, friends all together again – it doesn't get any better!

But then he starts asking questions about whether you "love" him. Fumbling, you answer, "You know I care about you." The third time he asks whether you even "care" for him. It hurts because before he died, you were trying to fit in. You swore three times that you did not even know him!

Years later, the fisherman writes: "**If you call on the Father who judges impartially, according to the work of each person, conduct yourselves during the time of your pilgrimage in reverence.**"<sup>2</sup> I'd be shaking for any friend to keep questioning me, but if God's own Son was asking, and I'd failed so miserably? I'd expect anger something like, "I don't ever want to see your face again!" I would not expect him to give my job back, much less an even better job. He says: "**Feed my lambs....Take care of my sheep....Feed my sheep.**" Strange, isn't it? God Son surely gets my heart pounding...

‡ in reverent fear (v.17)

Then he tells you that you will lose your freedom. Someone else will have to dress you and lead you where you don't want to go? You'll be old and have to stretch out your hands. Sounds like the same way your friend died. What would make you want to say, "Okay!" when he says, "**Follow me!**"?

Strange is getting stranger still! The fisherman started his letter calling you "**God's elect,**" i.e., chosen ones, but then adds, "**strangers in the world....**" He's about to say, "**Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.**" How could it be stranger to think what you want is not just wrong, but "**sin**" against God? And where did this come from that giving in to "**sinful desires**" would make "**war against your soul**"?

So let's get this straight. The fisherman gave up his friend. The friend comes to call him back, but then he says the fisherman will die with his arms stretched out like crucified. And you can't even take

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<sup>2</sup> *Evangelical Heritage Version, EHV*® © 2017 The Wartburg Project. [www.wartburgproject.org](http://www.wartburgproject.org). Quotes unless noted.

a little pleasure along the way? What you desire can bomb out your soul from the inside? That is stranger than strange! Who would want such a life? Why would anyone say, “Okay! Count me in!”

*Think about it.* The fisherman is writing, *Think about it.* “**You know that you were redeemed,**” bought back from those “*sinful,*” soul warring “*desires,*” from “**your empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers....**” So if you came from a non-religious family, then you have no hope at all except maybe to live as long and happy as you can, die on your own terms, and “hope” there’s nothing bad on the other side. Sounds really *empty*. Deep down, you know there’s so much wrong in your life.

Maybe you’re like the fisherman from a very religious family, traditional culture covering the kinds of food you eat, the clothes you wear, the friends you keep. You try to do everything right, but then your loyalty gets tested and you fail. The harder you try on your own, the more frustrated you get. It’s an “*empty way of life.*” Is there a way out?

The fisherman writes on: “**You know that you were redeemed...not with things that pass away, such as silver or gold....**” Wow! This keeps getting stranger, in a more wonderful way! “**You...were redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot.**” *Christ* is the One your *forefathers* said was coming to make everything right with God. He had no “*sinful desires,*” no worries about how to fit in, only pleasing his heavenly Father. There was no “*blemish or spot*” of sin on him or in him. God’s Son, the LORD’s Christ, with no sin died for all your sins. Stranger, you are...

### † **dearly redeemed (vv.18-19)**

And then the strangest of all. “**He was chosen before the foundation of the world....**” No “Big Bang” accident, but a solid, careful creation by a very loving Creator. He made sure this perfect Lamb of sacrifice would be “**revealed in these last times for your sake.**” This is Good News! He wants you to know! He made sure that “**through him**” you would be “**believers in God**” – not the kind of “god” people make up, but the One God whose wisdom and power would be terrifying, except that his *mercy triumphs over judgment.* (James 2:13) You can be sure his plan worked because God “**raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are,**” literally, “**into God.**”

You’re really “**into**” Him because of this strangest, most wonderful truth of all. You can face life even if God promises a violent death. The fact that you are **dearly redeemed** gives you peace! Death could not hold your friend. Your disloyal sins against him, your falling over so many “*sinful desires,*” your failures to give him glory – nothing could stop him from making things right for you with God!

Strangest of all is the place of *glory* he has planned. Treasures like silver and gold down here are used up there to pave the streets. Instead of cement, they use emeralds, rubies and tons of other gemstones for foundations on walls so thick they cannot be breached, and gates that stand wide open because there are no threats. All enemies have been vanquished, even death itself! (Revelation 21) Strangers here are God’s family there. Because of the sure and certain hope of *glory* you are safely...

### † **resting in God (vv.20-21)**

You don’t need to be a fisherman to appreciate this absolutely true fisherman’s tale. Most of you know we’ve been talking about Peter, reinstated by Jesus on the shores of Galilee to go out with the rest of the apostles as witnesses for Jesus Christ. You know God the Father looks at our works as evidence of our faith. All the wealth of earth could not redeem us from one sin. God’s justice requires that he punish every sin. The cost to make us right with God could only be the holy and innocent blood of Christ. There’s only one way to live because our entire hope for eternity rests solidly on God and his promises. How shall we then live our *Living Hope* in a *Dying World*? In **reverent fear, dearly redeemed, resting in God.** Strange is past and gone. The strangest things are yet to be in the wondrous glories of heaven. But for now **Live Your Hope As Strangers.** Strangers here for now with your eyes on your best and trust Friend, Jesus. He is the living hope when I’m but a stranger here and heaven is my home. Amen.

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