

A Living Hope

Bible Background • 1 Peter 1:1-12

Printed Text • 1 Peter 1:3-12 | Devotional Reading • Lamentations 3:19-24

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: KNOW how we can find meaning in life's challenges; FEEL the hope of Christ and be able to share that hope with others; and ACTIVELY turn to Christ for hope and guidance.

In Focus

Rodney had heard about rampant layoffs, plant downsizing and closings, expansion overseas, and many other reasons millions of Americans have been displaced from their workplaces. But until it happened to him, he didn't know what it felt like to be without health insurance and other benefits of the working class. What was he to do?

Often, Rodney would express that God, not his job, was his source. Now it was time to really trust Him. Especially now that his unemployment compensation had been exhausted, Rodney knew that his only hope was in Christ Jesus. He began to stand on the Scripture, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

In order to make it through, Rodney knew he would need to take one day at a time. After all, he knew the Lord knows his end from his beginning. There is reason to hope.

The daily struggles of life can cause us to experience hopelessness. How can we become confident and find hope for a better tomorrow? Peter writes that a new birth into a living hope can be found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Keep in Mind

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

Focal Verses

KJV 1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, **5** Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in then last time. **6** Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: **7** That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: **8** Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: **9** Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. **10** Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: **11** Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. **12** Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

NLT 1 Peter 1:3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, **4** and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. **5** And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. **6** So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. **7** These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. **8** You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. **9** The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls. **10** This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. **11** They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward. **12** They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

The People, Places, and Times

Author, Audience, Attitude. There is little doubt that apostle Peter is the author of this epistle. He introduces himself in verse one. We also note that he is writing to strangers (perhaps Greek converts) in various regions of Asia. Whether Peter directed his letter to a specific group or not, it is encouragement for all Christians who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, even those of us today who have accepted the truth of the death, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus our Savior. With these motivational words, we are assured there is victory over suffering.

Background

Although Peter wrote to Jewish Christians driven out of Jerusalem and scattered throughout Asia Minor, there is much that we can learn from his letter.

He wrote to encourage Christians who were under persecution. Peter himself had been beaten, jailed, and threatened often as he brought God's message to the people. He had also witnessed firsthand not only fellow Christians dying for the faith but many being scattered as they sought refuge. In the midst of his awareness of ongoing persecution and suffering, the apostle Peter sought to bring comfort and hope to Christians under duress.

At-A-Glance

1. Hope through Salvation (1 Peter 1:3-6)
2. Triumphant Victory (vv. 7-12)

In Depth

1. Hope through Salvation (1 Peter 1:3-6) Abundant mercy (vv. 3-4). When Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, man fell from a great estate. This did not catch God by surprise, for He had a plan of redemption already in place. As we read in these two verses, God has already established reconciliation with humankind through the death, burial, and Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is through God's abundant mercy that we are not consumed.

The shed blood of Jesus not only brings hope of eternal life but a lively hope to all humankind. Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:5 of saints being "lively stones." This dynamic combination of a lively hope and "lively stones" allows us to have victory over the cares of this world. We have been translated into Christ's kingdom through the incorruptible inheritance we have received. All of this is accomplished by the resurrection power that is in us through the precious gift of the Holy Ghost. As believers, we have victory over suffering. We have a spiritual heritage built upon an everlasting foundation.

When the entire world is falling apart, our prayer can be: "Let your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." We are in this world but not of it. We serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was Abraham who searched for that city that was not made by hand. Through Jesus Christ, we have inherited the promise of His kingdom here on earth. Eternal life will not fade away for heaven belongs to His saints.

Faith works (vv. 5-6). Remember the song that many congregations used to sing Gene Martin and Richard Littlejohn? "Faith, faith, faith, just a little bit of faith. It don't take a whole lot, just use what you got, faith, faith, faith, just a little bit of faith." There is so much truth to that tune, which appeared on the 1970 "We Shall Be Like Him" album. Jesus taught that all you need is faith the size of a mustard seed for mountains to move at your command (Matthew 17:20).

Peter is encouraging the reader that although there are manifold temptations, we are kept by the power of God through faith. Salvation begins by faith, and we must hold onto faith until that day when we reach our heavenly reward. Perhaps, like Job, you have been considered by God to go through hardship. Rejoice as the fiery tests and trials engulf you. Take time to learn what the purposes of these experiences are—they exist to make us, not to break us.

2. Triumphant Victory (vv. 7-12) In our devotional reading from the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah lets us know where to place our hope. "The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him" (Lamentations 3:24). It seems nearly unimaginable to grasp

what the world does when life's challenges happens to them. We as saints have the Lord as our comfort. We are privileged to be able to go to Him in prayer.

Precious trials (v. 7). Can you imagine that 24-karat gold is not worth as much as the trials of your faith? This is what Peter is telling us. To the carnal mind, that definitely is foolishness. But to those of us who have been given the mind of Christ, how precious is this teaching! These fiery trials that we're enduring and overcoming are going to be currency with Jesus Christ in His appearing. Surely we want Him to be pleased not only then but now as well. A wise person has said it's all about attitude and perspective. How we look at a situation makes all the difference. Learn to see things as God sees them. Then the trials that seem like they're going to take you out will become precious and valuable.

Believing faith (vv. 8-9). Peter seems to echo the words of Jesus when He was speaking to Thomas: "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). We, too, are in that number—believing, rejoicing with unspeakable joy, and full of glory. The promise of hope has been fulfilled, and we are heirs to the promise.

Better days are coming (vv. 10-11). Throughout the Old Testament, prophets and common people alike rested in the promise of hope. They looked forward to a better day when the promised Messiah would destroy the works of man. The list is long and covers thousands of years, but these men, women, and children of faith looked to the future in hope. Present-day saints have a different vantage point. We have all these things recorded in the Word of God. We also have witness in our inner being that Jesus did just as He said. Our hope is in the glorious resurrected Christ. He has provided triumph over death and suffering. Yes, we have hope eternal.

Angelic curiosity (v. 12). "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Psalm 8:4-5). Man has a place of honor in God's creation. God breathed life into man and he became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). No other creature, angelic or otherwise, can boast of this status. However much the angels may be puzzled at God's decision in creation, we do know that in redemption the angels rejoice when a soul is saved (Luke 15:10).

Search the Scriptures

1. What type of inheritance do we have as saints (1 Peter 1:4)?
2. In whom does our hope lie (Lamentations 3:24)?

Discuss the Meaning

With so many catastrophes occurring in the world around us, let alone the strife among nations and individuals, from where do we draw our strength to face a world in turmoil?

Lesson in Our Society

The foundations of our society have been shaken. Everywhere a person turns there is strife, fear, and upheaval. Systems and programs that have been in place for decades such as Social Security, Medicare, college education grants and loans, and other assistance programs are in jeopardy of failing. What are some ways that the body of Christ can minister hope to the society in which we live?

Make It Happen

The church of Jesus Christ is called to be a beacon of light to a dark world. Determine ways your local church can have an impact of hope on the community in which you live. Share the hope that you have with those who are in hopeless situations.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

1 Peter 1:3-12

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The apostle Peter wrote to believers living in northwestern Asia Minor, now Turkey. The bearer of the letter lists the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia in the order of visit. Though Peter's ministry was mainly oriented to the Jews, the letter here was addressed to Christians who were largely Gentiles.

The beginning of this section, focused on thanksgiving, was a Jewish pattern of writing adopted by the Christians. While the Jewish thanksgiving formula is limited to the mention of God, Christian thanksgiving is expanded in identifying God more specifically because of the revelation of Jesus Christ as Lord. Here Peter's praises go to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul uses the same template for his letters (see 2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3). This thanksgiving is rooted in what God has accomplished for Peter and his audience.

God in His mercy has given new birth to both Peter and the recipient of his letter. In 1 Peter 3:3, the phrase "a lively hope" translated in Greek is *anagennao* (**an-ag-en-NAH-o**), meaning new birth (or "born again," NLT). The concept of the new birth is found in John where the new birth is not dependent on the will of man but that of the Spirit (1:13; 3:6). This new birth came through God's mercy, which is the rendering of the Old Testament Hebrew word *chesed* (**KHEH-sed**, meaning lovingkindness); in Greek it is *eleos* (**EL-eh-os**). *Eleos* reminds the readers that the provision for the new birth is solely the work of God without any merit whatsoever from the receiver of the new birth. The means by which God accomplishes *anagennao* in the believer was through the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. It echoes the importance of the Resurrection for the Christian faith stated by Paul. Without it, the Christian faith is aimless and futile. All this ushered the Christian believer to a living hope.

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

Inheritance results from the new birth as well. The inheritance notion is found in the Old Testament with the promise of God to Abraham to give him the land of Canaan. The Children of Israel received the land through conquest by Joshua. However, their inheritance was plagued with wars, idolatry, and vices, and by the eroding effect of time.

Unlike the inheritance promised to the Israelites, which was subject to degradation because it was earthly, the inheritance God promised to Christians is not subject to these three plagues. Peter uses three qualifiers in Greek to explain the quality of this inheritance. It is first incorruptible, or permanent, and cannot suffer corruption or corrosion. Then, it is "undefiled," morally pure and cannot be tainted. Finally, it is "reserved in heaven"—set aside eternally for believers.

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The beneficiaries of God's inheritance are securely protected. The term used for "kept by the power of God" in Greek (*phroureo*, **froo-REH-o**), has military connotations. It gives a picture of defense against a military assault while those protected are in a fortress. This previews the following verse where the trials will be introduced. Indeed, Christian life is not problem free but instead is a life of trial, temptations, and assaults of all kinds. This protection from God is therefore a good assurance for Christians.

This protection has a time frame. It runs from the new birth until the "last time" where the final salvation is acquired. The Greek word used for "last time" is *kairos* (**kahee-ROS**), is different from *chronos* (**K HRON-os**), which designates time in general or a span of time. *Kairos* means a decisive point in time or an appointed time. Therefore, Christians are under God's protection until the last day appointed by God for the return of Christ and the end of the world. Proverbs 18:10 and John 17:11b give us an assurance that the name of God is a real protection.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

"Wherein" links this portion to the living hope described by the inheritance in heaven and the protection until the reception of the salvation ready to be revealed. This living hope is indeed a source of great joy ("So be truly glad," NLT). The anticipation of Christ's return and the glorification of saints with Him provide a real joy. Expectation of a good outcome in the future always generates joy such as Paul expressed when he projected the overflowing of the Philippians' joy in relation to his probable release from prison.

The believers' joy is challenged by the sufferings they are experiencing throughout provinces in Asia and elsewhere. But this is for a little while—"though now for a season"—because He has already set the time frame of endurance. Until Christ comes at the appointed time, the believers may go through various kinds of suffering. But Peter tells them to rejoice in partaking in Christ's suffering. The attitude they should have when they suffer for Christ could be considered as a distinct contrast to what they suffer for their own misbehavior.

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

The sufferings in a Christian life have a purpose. The goal is to test one's faith and bring it to maturity. James gives the process of the refinement of one's faith through suffering: trials bring perseverance. When one endures these sufferings, it brings maturity in his faith (1:4-5). A mature faith will produce a testimony that will glorify the name of the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Coming. Here again, in 1 Peter 1:7, reference is made to the last time or days.

Peter explains the purification process of believers' faith through trials by drawing a parallel with the process of purification of gold. Gold goes through this process through placement in a fire in a furnace. The aim is to remove the impurities from the mined substance and achieve pure gold. In so doing, the fire does not destroy the gold; instead, the gold's purity increases after being separated from the impurities that surround its essence. In the same way, a Christian is strengthened after going through trials successfully.

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Peter has seen the Lord, and he was a participant in Jesus Christ's earthly ministry. However, his readers did not see Him physically but heard of Him through the preaching of eyewitnesses. The apostle's audience, who did not know Christ in person, did two things: They loved Him and believed in Him. Glorious, inexpressible joy is a result of their love and belief in Christ without the ability to see Him physically. It resounds like the blessing Jesus gives to those who believe without seeing (John 20:29).

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

The Greek word *komizomai* (**kom-ID-zo-mahee**) used for "receiving" denotes carrying off for oneself what is deserved or earned. The verb is used frequently for obtaining a prize or reward. The prize is the goal of believers' faith. Here again the notion of hope and perseverance is implicitly present. Their faith has a goal—the inheritance, the living hope. It is summed up in the salvation of their souls. "Soul" here refers to the whole person. Salvation is both present and future and relates to the whole person, not just the physical body. It starts with regeneration at new birth and is completed in glorification when Christ comes.

10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

This salvation was the theme of the prophets of the Old Testament. In Luke 24:45-47, Jesus reminded the disciples of the content of the Old Testament that He summarized through His suffering, death, and Resurrection from the dead. Repentance and forgiveness was to be preached to all nations as part of this reminder. These prophets were moved by the Spirit of Christ in them. In his second letter, Peter reminds his readers that no prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet's own will (2 Peter 1:12-21).

What the prophets receive as message was not intended for them but for the believers in Christ as is the case with Peter's audience. These prophets investigated the message to find out the time and the circumstances of the revelation they received. The revelation was centered in the sufferings of Christ and the glories that will accompany them. Part of these glories involves the resurrection of Christ from the dead and the resultant grace that came to Peter's readers and all believers in Christ Jesus.

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

The prophets were told they were not the recipients of the grace but that they were serving the believers in Christ that will come. When the prophets talked about these things, they were looking forward to the future beneficiaries. Empowered by the Holy Spirit sent by God

the Father, people have preached the same message to Peter's audience. This reminds us of Jesus' commission to the disciples to go into the world and preach the Gospel after they have received the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

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Say It Correctly

Pontus. PAHN-tuhs.

Galatia. guh-LAY-shih-uh.

Cappadocia. kap-ih-DOH-shee-uh.

Bithynia. bih-THIN-ee-uh.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY	I Have No Help in Me	(<u>Job 6:8-13</u>)
TUESDAY	Days without Hope	(<u>Job 7:1-6</u>)
WEDNESDAY	Will Mortals Live Again?	(<u>Job 14:7-17</u>)
THURSDAY	My Times Are in Your Hands	(<u>Psalm 31:9-16</u>)
FRIDAY	The Lord Preserves the Faithful	(<u>Psalm 31:19-24</u>)
SATURDAY	Hope in God's Faithfulness	(<u>Lamentations 3:19-24</u>)
SUNDAY	New Birth into a Living Hope	(<u>1 Peter 1:3-12</u>)