

Living Hope

1 Peter 1:1-12

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
 To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,
 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience
 to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:
 May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Born Again to a Living Hope

3 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,
 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by
 God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various
 trials, 7 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. 8 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, 9 obtaining the outcome of
 your faith, the salvation of your souls.
 10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours
 searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was
 indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 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.

The **HOPE** of v. 3 is the main theme of these first 12 verses of Peter's first letter. He makes 10
 connections to that hope that make it as relevant for us today as it was to its original recipients in
 Asia Minor (modern Turkey) north of the Taurus Mountains and south of the Black Sea.

1. Hope is **FOR** "elect exiles" (v. 1). These elect are probably Gentile predominantly, even though
 Peter was generally the apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:8) and even though there were Jews from the
 five Roman provinces listed here who were present on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9f.). They are
 also probably "exiles of the Dispersion" only figuratively and not literally. If literal then they are Jews
 scattered from Jerusalem since the Babylonian Captivity and scattered from Rome since the edict
 of Claudius (Acts 18:2). If figurative then they are Christians, Jew and Gentile, whose true home is
 heaven but who have been told to seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which they have
 been exiled, just as Jeremiah gave that counsel to the Jews of the captivity in Jeremiah 29:7-10.

2. Hope is **BECAUSE OF** "God" (v. 2). And not just any God, but rather the Triune God where the
 Father foreknows, the Spirit sanctifies, and the Son cleanses and commands (cleansing and
 commanding being the "double cure" we need from our sin, removing from us its guilt and power).

3. Hope is **ACCORDING TO** "his mercy" (v. 3). But not mere mercy! The hope we have in Christ is
 according to his GREAT mercy. However great we may know our sin to be, we can rejoice that
 God's mercy is greater still!

4. Hope is **FROM** being "born again" (v. 3). Jesus said all who would enter the kingdom of God must
 be born again (John 3:3, 5), and Peter reflects his master's teaching here. Clearly true biblical hope
 is God's creation and not that of any human being!

5. Hope is **THROUGH** “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (v. 3). False Christian hype may come through trying in one’s own strength to follow Christ’s example, but true Christian hope comes only through God’s power in bringing his Son back from the dead! Then, if he is raised, we who believe in him are raised with him (1 Cor. 15:13-23).
6. Hope is **TO** “an inheritance” (v. 4). True Christian hope is to a certain kind of inheritance too —“imperishable, unfading, undefiled, kept in heaven.” It is solid and secure!
7. We share this hope **WITH** all who believe, with all “who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (v. 5). It is helpful to observe that not only theologically but also textually, regeneration (v.3 “born again”) precedes faith (v. 5).
8. Hope is ours **DESPITE** “trials” (v. 6). False hype from so-called Christians is absent in trials but Peter says that we experience hope in the midst of trials. These trials are further qualified by four descriptors: temporary, necessary, grievous, and various. We endure the last two characteristics because of our hope in the first two.
9. Our hope is a hope **OF** “salvation” (vv. 7-9). Many Christians say that they have been saved already, and there is an element of truth in that saying. We have been saved in the past from the penalty of our sin. But we are also being saved in the present from the power of our sin, and we will one day be saved in the future from the very presence of our sin! Our hope is future-oriented even as our faith is looking back to what Jesus already accomplished “once for all” on the cross.
10. Hope is **IN** “Christ” (vv. 10-12). All of Scripture speaks of him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47), and Peter mentions three very important classes of beings who focus on him as well: prophets, apostles, and angels. The Spirit of Christ, the people of Christ, and the mystery of Christ command the attention of beings both earthly and heavenly! So we sing, “In Christ alone my hope is found. He is my light, my strength, my song.”

Discussion Questions

1. (Ice-breaker) What are one or two distinctions you would make between true hope and false hype?
2. (1:1) How do you interpret the recipients of Peter’s letter (Jew or Gentile, 1st century or 21st century, literal dispersed exiles or figurative) and why? (If you have time for a deeper look, you may want to quickly read the whole letter and make a column of evidence suggesting a primarily Jewish audience and a column of evidence suggesting a primarily Gentile one.) Do you feel included as a recipient of this letter? Why or why not?
3. (1:2) Verse 3 in the ESV translation says that God caused us to be born again to a living hope, and verse 2 tells us the contribution of each member of the Trinity. Which of the persons of the Trinity does that part of the work that most impresses you today as particularly needed right now in your life? Explain.

4. (1:3) This key verse says that our living hope is ACCORDING TO God's "great" mercy, coming FROM our being "born again," and THROUGH "the resurrection." Do you have a question about any of these aspects of our hope, and do you have a personal application about any of them?

5. (1:4-5) Which adjective describing the inheritance for which we hope most impresses you and why?

6. (1:6) Which adjective describing our trials most impresses you and why?

7. (1:7-9) Which tense of our salvation (past justification, present sanctification, or future glorification) most impresses you today and why?

8. (1:10-12) Prophets, apostles, evangelists, and angels are all enthralled by Christ Jesus our Lord! By which of these classes of persons or beings are you most surprised?

9. (Overall) If you could only have one of these 12 verses to take with you through the coming week, which would it be and why?