



1 Peter 1-5

Hope in the Midst of Hopelessness

Dear,

“To God’s elect.. who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:1,2

Sometimes its easy for us to lose hope in the midst of the daily grind of frustrations and disappointments. Troubling times have a way of destroying our joy until we have a crying need for encouragement. Peter gives us that encouragement in verses 3-5 of this first chapter. There we see we have joy and hope not only now in times of trouble but, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have been given this living hope of eternal life.

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proven genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (1 Peter 1:6,7 New International Version)

Yet this is hard to receive when, “the thought of my pain, my homelessness, is bitter poison. I think of it constantly, and my spirit is depressed”.(Lamentations 3:19,20 Good News Bible) Sometimes in the middle of our pain we feel so alone, like God is far away. “Yet hope returns when I remember this one thing; The Lord’s unfailing love and mercy still continue, Fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise. The Lord is all I have, and so in Him I put my hope.”(Lam.3:21-24 GNB) “Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”(1 Peter 1:8) “Therefore, prepare your minds

for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: Be holy, because I am holy.”(1 Peter 1:13-16 NIV)

To “ be holy” means to abide in the presence of the Living God. Surrender your life, your hope, your dreams to the One who loves you and gave His life for you. Don’t waddle in hopelessness and sin. Instead, “set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ returns”. Remember no matter what the circumstances might be now, there is hope because Christ is risen. “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life, handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him, and so your faith and hope are in God.”(1 Peter 1:13 NIV)

Because your faith and hope are in God and not in your present circumstances, your own abilities to pull yourself up by “your boot straps,” or other people, the way you live is going to be different. You have discovered the truth that God loves you and you have a future and a hope in His ever-abiding presence and care for you. “Now that you’ve cleaned up your lives by following the truth, love one another as if your lives depended on it. Your new life is not like your old life. Your old birth came from mortal sperm; your new birth comes from God’s living Word. Just think: a life conceived by God Himself! That’s why the prophet said, ‘The old life is a grass life, its beauty as short-lived as wildflowers; Grass dries up, flowers droop, but God’s Word goes on and on forever. This is the Word that conceived the new life in you.’”(1 Peter 1:22-25 The Message Bible)

Living daily in the Light of God's Word revolutionizes our lives. Its not only invigorates us to arise above the circumstances, but the Living Word of God infuses us with the hope to declare. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."(Phil.4:13) As a result we want to follow the directives the Word of God gave us when it says, "rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."(1 Peter 2:1-3 NIV) "Come to Jesus Christ. He is the Living Stone that people have rejected, but which God has chosen and highly honored. And now you are living stones that are being used to build a spiritual house."(1 Peter 2:4,5 Contemporary English Version) "You are God's chosen and special people. You are a group of royal priests and a holy nation. God has brought you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Now you must tell all the wonderful things that He has done. The scriptures say, 'Once you were nobody, Now you are God's people. At one time no one had pity on you. Now God has treated you with, kindness.'"(1 Peter 2:9,10) Contemporary English Version) What do these verses means to you? What hope do they provide you in the midst of your hurt and pain? To me these verses 1 Peter 2:1-5,9,10, are saying "don't let that hurt turn into anger resulting in deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander". Instead I need to crave the spiritual milk of God's Word. When I do that I will come to Jesus in a new and powerful way. Discovering He is the Living Stone that 1 Peter 2:6,7 in the Amplified Bible describe in this way. "For thus it stands in Scripture: Behold, I am laying in Zion a chosen (honored), precious chief cornerstone, and he who believes in Him (who adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Him) shall never be disappointed or put to shame.(see Is.28:16) To you then who believe (who adhere to, trust in, and rely on Him) is the preciousness; but for those who disbelieve (it is true). The (very) stone which the builders rejected has become the main Cornerstone, (see Ps.118:22)".

Do you believe in Him? Do you really believe in Jesus to the point you are adhering to, trusting in, and relying on Him totally? If that is the case then, "you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling

of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference He made for you from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted. Friends, this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it. Don't indulge your ego at the expense of your soul. Live an exemplary life..."(1 Peter 2:9-12 The Message Bible)
 The Contemporary English Version expresses 1 Peter 2:11,12, this way. "Dear friends, you are foreigners and strangers on this earth. So I beg you not to surrender to those desires that fight against you. Always let others see you behaving properly even though they may still accuse you of doing wrong. Then, on the day of judgment, they will honor God by telling the good things they saw you do."

1 Peter 2:13-17 gives further directions for proper behavior including being good citizens who submit to governing officials for "the Lord's sake". An example of when this is not possible is Peter and John who in Acts 5:29 were forced to resist by declaring "We most obey God rather than men".

Victims of injustice are reminded of Jesus in 1 Peter 2:14, who entrusted Himself to God who judges justly. As a result of such faith Jesus who died on the cross, condemned as an innocent man, rose from the dead to provide hope for all who believe in Him for all eternity.

In 1 Peter 3:1-6 wives are encouraged to submit to their husbands in such a way that husbands will be "won over without words by the behavior of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your (wives) lives". Husbands are challenged "in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayer."(1 Peter 3:7 NIV)

"Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary repay with a blessing."(1 Peter 3:8,9)

The New Revised Standard Version) These are just words, words and more words for those who do not truly believe. But believers in the Living God know that the directives provided in His scriptures are given in order that they may inherit the blessings Christ has promised. What four directives are provided in verses 10, 11 in 1 Peter 3? What promise is given in verse 12 of the chapter?

“Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.”(1 Peter 3:13,14 NIV) Thank God I’m free. You’re free-from a fear of harm if you can and will continue to do good. Trusting ourselves totally to God and His ability to provide, frees us from fear of what others might do to us. For me this means I can have hope that everything will work out for the best, in spite of the circumstances. Now in the midst of the trials, disappointments, and uncertainties about the future you and I are told, “in your heart set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”(1 Peter 3:15 NIV) And what is the never changing eternal basis for this hope? “For (it is) better to suffer (unjustly) for doing right, if that should be God’s will, than to suffer (justly) for doing wrong. For Christ (the Messiah Himself) died for sins once for all, the Righteous for the unrighteous (the Just for the unjust, the Innocent for the guilty), that He might bring us to God. In His human body He was put to death, but He was made alive in the spirit.”(1 Peter 3:17,18 Amplified Bible) In what way do verses 19-22, say that baptism makes this hope very personal? According to verse 21, where does baptism get its power?

When we are suffering it is so easy for us to feel immobilized, alone, crushed, hopeless, overwhelmed, and devastated. 1 Peter was written to offer hope to first century Christians who were being persecuted for their faith. Chapter 4 of this book shares with all of us how we can be victorious and have hope in the midst of suffering. “Therefore, since Christ suffered in His body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with

sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.”(1 Peter 4:1,2 NIV) According to verses 3-7, how do individuals who are done with sin, live their lives differently?

“Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it; if words, let it be God’s words; if help, let it be God’s hearty help. That way, God’s bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and He’ll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time. Oh yes!”(1 Peter 4:7-11 The Message Bible)

But even, as we try to do good and live faithfully for the Lord the suffering continues. According to 1 Peter 4:12-18, how are we supposed to respond to such suffering? Why is it important that we rejoice even in the midst of suffering? “Therefore, those who are ill-treated and suffer in accordance with God’s will must do right and commit their souls (in charge as a deposit) to the One who created (them) and will never fail (them).”(1 Peter 4:19 Amplified Bible)

The practical advice and directives for victorious living continue in 1 Peter 5. In verses 1-5, we see religious leaders warned not to fall into the heresy of prosperity theology, perpetuated by greed. Instead, they are to be eager to serve and be “examples to the flock”. Younger people are to “be submissive to those older.” Then Peter says, “...wear the “overall” of humility in serving each other. God is always against the proud, but He is always ready to give grace to the humble. So, humble yourselves under God’s strong hand, and in His own good time He will lift you up. You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon Him, for you are His personal concern.”(1 Peter 5:5-7 Phillips Modern English Translation) Think about it. You can “cast all your anxiety on

Him because He cares for you.” Now “be self-controlled and alert your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”(1 Peter 5:8,9 NIV) What steps are you taking to resist the devil? How do you stand firm in the midst of trials, tribulations, and suffering?

“But God shows undeserved kindness to everyone. That’s why He had Christ Jesus choose you to share in His eternal glory. You will suffer for a while, but God will make you complete, steady, strong and firm. God will be in control forever!” (1 Peter 5:10,11 Contemporary English Version)

Hang on brothers and sisters. Trust in God. He will bring you through. Remember there is hope for Christ is Risen and God is in control. “Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He care for you.”(verse 7) “Peace to all of you who are in Christ.”(verse 14)

Yours in Christ’s service

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