

INTRODUCTION TO 1 PETER

God has called a people out of darkness and into his marvelous light. They are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. They have been born again to a living hope, ransomed from the futile ways of their forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. They are being built into a spiritual house, stewards of God's grace.

This is the imagery that the Apostle Peter uses in his letter to first century believers who, like us, needed to be reminded, encouraged and challenged by these truths. God's people have identity, security and purpose.

These believers were most likely Gentiles – that is non-Jews - scattered across Asia Minor, facing trials and learning what it means to be the people of Yahweh. Peter wrote to these “elect exiles” in hopes of seeing their “grace and peace” multiplied.

In his letter he reinforces their identity as a “people for God's own possession”. He reminds them of the salvation that they have through Jesus and the example that their savior gave them for how to live. He instructs them on what it means to be God's chosen people, how to act as husbands, wives, church leaders and citizens. He encourages them in their suffering, even giving them purpose for it.

In a letter overflowing with powerful imagery, Peter reminds us that this world is not the ultimate home for those who embrace the saving mercy of God. We have a future and a hope that we set our eyes to. But in the time that God has for his people on earth, we are called to obey Jesus, who is our Lord, and live in the Spirit, who transforms us. We are called to be holy, both in times of plenty and in suffering. We are to be set apart, shining as lights in a world that is still captive to the futile ways of generations past.

God has called a people out of darkness and into his marvelous light. We are his and in him, we find our grace and peace.

BORN AGAIN TO A LIVING HOPE

1 PETER 1:1 - 9

Study the Text:

1. In verse 1, Peter calls himself an “apostle” of Jesus Christ. What are the different ways in which Peter could mean he is an apostle of Jesus, and is there one way that Peter might be specifically using the word in verse 1?

2. Verses 1 and 2 are loaded with important terms that need definition in context and help set the stage for the rest of this letter: “elect exiles,” “foreknowledge,” “sanctification,” “obedience,” and “sprinkling with his blood.” Spend some time researching these terms to determine their meaning.

3. Verse 3 claims that we are born into a “living hope.” What consists of this living hope?

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4. In verse 4, Peter writes that part of what we are born into is an “inheritance.” What is the inheritance and what are the characteristics of this inheritance as discussed in verse 4?

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5. Verse 7 claims that our faith is tested, and that this testing is a good thing. What are the benefits of a tested faith?

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For Deeper Reflection:

Excerpt from *Man's Search for Meaning*

By Viktor Frankl

The prisoner who had lost faith in the future - his future - was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay. Usually this happened quite suddenly, in the form of a crisis, the symptoms of which were familiar to the experienced camp inmate. We all feared this moment - not for ourselves, which would have been pointless, but for our friends. Usually it began with the prisoner refusing one morning to get dressed and wash or to go out on the parade grounds. No entreaties, no blows, no threats had any effect. He just lay there, hardly moving. If this crisis was brought about by an illness, he refused to be taken to the sick-bay or to do anything to help himself. He simply gave up. There he remained, lying in his own excreta, and nothing bothered him anymore.

Discussion Questions:

1. Mental health experts claim that hope is as important to the human condition as food and community. Why is hope so vital to humans? Is it possible to live without hope?

2. According to God's great mercy, he has caused us to be "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (v. 3). Hope is a cliché word in our culture, yet there is a greater meaning to the term for Christians. For us it is a "living hope." What are the differences between the living hope that our resurrected Jesus offers and the worldly hope that our society offers? How does this change the way Christians live?

3. What aspects of our inheritance in Christ may increase our belief in hope and ability to live in hope?

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4. John MacArthur wrote the following in the context of living in the hope of Jesus as opposed to the hope the world has to offer:

“We make too much of life’s difficulties. We can’t be telling people that Jesus wants them to live their best life now or Jesus will disappoint them because this isn’t going to be your best life now. Don’t invest too much expectation in it. It’s full of trouble. And if you expect too much out of this life, this life will steal your joy. If you expect little and are grateful for every small benefit, but you live in the light of the life to come, then this life can steal nothing of your joy.”

How does the eternal perspective of hope change the way you live today? Are their specific examples you can cite from your life?

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