

Peter 1
Why We Can Choose Hope
J.D. Farag

We're going through the Bible book-by-book, chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse. And I know I say this about every book, but really looking forward to *1 Peter*. So the first five verses of *Chapter 1*, I'll ask you to stand if you're able, you can follow along as I read. If not, where you're seated is just fine.

The Apostle Peter, by the Holy Spirit, *verse 1*, "**Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who [Verse 2] have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ [There's the Trinity right there] and sprinkled with His blood. Grace and peace be yours in abundance.**

Praise [verse 3] be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who, through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."

Wow! Let's pray; if you would, please join with me.

Father thank You so, so much for Your Word. Wow, this is just a taste of what's here in this first letter! Lord, thank You for inspiring Peter to write this. Here we are, well-nigh 2000 years later, and what a blessing and an encouragement this is going to be for us.

So Lord, will You minister to us and speak into our lives, in and through Your Word? Lord, be our teacher and be our guide. We open up our ears to hear and our hearts to receive. So Lord, as we do, speak, for Your servants are listening. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen and Amen.

You can be seated. Thank you.

So I want to talk with you today about why it is that we can choose, key word, choose, hope in the midst of persecution and trials and difficulties.

Anyone in a trial today? I like how one said it: You're either coming out of a trial, right smack in the middle of a trial, or about to go into a trial. Doesn't that just - isn't that perky?

Thank you so much for that. Well, the reason I'm approaching this teaching this way is because truth be known, we do have many choices before us when we're in a trial, when we're experiencing those hardships in life. We can choose fear. We can choose despair. We can choose again, keyword, choose, anxiety. We can choose hopelessness.

But Peter, by the Spirit, provides us with five reasons as to why it is that we can choose hope instead. However, before we jump into these reasons, I think it would be important to know a bit about the back story behind this. It's going to be germane to our understanding of this.

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First, it's believed that this letter was written about 64, 65 A.D. Now, why is that important? Because during this time, there was - and when I say this, it's an understatement - severe persecution, namely at the hands of one Caesar Nero, who fiddled while Rome burned. You've heard that expression? That was coined after Caesar Nero burned Rome and blamed the Christians.

Why did he burn Rome?

Oh, because he wanted to build back better. I'm not kidding. See, Rome was already built. So enter one Caesar Nero, who wanted to make a name for himself.

How is he going to do that?

Well, let's burn this thing down, and we'll build back better. And I'll build it in my name and my image.

You're going to burn Rome?

Yeah, and I'm going to fiddle while Rome is burning. That's where that saying comes from. So after Rome is burned, they need somebody to blame.

So who's he going to blame?

Well, it's those Christians. They always talk about hellfire. It must be them. They're the ones.

So what happens?

Well, Caesar Nero, and I'll try to be careful in how I - I mean it's pretty graphic, but it's the truth, and it happened. So this guy was clearly demon possessed, and he would take these Christians and he would dip them in tar, and he would put them in his gardens, and he would get on his chariot, cross-dressed with his homosexual lovers in the chariot with him, and they would ride around these gardens.

By the way, be a Berean, and you can find this out. If I can know this, you can know this. He would ride around his chariot in this, in his gardens with these Christians, and they would light them on fire and burn them alive. And he would mockingly say to them, "Burn, you're the light of the world."

This is also why we get that expression "thrown into the lion's den" because they would have these huge sporting events and for sport, they would have all of these people come and they would pay money, and they would have these, you know, events, where they would bring in these lions and these wild animals, and they would throw these Christians in.

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Again, I'll try not to be too graphic, but they would actually take the carcasses of dead animals, put the live Christian inside, and throw them into that arena as Rome cheered on. And they were eaten alive in that way. So either burned alive or eaten alive.

Wow, Pastor, why the detail?

Because when Peter pens this epistle, they were on the run. Which is why in verse 1, we're told that they were dispersed throughout the provinces. It's to these believers in this extreme persecution and suffering that Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, would write to give them hope. That's who this was written for and to, and here we are all these generations later. And this is for us today.

One more thing I want to point out. I think I'd be grossly remiss if I didn't. And it has to do with the Apostle Peter, specifically Peter's apostolic prominence in the early church and whose name is mentioned more than anyone other than Jesus in the New Testament. In fact, one has noted that Peter's name is mentioned 210 times, Paul's only 162 times, and all the other apostles combined only 114 times.

Recorded in the New Testament, in the Gospels, Jesus talks with Peter more than any other of the disciples.

Now why is that important?

Because Peter is the vessel from whom they would receive this from. These persecuted Christians knew about Peter. And as such, they would receive from Peter this hope and encouragement because they knew that Peter could speak into their lives.

In other words, Peter was to be the vessel in the lives of these suffering believers because of all Peter went through with Jesus. He was with Jesus. We're going to see this later on in Chapter 1. He says of them to them, you do not see Him. I saw Him. I actually knew Him.

You did? No way?

Way!

But you didn't; you were never with Him. I was. And yet you believe Him and love Him.

We're going to see that later on. There's an interesting account in Acts Chapter 4. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, preaches boldly and courageously to the rulers, the elders, the scribes, and the high priests at the time, and it leaves them stunned.

They're like, wait a minute. Isn't that that guy that has that boat, that fisherman? This is the - is this the same guy, Peter? This raw and rude and rough fisherman?

No way.

Way!

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Acts 4:13, "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note [Listen] that these men had been with Jesus."

Oh, that's why. I mean, this guy is a fisherman and he's preaching like this?

The only explanation for this is that he had been with Jesus. Oh, would to God that it would be said of us: Oh, he's been with Jesus. That's why. That explains it.

Well, it's with this understanding that I think we're now ready to jump in. This is a profoundly encouraging letter, and we're going to get just a great start in these first five verses and five reasons. You might find more, but I found five. Five reasons that we can again, keyword - I'm sorry that I'm repeating myself but - choose hope.

We have the choice. Choose hope.

The first one is in *verse 1*, and it's that our stay here is temporary. Peter starts by addressing this letter to God's elect, the exiles, or pilgrims as some of your translations render it, which is really a better translation and understanding because you know what a pilgrim is, right?

Someone who's just kind of passing through. And we're going to see this again later on in just the first chapter where Peter talks about trials and how just for a little while...

A little while? This thing keeps going on and on and on. What do you mean, a little while?

Oh, it's just temporary.

The Apostle Paul would echo this by the way. The sufferings of this life are not to be compared with the glory that awaits. So Peter is wanting to encourage them and almost in a way, if you will, remind them, you're just pilgrims. You're just, you're not here for very long. You're not citizens of this world. Your stay here is just temporary. This is a much-needed reminder that they were foreigners just passing through this world.

Yeah, but Peter, my brother, my uncle, my father, my son was just burned alive by Caesar Nero. They didn't get out in time. We did; we escaped to Galatia and the other provinces, and we got away, but they didn't.

Well, our stay here is but temporary, brother, sister. Knowing our stay in a foreign world not our home and that it's only temporary is perhaps one of the most encouraging and hopeful truths there is. Knowing that, wait a minute, this is as bad as it gets. And it's not going to last forever because this is not my final destination. This world is not my home.

As it's been said, and I'm sure you've heard it said, for the Christian, this is the most hell we will ever know. And for the non-Christian, this is the most heaven they will ever know. I think that puts it into perspective.

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I was sharing in the Prophecy Update, First Service - really more of a confession, so I suppose I should probably confess to you too. I don't do this very often, but whenever I do, I go to Kailua Beach and I go Flags, and I walk by this, I mean mansion.

They've been preparing this place. I don't know for how long. It's not even done yet, and I'm like, Wow, it's been, what, two, three years?

Beautiful! It's coming together and I'm walking by this thing and I'm looking at it, and I'm - this is the confession. It's like Paul said, I know that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing that is in me. It rears its ugly head, and, oh, here comes envy.

Oh, hi, Envy; I've been expecting you.

And it says, Wow look at this place! Wouldn't this be great? Right on the beach! I mean, the restroom in the guest house is bigger than your house.

And I'm looking at this thing going, wow, this would be great! This would be so nice.

And then the Holy Spirit's going, What are you doing? What? What?

[Laughter]

This - do you know what I'm building for you up here? You know, I'm preparing for you, the mansion I'm...? It's going to make this look - well, here's an example. Look at that concrete. Yeah, they just poured it.

Yeah, you're getting gold.

Oh, never mind. (Chuckling) I'm good now. Sorry, I, I forgot.

I think we need the reminder, don't we? Every time we partake together of communion, you know what the key word in the communion celebration is? Remember.

Why, remember?

Because we forget.

What do we forget?

We forget what awaits us. We forget that Jesus died for us. We forget that this world is not our home. We forget that we're here but for only a short time. It's still a nice place on the beach, (Chuckling) but I'm not going to be here that long.

[Audience says, "Amen."]

This brings us to the second reason in the first part of verse 2, and it's that God foreknew and chose us.

Now, hang in there with me, please. I realize that this passage of Scripture has been the source of raging debates over the centuries concerning predestination, the elect, the chosen,

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the five points, as it's referred to, of Calvinism. You know, it's actually quite simple. And you'll forgive the oversimplification as it relates to predestination.

That sounded pretty good, didn't it? Sounded, actually like I know what I'm talking about, but... But this is a big issue.

I could start mentioning names; I won't, no need, of very well-known Bible teachers that hold to the belief that only the elect that are predestined are going to be saved. So if you're not the elect, predestined, you won't be saved.

Why did I even... Well, too late now.

It's blasphemy. It's blasphemy. And I'm sorry to say it, but it comes from the pit of hell. I know that's strong, but it needs to be.

Because if that's true, then you know what that means? That means that John 3:16 needs to be - it's even hard to say this - it needs to be taken out of our Bibles.

Because *John 3:16* says, "**For God so loved the world that whosoever would believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.**" And it does not say whosoever is of the elect that's been predestined. No!

One more thing; I might as well. Why not?

I don't know if you remember. He's with the Lord now. Dave Hunt of the Berean Call. I had the privilege - this is back when I was on the mainland. I had him as a guest speaker when I was in North Idaho. We rented out North Idaho College. I got the better part of a weekend to spend with him, and man, I was just one question after another, asking him.

And this was, by the way, with Chuck Missler, whom many of you also know. He's with the Lord too now. And I became friends with Chuck Missler. He was in Post Falls. I was in Coeur d'Alene.

And when I told Chuck that I'm going to have Dave Hunt, he's like, Hey, Dave's a good friend of mine. I took Dave Hunt and Chuck Missler out to lunch, and you should have seen me. It was it was like this, like [Gazing in awe].

It was right at the time when Dave Hunt was writing his book titled, "What Love is This?" And it was a refuting, a rebuttal against the doctrine of Calvinism and predestination. And he sent Chuck Missler and I a part of the manuscript and wanted to ask us about a couple of verses in Acts which really opened my eyes to this. And I spent quite a bit of time on this.

And keep in mind, I'm young in the ministry. I'm not young in the Lord at the time. I was also younger at the time, but I was young in the ministry. And this was so helpful to me, and it just, it just settled it for me.

Here's an explanation which I know might be seen as an oversimplification as it relates to predestination. Peter says, God chooses those whom He foreknew.

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Don't let the enemy complicate it. God knows the end from the beginning. He's all-knowing, omniscient, He knows everything. There's nothing He doesn't know.

He knew me before the foundations of the earth. He knew me before I was formed in my mother's womb. In fact, He knew who my mother would be before she was even born. And He knew the day that I would be born. And He also knew the day that I would choose Him. He foreknew the day I would be born-again. He already knows the choice I'm going to make.

Wait a minute, so free will, yeah, right?

Yeah. Talk about spoiler alert.

What's your decision going to be?

Oh, God already knows. He's already seen the ending. He already knows what decision I'm going to make. He foreknows everything because He knows everything.

Why are you yelling?

Because. (Chuckling) He knows!

Couldn't you've just said that?

I suppose I probably could have. But when you're going through severe, extreme, intense pain and suffering in the midst of that trial, you need to know that He knows.

Can you imagine, God in heaven being caught off guard? I mean, we pray like He was surprised by what happened. God, did You see what happened?

Could you imagine God going, When did this happen?

[Laughter]

And we pray like we're informing God. God, you know on Tuesday, blah, blah, blah.

And God's going, before I even created the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that in them is, I knew that you would be going through this. I know. I know everything. I foreknew it.

Well, how does that give me hope?

Because He foreknew that I would choose Him, so He chooses me. He chose me. I'm feeling pretty special now.

You know how it is when you're a kid in school, and they're picking teams? I used to hate that. You know, you've got the two captains, right? And then here's all of us. I wasn't just the last one to get picked, I actually never got picked. It's kind of like, oh, okay, I guess we're stuck with you. Come on over. But they would pick who they wanted on their team. And of course, you know...

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Is this a... anyway, enough of my problems. But I'm scarred; obviously, this is an issue for me, I need to deal with it, but....

No, you know what? He picked me. He chose me. And it wasn't like, Oh, well, I guess I'll have to settle for this one. No, I was His first pick, first round on the draft, just so you know. Yeah, first round, first one.

Why?

Because He foreknew that I would choose Him. So He chose me.

That should be a game-changer. If God foreknew me and foreknew everything that would happen to me, then wouldn't it stand to reason that He's got it under control?

God, do You see what they're doing to Christians?

I know.

God, why are You allowing it?

Oh, you'll see, you'll see.

And that actually ties into the number 3 in the second part of verse 2. And it's that grace and peace is multiplied.

I don't know if it's possible to overstate the importance of what Peter says here because he actually, in a way, takes it a step further than the Apostle Paul.

You know how the Apostle Paul always said grace and peace, grace and peace, grace and peace?

Well, Peter says grace and peace be multiplied, as some of your translations render it. In other words, he's, it's not just grace and peace. It's like grace and peace times 10 to the 10th power, multiplied many times over in abundance, exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond anything you could ever...

(Chuckling)

Okay, you got the point.

In other words, I'm not just going to add what you need because right now you need grace and definitely peace. I'm going to give you grace, "**My grace is sufficient,**" and I'm going to give you peace, "**Not as the world gives.**"

The peace that I give is not the same as the world's because the peace that the world has to offer is predicated upon what's going on in your life. The peace that I come to give is irrelevant. Everything in your world can be falling apart, but the peace that I give you is not predicated upon what's going on in your life. The peace that I give you is going to transcend, surpass human understanding and comprehension.

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And the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:8 or 7, 6-8 actually, says that it is that grace that surpasses human understanding that keeps your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. The peace of God from the God of peace. I'm not just going to give you a peace; I'm going to add a little bit. And actually, with what you're going through, I'm actually going to multiply it.

You need multiplied peace and multiplied grace. There are those times in our lives when God, who knows, will multiply exactly what we need at the time that we need it. It's ours.

Grace: I'll take it.

Peace: Where do I sign? I need peace.

It's yours, multiplied many times over.

Well, our fourth one is in verse 3, and it's that ours is a living hope in Christ. Now, I want to spend just a little bit of time on this because here, Peter is emphasizing God's great mercy, and it's kind of like He just burst forth with this praise be to God in the mercy that He's given us in this new birth into a living hope! Oh, it's not just hope. It's a living hope.

Why a living hope?

Because He's alive! Because Jesus rose again from the dead, the resurrection of Jesus Christ defeating death. This is a living hope, not a dying hope. In other words, the world, the hope that the world has ahh, it's kind of - we say hope is fading away.

It is?

Not mine; I got a living hope in Jesus Christ. Yeah, it'll never fade away. It'll never go away. It'll never be lost. This is a living hope that is mine in Christ.

Should I choose?

It's my choice. Because again, we have that choice before us when adversity strikes, and adversity strikes, those trials hit. Now the choice is ours.

How am I going to respond?

It's my choice. Am I going to freak out? Am I going to start worrying and fearing and fretting? Or am I just going to trust Him, put my hope in Him?

Because if I do, then that hope is a living hope that is mine because I'm born-again by the Spirit of God into this living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Pardon me. This is the last one. Boy, I'm so reluctant to cough these days. Oh, I'm good, I'm fine. I just want you to know.

I want to spend the remainder of our time on this fifth and final one and verses 4 and 5. And it's that of an eternal inheritance that awaits.

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Now, we actually talked about these two verses in a recent Prophecy Update. And the reason we did is because it packs together this powerful truth concerning our hope, should we choose. I don't know how it's possible for this to be written in any stronger or clearer terms. But he's talking about this inheritance.

Did you know that you have an inheritance? And, oh, by the way, this inheritance that you stand to inherit, no attorney is going to touch it. Nobody is going to get their hands on it. And the reason is because it's shielded and preserved by His power until He comes. And if we choose hope, then we have awaiting us this eternal inheritance.

Now, how does that encourage me and give me hope?

Because when you have that to look forward to, it will make whatever you're going through easier to get through because you have that to look forward to.

I have an inheritance.

You do? How much?

Ho, did I tell you about that place on Kailua beach?

[Laughter]

Okay, that's the last time I'm going to refer to that. By the way, I want you to know I repented, and God has forgiven me of the... I mean, the inheritance that awaits me, that is preserved and shielded for me is going to make all of this just pshhh....

Again, the Apostle Paul - you can't even compare the sufferings, the trials, as difficult, as severe, as extreme as they are, with the glory that awaits, the inheritance that awaits. Get your eyes off of that and put your eyes on Him.

Isaiah the prophet writes, by the Spirit, that, **"He will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."**

Again, this comports with Philippians Chapter 4 where the Apostle Paul in talking about worry and fear says you can worry about no thing if you thank Him for anything and pray about everything. You're worry about no thing. And that's when the God of peace will give you the peace of God. And then think on these things. Then he starts listing these things:

Whatever things are pure, of a good report, noble. Think on these things. You'll be amazed at the transformation that takes place. Because **"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."**

So if I'm only thinking about the difficulty I'm in, well, no wonder. Here's another one too that is so dorky, but I love it. I'm dorky, so I guess that's why I love it.

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But you've heard that saying: When your eyes are on yourself, you're depressed. When your eyes are on others, you're distressed. But when your eyes are on the Lord, you're blessed. And I told you it was dorky. But it's true, isn't it?

I mean, you know, these - look within yourself. No, actually, don't do that. Don't do that. It's very depressing. And if your eyes are on yourself, you'll be the most depressed person in the world. And don't look at others either because that's even worse. Because now you go from being depressed to being distressed. Put your eyes on the Lord.

Is that not in whom our hope is? I mean, He's our hope. And we call it the blessed hope, the appearing, the rapture. It's our - and by the way, when you say - we talked about this in the Update, too.

Just real quick; we're almost done. I appreciate your patience.

When we say hope, it's not like, oh, I sure hope. No. In the English language, the best word that you can come up with is (Coughing) pardon me, hope. I hope I don't keep coughing.

But it carries with it the idea of that's your hope, your only hope. You will get out of this. Because that's who your hope is in. Jesus is our hope. It's a foregone conclusion. It's just a matter of time.

And I'm going to bring it to an end because, as one said, when the sermon is over, you should close. So Kaponu, why don't you come on up? Why don't you stand up?

[Applause]

Oh, boy, That goes for the Lord!

Father in heaven, thank You! Thank You for Your word, Your word. Thank You for this word and this hope. Thank You that we can choose hope. Thank You for inspiring the apostle Peter to write this for such a time as this, because I know there are many that need to hear this because they're just hanging on.

Lord, thank You that this is not our final destination. We're not going to stay here very long. We're just passing through. And then if we only knew what awaits us, it would make all of this just go away, pale in comparison.

Lord, thank You, in Jesus' name, amen.