

God Will Get You Through What You're Going Through
1 Peter 1:1-12

Have you heard any good news lately?

The economy is faltering. We are sinking lower and lower on the educational ladder. There is a continued increase in violent crime. Our world is in a mess! Good news is hard to find in today's sin-cursed world.

When we read the headlines happening in our world, and when we think of our own problems and burdens, it can cause us to want to give up. Sometimes, we are guilty of allowing the world around us to steal the joy that God has placed within our hearts.

For the next few weeks, we're reading 1 Peter and answering some of the questions that this book asks and answers. The author is Simon Peter, the Disciple of Jesus. People love Peter because there is something about him we can identify with. He was just a normal guy.

Peter writes this book for people who are in the midst of suffering. They don't understand why they're going through it or what they should do about it. They could use some good news. Peter is going to give them truths that combat the lies they have been living with. The Bible writers don't hide themselves from this question of suffering. They are fully aware of the problem that suffering presents to faith in a good God.

We have an assumption that good people get rewarded and bad people get punished. We live in a world where innocent people suffer. Children die of starvation. The wicked go unpunished and the good unrewarded. Peter is not only aware of this question. He and the people he's writing to are living it.

Peter talks about the "fiery" trials they are going through. That might have been literal. Some Roman emperors were known to dip political prisoners in oil and impale them on poles and light them on fire. We know for a fact this happened to many Christians around Peter's time. Genocide was a part of the Roman system. Whole families—men, women, and children would get slaughtered on the whim of a Roman emperor.

In the first verse, Peter addresses his letter to "*the exiles scattered.*" He is writing to Jewish believers who have been forced to leave their homeland and have found themselves dispersed into other parts of the world. These people, because of their beliefs and faith, are being subjected to persecutions and sufferings that you and I cannot even begin to imagine. Peter is writing to them, against this backdrop of pain and suffering, to encourage them. He is reminding them that, in the midst of their trials, there are some reasons for real rejoicing!

One cause for rejoicing lies in the word "*exiles.*" The word refers to one "*who travels through a strange land.*"

Peter is reminding us that we are not home yet! We are merely strangers passing through a foreign land. One day, the journey will end, and they will be home! While we are not being persecuted today, there are still battles to fight, valleys to cross, dark nights to endure, and pain to suffer. In the midst of it all, it is easy to lose perspective. It is easy to forget who we are in Jesus and where we are going because of Jesus.

There is a story of a boy who found a fresh start. In his book, Dance of Hope, Bill Fry has a story about a boy he tutored at the University of Colorado. One day Bill asked the student how he became blind. The student named John described an accident that happened in his teenage years. He told Bill the accident took not just his sight, but also his hope. He described how he became bitter and angry. Angry at the world. Angry at God. Angry at everyone around him. He figured since he had no future, he wouldn't lift a finger on his own behalf. He would just let others wait on him. He told how he shut his bedroom door and refused to come out. He would only come out for meals. His response really surprised Bill because John displayed no bitterness, no anger. He asked John to explain the change, and John credited his father. Weary of the pity party and ready for his son to get on with life, one day he reminded John of the coming winter. He told him to mount the storm windows. He

told him to do the work before he got home, “or else,” the dad insisted. He then slammed the door on the way out, and this angered John. It angered him greatly. Muttering and cursing, he made his way down to the garage. He found everything he needed. The tools, the step ladder, the weather stripping. He kept muttering to himself, “They are gonna be sorry when I fall off the ladder.” But he didn’t fall off the ladder. Little by little he inched around the house. He finished the chore, and he completed the dad’s goal. John began to realize he really could work, and he began to reconstruct his life. Years later, he learned something else about that day. He shared this detail with Bill that his blind eyes had missed it that day. He discovered that, at no time while he was placing those shutters on the house that day, had his father more than 4-5 feet from his side. The father had no intention of letting his son fall. Your Father has no intention of letting you fall either. You can’t always see Him, but He is present.

“You are shielded by God’s power.” 1 Peter 1:5

“God, who is able to keep you from falling.” Jude 23

“When you pass through the waters I will be with you.” Isaiah 43:2

God gets us through things. “Through” may be one of God’s favorite words. He gets us through the Red Sea. He gets us through the valley of the shadow of death. He gets us through the wilderness. He gets us through things, and He will get you through what you are going through. It will not be painless. John didn’t get rid of his bitterness overnight. Your unhappy marriage won’t be happy overnight. He pledges to transform our pain into a higher purpose. He will redeem this hardship into something new. It is our responsibility to not give up. We have to believe for one more day, one more hour. Pray one more prayer. Take one more breath. You have to lift your head to heaven and say, “Lord, I can’t see You, but I believe you can see me. I’m going to trust You because I believe You are going to help me begin again.”

1 Peter serves as a reminder of Whose we are and where we are going.

1. We Are Saved By Grace.

“Praise 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.” 1 Peter 1:3

Peter begins their thinking with God’s mercy. That’s a good place to start. A lot of times when we are in pain, the assumption is. “Why are all these bad things happening to us good people?”

The Bible takes the opposite approach. This world is under a curse. Peter reminds them all of God’s goodness and mercy. Religion says, “We are good, so God owes us.” The gospel is, “We are evil, but God has been merciful, so we owe Him.”

In mercy, He has caused to us to be born again to a living hope. Hope is what you look forward to on the other side of pain. It’s what tells you everything is going to be okay, that it will all be worth it.

If you are saved, it is not because you did anything to deserve it! The first two verses are filled with the truth that salvation is a work of pure grace. Peter says: We Have Been Chosen By God. We Have Been Called By God. We Have Been Cleansed By God. The precious blood that Jesus shed on Calvary has the power to wash away the vilest of sins! The blood of Jesus is the only hope the sinner has of being cleansed. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

It was the grace of God that led Jesus to Calvary, to die there on the cross for our sins. (Isaiah 53:1-12) It was grace that allowed Jesus to take upon Himself the sins of the world. (2 Corinthians 5:21) It was grace that parted

His parched lips to utter three remarkable words that will ever reverberate down the halls of time, “*It is finished!*” (John 19:30)

That blood has been shed, and any sinner who hears the call of the Spirit of God, can come and have his sins washed whiter than snow in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is nothing less than a work of pure grace!

Peter tells us that God’s plan in all of this was to effect a “*new birth*” (1 Peter 1:3) in all those who come to Him. When we were born the first time, we were born into the family of Adam. This first birth resulted in us all being born with a defect. Not a defect of the flesh, but of the spirit. We are all born spiritually dead. (Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1)

We were born with a nature that is pulled toward sin and away from God. (Ephesians 2:2-3) All humans are born into this world as vile, dirty sinners! As a result of our sins, we are separated from God (Isaiah 59:2), and we are destined to suffer a second death in a place called Hell (Psalm 9:17), a place where sinners really do not die, but where they experience eternal separation from the presence of God and the awful pain of unquenchable fire forever. (Mark 9:44, 46, 48)

Jesus lived and died to change that! When He died on the cross, He paid the sin debt for every person who will receive Him by faith! When a sinner repents and comes to Jesus, that sinner is instantly transformed into a saint. He gets a brand new start. (2 Corinthians 5:17) All of his sins are forever forgiven. (Colossians 2:13-14) He is immediately adopted into the family of God (1 John 3:1-3), and his name is written in the Lamb’s book of life! (Luke 10:20)

Peter tells us that the result of all this work by God is a “*living hope*,” (1 Peter 1:3) a living confidence that we have a bright future! Our hope is a “*living hope*” that is *sure, certain, and real*, as opposed to the *deceptive, empty, false hope the world offers*.

Many people in our day are pinning their hopes on their 401K. Many have their hope in the stock market. Some have their hope in their health or their family. This is a hope based in wishful thinking! When the New Testament uses the word “*hope*,” it does not refer to a wish or desire. It means, “*a confident assurance based on the Word of God and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that produces an excited response.*”

When we speak of our hope of heaven, we are not talking about “*pie in the sky, by and by.*” We are talking about a sure thing! We are talking about something that is more solid than the ground under our feet. We are referring to something that is settled by the inerrant, infallible, Word of God!

2. We Are Slated For Glory.

Peter says that we are the recipients of an “*inheritance.*” A Guaranteed Place. An inheritance is something left behind by someone who has died. It is a gift to those still living from one who isn’t. In our case, we have an inheritance provided by One Who died, but Who now lives. (Revelation 1:18) As children of God, we still share in the inheritance of God. (Romans 8:17) We are mentioned in Christ’s last will and testament, (John 17:22-24) and we will share that inheritance with the One Who gave it to us in glory some day! Don’t worry about Heaven being a myth as some might say in our day. (John 14:1-3)

Peter uses three terms to describe that inheritance to which we are headed in a very positive fashion.

- It Cannot Be Destroyed.

“*Into an inheritance that can never perish.*” 1 Peter 1:4

People in Peter's day had seen the Roman legions destroy city after city. He tells them about a land that is beyond the reach of all invaders.

- It Cannot Be Defiled.

"Into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil." 1 Peter 1:4

It is not *"spoiled or stained."* Heaven, unlike this world which has been wrecked and ruined by sin, is untouchable by defilement and by the things which have destroyed the world. None of the evils that mar earth will rear their ugly heads in Heaven! Things like death, sin, Satan, suffering, troubles, will quickly pass from our vocabularies when we reach that land of eternal bliss and glory!

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:4

- It Cannot Decay.

"Into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you." 1 Peter 1:4

It cannot wear away. All the great sites and possessions of this world are subject to decay. Your home, your car, your body, everything you see around you is in the process of decaying and fading away. Not Heaven! That city will require no repairs, no fixing, and no restoration. It will never wear away!

In New Testament times, many people grew olive trees. It took 23 years for a tree to mature to fruit-bearing age. These trees were often left as an inheritance, because the olives could bring large sums of money. However, the olive trees were always destroyed by invading armies, thus taking away the next generation's inheritance and ability to provide for itself. Peter tells us that, unlike an inheritance here on the earth that may pass away through theft, mismanagement or decay, what we have in Heaven is "kept." It means *"reserved."* It also means *"guarded."* It could be translated *"Kept under lock and key."*

Our heavenly home is as secure as if our feet were already planted on the golden streets, as if our eyes could already behold the Savior's face, as if we were already living in our glorified body! Heaven isn't a myth! It is a reality! It is a present reality being guarded by our Heavenly Father, waiting for the day when we will arrive home to receive it unto ourselves.

3. We Are Shielded By God's Power.

"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." 1 Peter 1:5

The power that keeps us resides within us, the Holy Spirit! The reason we are secure rests in the fact that we are not liable for keeping our own salvation. The Bible is clear when it says here that we are *"kept by the power of God."* It is the dynamic power of the Almighty God that does the keeping. If it were up to you and me to do it, we would surely lose the fight. However, our salvation rests in the power of God.

Peter closes verse 5 by reminding his readers that they are partakers of a salvation that extends beyond the turmoil of today. He tells them that their faith in Christ has secured for them an eternal hope that will culminate in their safe arrival in Heaven at the end of the journey.

Peter is saying that trials and pain expose where our hope is. For many of us, our hope is simply that our circumstances will change. One day, I'll get the recognition I deserve. One day people will like me. One day I'll

have a good job. One day I'll be married. When it looks like you won't ever get that, you despair. You give up. You become bitter.

Peter says we have a living hope...

There is our fixed reference point: something glorious, wonderful, beyond the scope of this world. An inheritance and a hope that death and disease cannot touch. Something that is so glorious it makes all the pain worth it.

Peter says, "and I see this inheritance through the resurrection of Jesus." Think for a minute about what the resurrection of Jesus meant for Peter. Peter's darkest hour had been when Jesus died. That's when everything fell apart. He had based his whole life on the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, but now Jesus has died. That Friday and Saturday was a time of utter despair. Peter is so disappointed that he denies even knowing Jesus. Then Sunday comes, and he goes to the tomb, and it is empty. Then Jesus appears to him, and His sadness turns to joy; his despair is turned into triumph, and he realizes that the whole time, God had a plan. Friday and Saturday were painful, but there was a Sunday coming that reversed all of the pain of Friday and Saturday.

Peter sees that we all, right now, are living in a kind of Saturday. We are exiles, but that time is brief, and the joy of resurrection Sunday is coming!

In The Lord of the Rings, J.R.R. Tolkien described the resurrection as a time when "every sad thing becomes untrue." There is a great Sunday morning in eternity where all sad things come untrue. You are reunited with a lost child. Disease is taken away. There is no more pain or crying, and God wipes away every tear.

Peter saw in the resurrection, where it looked like the worst day and God was the least in control, God was most in control. The greatest day in human history was the day of the crucifixion, but to them it looked like the worst. It wasn't just that God won in the end, it was that God used the apparent defeats as a part of His plan.

What if you saw your life through the lens of the cross and the resurrection? That there was a glorious Sunday morning coming when all sad things would come untrue, an inheritance death and disease could never touch, and then you see how even the most painful parts of your life were working toward that end? What does that give you?

"In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials." 1 Peter 1:6

Some of us can't have joy in the midst of bad circumstances because our joy is only in certain circumstances. Other Christians seem to deal with pain by never really feeling it. You walk around with a surreal look on your face, feeling chipper. "God is good, all the time. Let go and let God. Don't worry, God will put a rainbow on that dark cloud!"

"These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 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 end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls." 1 Peter 1:7-9