

HOLDING ON TO HOPE

BY DR. JERRY VINES

By the Book™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study
Series from Jerry Vines Ministries
2295 Towne Lake Parkway
Suite 116 #249
Woodstock, GA 30189

Let's Begin

One of the most excruciating ministry moments a pastor faces involves presiding over a funeral of a suicide victim. The family grieves because they lost something precious—their loved one. They grieve even more because they see the suicide as a needless loss, something entirely preventable. They are ridden with guilt. We wonder how a person gets so low and so empty, that he or she would lose all sense of dignity and self-worth. The answer lies in the loss of hope.

Luke gives us a vivid picture of lost hope as he describes the final journey of the Apostle Paul. On their way to Rome, Paul and his companions (including Luke) suffered shipwreck. Just prior to God's miraculous rescue, Luke records in stark detail what they believed to be the end. He writes, "And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (Acts 27:19-20, italics added). When hope leaves, expectation for rescue completely vanishes. And, as we will see from 1 Peter, only God is big enough to rescue us in our hopeless condition.

As we study chapter one together, we will observe hope from perhaps the brightest light in the New Testament. The Apostle Peter explains many aspects of hope's necessity. As we make our way through this study, we will focus on the questions below which serve as the outline for our journey:

- I. Who Needs Hope? (vv. 1-2)**
- II. What is Hope? (vv. 3-9)**
- III. What Good is Hope? (vv. 10-21)**
- IV. How do we Keep Hope? (vv. 22-25; cp. 2:1-3)**

I. Who Needs Hope? (vv. 1-2)

The fact is we all need hope as we illustrated above. Hope is essential not only to life. Hope is essential to a happy life. When we are in the tunnel of tragedy, hope points to the light at the end. When temptation suggests to us to quit the race, hope drives us to run a few more laps. Our living with bad decisions becomes offset by a vivacious, Biblical hope which reveals God's remedy for horrible circumstances. Hope is like a telescope which brings God's promises into full view to the eyes of faith. Hear clearly the Apostle Peter, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God

the Father,
t h r o u g h
sanctification
of the
Spirit, unto
obedience and
sprinkling of
the blood of
Jesus Christ:
Grace unto
you, and peace,
be multiplied"
(vv. 1-2). The
Apostle looks

*Hope is like a
telescope which
brings God's
promises into
full view to the
eyes of faith.*

at hope and the people who need hope from two different vantage points.

First, Peter speaks of our *earthly position*—"strangers scattered." All "throughout" the empire, believers took off in all directions. Hence, he says, we are "strangers," a word carrying the idea of foreigner or alien who has but a temporary residency. For Peter, our earthly dwelling places are mere tents—temporary campsites—because, as Christians, our citizenship belongs in heaven (cp. Phil. 3:20). Hence, we should be aware of our pilgrim-nature at every juncture of our lives, especially during intense persecution.

In addition, as "strangers" who walk this globe, we remain "scattered" throughout its terrain. The term



translated “scattered” means “to sow through” and has been used to refer to not only the farmer who scatters his seed expecting a harvest (Matt. 13:38), but also of the Jewish “Diaspora” (cp. Acts 8:1-4). Nevertheless, while we are “aliens” we are also “ambassadors” for Christ offering a message of hope to the hopeless. As we remain “scattered” throughout this world, we bring people to the Lord of hope. Echoing the prophet Jeremiah, Paul referred to the peoples of the world as “having no hope” (Jer. 2:25; Eph. 2: 12; 1 Thess. 4:13). Who needs hope? Every person on this planet!

*Believers
cannot be tied
to an earthly
perspective.*

Second, Peter refers to our *heavenly position*—“elect.” Believers cannot be tied to an earthly perspective. Being focused so much on temporal matters our Lord addressed in His popular sermon, “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on” (Matt. 6:25; 26-34). Our heavenly citizenship must neither be compromised nor neglected.

Peter briefly exposes the believer to a Biblical doctrine which has caused some people much unnecessary confusion. He calls believers the “elect” of God, “according to the foreknowledge...” of Him Who elected us. Furthermore, he mentions the *means* through which we are elected—“through sanctification of the Spirit”—as well as the end or purpose of our election (that is, “unto obedience”). And, while Peter does not fully expound upon the full process of election, he does indicate much we may consider. Also, we should note that when it comes to understanding the mind of God in election and predestination, every attempt is bound to fail if we expect to understand it completely. We no more may understand all there is to know about predestination than we can know all there is to know about the Trinity.

Reflection Connection

If you have been “elected” by God, does that mean you have no responsibility to believe and trust in Jesus for salvation? Explain.

The great Baptist statesman, Hershel Hobbs once noted that if we could adequately define God and fully comprehend God, the god we think we are describing is not the God of the Bible! God is revealed to us as surpassing our ability to comprehend. Therefore, we should not become confused when we consider the reality that we just cannot comprehend how God eternally works out these mysterious details. It should be enough for us to trust Him even when we do not understand Him or precisely how He eternally operates in His created universe.

Even so, there are some truths about election Peter reveals. First, we are elect “according to the foreknowledge of God.” The Greek term translated “foreknowledge” is *prognosis*, which means “to know beforehand.” Peter reaches back into eternity and explicitly asserts God *knew us beforehand!* “Foreknowledge” is specifically a part of God’s *omniscience*, which refers to God’s exhaustive knowledge of past, present, and future. God knew in eternity you would be saved. When you trusted Christ it did not take God by surprise. He determined to save each and every one who believes in Him and determined it in eternity past.

Additionally, Peter speaks of the “sanctification of the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit works in you, setting you apart, and applying the blood of Jesus to your sinful



soul—“sprinkling of the blood.” Our hope stems directly from the active work of God’s Spirit in our lives. Without Him, we would not experience the hope of His calling in Christ Jesus.

II. What is Hope? (vv. 3-9)

Peter tells us hope is designed for every soul. God is not willing for any to perish, but all to possess eternal life. But, what exactly is hope? Peter describes hope when he writes: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (vv. 3-5).

According to Peter, our hope is based on Jesus Christ and His resurrection. Hope begins and ends with Jesus. In Him, we have a *living hope* (vv. 3-5). While the source of our hope is the resurrection, the substance of our hope is our “inheritance” which, according to Peter is “incorruptible.” No decay is possible for the inheritance we have from Christ. Moreover, it is “undefiled” which simply means it is not polluted and will not fade. Hence, our hope is “reserved in heaven,” the security which is guaranteed by the Lord Himself. How is this accomplished? God keeps us by His power through our faith.

Reflection Connection

When you express “I hope so” are you not expressing a form of doubt? What is the difference between “I hope so” and “My hope is in God”? Explain.

In addition, since our faith is an enduring faith, our hope is an enduring hope. Note Peter’s words, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (vv. 6-7). Though we all face mental heaviness and distress, our trials lead us to “praise and honour and glory.” Hope establishes us and pushes us to trust in God during tough times. Peter reminds his readers of his relationship with Jesus in the days of His flesh (vv. 8-9). Though his readers had not seen Jesus, Peter certainly had. Neither have we seen Jesus in the flesh, yet our hope remains established through the apostolic witness to which Peter testifies. We are captivated by His love. Little wonder we have a sure faith expressed by “joy unspeakable.”

III. What Good is Hope? (vv. 10-21)

Peter keeps coming back to the theme of hope in the salvation only God can give. While the Triune God works to make salvation a reality (v. 3), hope (along with faith and love) brings salvation into our experience (vv. 4-9). And, Peter makes perfectly clear the salvation we have from Him is applicable not only in eternity future, but also in the past as well as the present. He writes, “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently...Searching what,



or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify... Unto whom it was revealed...unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven..." (vv. 10-12).

The Apostle Peter alludes to the prophetic expectation saturated in the Old Testament. Clearly the inspiration of the prophetic utterances is implied in this passage. The Holy Spirit revealed centuries before Christ, that the Messiah would come, would both suffer and die but be raised from the dead. Hence, the inspired Word became as it were a Divine revelation from God Himself. Furthermore, the apostolic proclamation became successor to the inspired utterances of the Old Testament prophets. Peter records the sufferings of Jesus as an eyewitness (cp. 5:1), and he shares the experiences of the risen Christ. Indeed the redemptive hope the Apostles preached was a record of events even angelic beings were curious to investigate (v. 12c).

Hope also demands.

Hope, therefore, if even curious to angels, must bear some benefit to its possessors. Therefore, what good is hope? Hope *inspires*. Peter says, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end" (v. 13). We must live beyond the present. Hope pushes us to embrace the future—"hope to the end." Hope also *demand*s (vv. 14-16). Since we are "obedient children" our goal cannot be to "fashion" ourselves after this world but to Christ. We must "be holy" for God is holy (v. 16). Hope furthermore *examines*. Hope prods us to examine our personal life, making adjustments when we do not live up to Scriptural standards. Why? Because, as Peter asserts, since we will all be judged, we must "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (v. 17).

Finally, hope *redeems* (vv. 18-21). While it is true we look ahead to our examination, we look back to our redemption. From what did our hope in Christ redeem us? According to Peter, "from vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers" (v. 18). Nor does Peter leave out precisely how believers are redeemed, "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot...Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." (vv. 19-21).

IV. How do we Keep Hope? (vv. 22-25; cp. 2:1-3)

The Apostle ends this section with one of the strongest statements in the Bible on inspiration. He writes, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. ...The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (vv. 22-25).

Hope stays alive in us because the Word of God came to us. According to Peter, we were "born again...by the word of God." The Bible is like seed. It seems small and insignificant until it is planted in good soil. It then creates new life. The Scripture is the tool the Holy Spirit uses to regenerate our souls (cp. James 1:18). Without the Word of God, no one can be saved. Granted, one does not

Reflection Connection

Is the way we view the inspiration of Scripture a significant doctrine to maintain? Why or why not?



have to have a Bible in hand or read from the Bible itself. However, the true Word must be spoken else the Holy Spirit has no seed to plant in the person's heart.

The Word not only *saves*, the Word also *sanctifies* (vv. 22-25). Peter speaks of being "purified...laying aside." The Bible is a cleansing agent used by God. Scripture is God's soap to wash us up. On the one hand, God does the *initial* cleansing, the beginning of sanctification. Our souls are "purified" through obedience initiated by the Holy Spirit. However, on the other hand, *individual* cleansing is initiated inwardly in our hearts. In other words, we are not passive in the process but very active. We are to "lay aside" or "put off" as if the old life and lifestyle were garments to be forsaken. The Word of God is the instrument He uses to save and sanctify His people.

Finally, not only does God save and sanctify us through His Word, He also *sustains* us through His Word. Because the Word endures forever, it becomes the means through which God sustains us now and throughout eternity. Our hope is kept because God is a God of His Word and always will be!

Golden Greek Nugget

Peter speaks of our Lord Jesus, "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (v. 20). The Greek term translated "was foreordained" is *proginosko*, a term similar to "foreknowledge" (v. 2). It means "to know beforehand" and has the idea of selecting in advance. Even before the creation of the world, Jesus was "selected in advance" to die for our sins. What a mighty God we serve! What a mighty Savior He is!

Wrap Up

While Paul may be characterized as the Apostle of faith because of his deep understanding of doctrine, and John as the Apostle of love because of his focus on love in his writings, Peter may be characterized as the Apostle of hope. Hope keeps us going in the right direction and sustains us when the going gets rough. Hope pushes us to look always to better days ahead and the deliverance our God will surely bring.

