

1 Peter

Week 1: Living Hope Through the Resurrection -- 1 Peter 1:1–12

Picture a small group of believers gathered in a borrowed room somewhere in the hills of Asia Minor. They are far from home, and a good many of them never really felt at home anywhere. They are foreigners, resident aliens, people the wider culture eyes with suspicion. Some have lost work since they began following Jesus. Some have lost family. The evening is cold, the future looks colder, and the rumor of harder days ahead hangs over the gathering. Then a letter arrives, carried by a man named Silvanus, and someone unrolls it and begins to read aloud. The first words out of Peter's pen are not a warning and not a complaint. They are praise. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" And the cold room fills with something these exiles had almost forgotten they were holding: hope.

Peter is writing to scattered Christians who are being pressed on every side, and the great theme he sets before them in these opening verses is a living hope. It is a hope born from an empty tomb, an inheritance kept safe in heaven where no thief and no decay can reach it, a salvation that is being guarded by the power of God. He tells them that the trials burning through their lives are not random and not pointless. They are a refiner's fire, and the gold being purified is their own faith, a faith more precious to God than anything that comes out of the ground. These are not abstractions to Peter. He had warmed his hands at a fire on the night he denied his Lord, and he had stood, weeks later, looking into the face of the risen Christ who forgave him. He knows what living hope costs and what it is worth.

You may know something of exile yourself. Maybe it is the quiet ache of not quite belonging, the sense that the values you hold are slipping out of step with the world around you. Maybe it is grief, or a diagnosis, or a season when everything you leaned on seems to be giving way. Peter does not begin by fixing the circumstances of his readers. He begins by lifting their eyes. Before he says a single word about how they should live, he reminds them who they are and what they have. He wants them to know, deep in their bones, that the worst thing that can happen to them is not the last thing that will happen to them.

That is where this study begins. Not with a list of rules, but with a tomb that could not hold its occupant, and a hope that is alive because the One it rests on is alive. Read these twelve verses slowly. Let Peter do for you what he did for those weary believers in that borrowed room. Let him lift your eyes.

Group Discussion: Peter opens his letter by reminding scattered, suffering believers that they have been "born again to a living hope" (v. 3). When life feels uncertain or painful, where do people most often go looking for hope, and what tends to happen to those hopes over time? How is the living hope Peter describes different from the hopes the world offers?

Personal Reflection: Peter writes to people who feel like exiles, far from home and out of place in their own world. When have you felt like a stranger because of your faith in Christ? How did you respond in that moment, and how might the promise of a heavenly inheritance change the way you carry that feeling the next time it comes?

Read 1 Peter 1:1–12

Study Questions

1. Peter says that God “has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (v. 3). What makes this hope a “living” hope rather than mere optimism or wishful thinking, and how does the resurrection of Jesus serve as its foundation?
2. Peter is writing to people who have “been grieved by various trials” (v. 6), and yet he calls them to rejoice. Think about the trial that weighs on you most heavily right now. Where have you been tempted to anchor your hope in something that cannot survive that trial, and what would it look like to anchor it instead in the risen Christ?
3. The inheritance Peter describes is “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (vv. 4–5). What does this teach about the security of the Christian’s hope, and what does the phrase “guarded through faith” tell us about our own part in that security?
4. Peter addresses his readers as “elect exiles” whose true home is elsewhere (v. 1). In what specific area of your life are you living as though this world is your permanent home? What would actually change this week if you lived as a citizen of heaven simply passing through?
5. Peter compares the testing of faith to gold refined by fire (v. 7). What does this image teach us about the purpose God has in allowing trials, and why does Peter say that tested faith is “more precious than gold that perishes”?
6. Peter says that trials come “for a little while, if necessary” (v. 6). When you are in the middle of a hard season, do you tend to experience it as meaningless suffering, or as something God is using to refine you? Name one trial, past or present, in which you can now begin to see God at work.
7. Peter writes, “Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (vv. 8–9). What does this passage teach about the nature of saving faith, and how can we genuinely love and trust a Christ we have never seen with our eyes?
8. Peter speaks of loving Jesus and rejoicing in Him with a joy that words cannot capture. Be honest about your own heart for a moment. Is your relationship with Christ marked by real love and joy, or has it quietly cooled into routine and duty? What is one thing that has dimmed your joy, and what might begin to rekindle it?

9. Peter says his readers are chosen “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood” (v. 2), and that the prophets of old searched and inquired carefully about the salvation now revealed (vv. 10–12). How does this passage describe God’s eternal plan of salvation unfolding across Scripture, and what does it mean that we are chosen “according to foreknowledge” and “for obedience” to Jesus Christ?
10. Look back across the whole passage. Peter takes a group of suffering exiles and lifts their eyes to a living hope, a secure inheritance, a refining purpose hidden inside their trials, and a love for Christ that fills them with joy. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from 1 Peter 1:1–12 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: 1 Corinthians 15:12–22, the resurrection of Christ as the ground of all Christian hope; John 3:1–8, being born again of water and the Spirit; Romans 8:16–25, the inheritance and the hope for which we patiently wait; James 1:2–4, trials that produce steadfastness in us; 1 Peter 1:22–25, born again through the living and abiding word of God