

1 Peter: An Alien's Hope

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Date: 10 August 2014

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[0:00] Good morning. My name is Eric. I'm the youth director here at Watermark Church, and like you heard, today we are starting a new series on 1 Peter. And we'll be in 1 Peter for a few weeks, and it'll sort of lead us through the fall, where we're going to be looking at what is the church?

As a church, what should we be doing? How should we be living? We're kicking it off today with looking at 1 Peter. Since we're starting a new book, I figured it'd be good to give a little background on the book of Peter.

It was written by the Apostle Peter. He was one of Jesus' closest friends. He was one of the guys, one of the 12 guys who followed Jesus around everywhere he went in his ministry.

And out of those 12, he sort of had this special place where he got to see things that even some of the other 12 didn't get to see. But on the night when Jesus was put on trial right before being killed, he famously denied three times that he had ever met Jesus.

After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus reinstated him, and he affirmed three times that he does actually love Jesus. And from the early days of the church, from the day of Pentecost when the church started, Peter was one of the major leaders in the church.

[1:12] Anyone who had heard of Jesus in the world at that time probably would have heard of Peter as well, because Peter was right there with Jesus from the start. Peter was one of the leaders in the church from the start.

And so when Peter writes this letter, he starts it off saying, Peter, an apostle of Christ. And he doesn't really need to give much background or information about who he is, because anyone who knows of Jesus would have heard of this Peter guy that goes with him also.

His audience, he addresses the letter to the elect exiles in the dispersion. There's a few things we know about this audience. There's a few things we don't know about this audience.

One thing we do know is that they were Christians. When he says elect, he's talking about Christians, people who have been saved by Jesus. We also know that they were most likely Gentiles, not Jews, for the majority of them.

The way that he addresses them later in the letter, he talks about the way of life that they had before becoming Christians, and it's a way of life that would have been characteristic of Gentiles at this time and would not have been acceptable among Jews, even if they weren't Christians.

[2:18] And so these are a group that maybe had some Jews in it, but primarily Gentiles. It was Christians, and we know that they were exiles in some sense.

Now, the sense in which they were exiles, we're not 100% sure. It could be a political thing. If you look at the regions that he names right here, he lists off five geographic areas in the Roman Empire that are sort of all connected to each other.

And around the time when this letter was written, those areas were being recolonized. Rome decided, we're going to build these areas up. We're going to send people over there to live in these areas so that they can be big cities.

And they took people and sent them over there. So it could be that as he writes to these people in this area, they're actually exiles who were born somewhere else, who maybe even became Christians somewhere else, like Rome, and then got sent over to these areas to live there and colonize these areas against their will, possibly even.

But that might not be the case. But either way, they're exiles in another sense, in a deeper sense. The fact that they're Christians means that they have a hope that's different than the rest of the world around them.

[3:33] The fact that they're Christians means that no matter where they're living, in a sense, they're exiles, because they're different, because they hope in different things than the worlds

around them, because they look for different things than the world around them.

And their Christian identity made it so that no matter where they were living, whether it was the land of their birth or somewhere that they had been sent off to recolonize, they were in one sense, one very real sense, aliens and exiles, people who didn't fully belong in the place that they were.

And as Peter writes this letter, he does it because there's suffering going on in the churches that he's writing to. These people have gone through suffering, and it's not just, you know, life has suffering.

Life gets tough at times. But these people had a different type of suffering. They were suffering specifically because of their faith in Christ. They were facing trials that weren't normal to everyday life, specifically because they were following Jesus.

And Peter wants to write to them and encourage them and say, look, you have this hope in Christ, and it's causing you trials, but it's worth it. And it gives you the strength to endure these trials with hope and with joy.

[4 : 48] And it's not always going to be easy. But it's worth it. And so let's jump in and look at what exactly he says to them in this letter about how to address their trials.

The first thing that I want us to notice is that he starts off not by talking about their suffering, but by talking about how amazing their salvation is. Because he needs this as a foundation, so that as they look at their suffering, they can see, you know, this is tough, but it's worth it.

And he starts off in verse 2. He says, He's talking about how they became Christians, and he's starting off saying, look, your salvation is a big deal.

Your salvation is so big of a deal that every individual member of the Trinity got involved in it. If you don't know much about Christianity, we believe as Christians there's one God who exists in three distinct persons, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

And each of them works in different ways in our lives. And Peter is starting off this letter saying, look, every single individual member of the Trinity got involved in your salvation.

[6 : 08] Every single member of the Trinity cares about your salvation. Every single member of the Trinity is at work in saving you. Never, ever, ever think that your salvation is some throwaway idea.

Never, ever, ever think that your salvation is unimportant. Because your salvation is so important to God that every single member of the Trinity got involved in ensuring that you would be saved.

And he starts them off with this foundation from the fact that it is the Trinity at work saving us. And then he goes on, he says, Blessed be God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his great mercy, he caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

He says, look, God saved us, and when he saved us, he gave us a living hope. Now from the day that we're born, every single one of us hopes in something.

When we're babies, it's someone to change our diaper when it's dirty and feed us and keep us warm and comfortable. And as we grow up, our hopes develop and change, and we end up placing our hope for life in different things.

[7 : 24] Maybe it's money, maybe it's power, maybe it's sex. If you were here last week, we talked about this idea also. We called these things idols, things that we build our lives around instead of Jesus.

And Peter's saying, look, all of these things that we hope in, they're dead hopes. They're never going to satisfy you.

They're never going to come through on the promises they make for you. Just as a case study, let's look at money. So many people spend their lives chasing money because it holds out this promise that if you get enough of it, you'll be happy.

How many of us know people who have taken a job that they hate over a job that they would love because the pay was better? How many of those people that you know that are working jobs that you hate or that they hate because of the better pay are willing to sacrifice everything else in life and clear out their calendars to stay late working at this job that they hate because they think that they'll get a better paycheck or a promotion by doing it?

How many of these people that are working jobs they hate for better pay have ruined significant relationships in their lives in their effort to get more money? I know lots of people.

[8 : 48] And if you think about these people that we know that are working jobs they hate, working excessive hours at jobs they hate, ruining relationships for jobs that they hate, because of the

promise of money, how many of them would honestly say that they're happy because of the amount of money in their bank account?

People invest our entire lives trying to get more and more and more and it never satisfies. If I think through the people that I know that are working these jobs for more money, that are working the crazy hours for more money, that have ruined significant relationships in their attempt to get more money, I can't think of one of them that would honestly say, I'm happy because of the amount of money in my bank account.

What I've actually seen more often is that they turn to other things like alcohol, partying, sex, because they realize money's not fulfilling me like I thought it was and I need something else to get me through.

Peter's saying, whatever it is that we hope in besides Christ, it's a dead hope. It's going to require everything from us and it's never going to come through with what it promises to give us. We're going to build our lives around it and it's going to tear out everything that we have ever invested. But Christ gives us a living hope. He gives us a hope that's not dependent on the balance of our bank account.

[10:18] He gives us a hope that's not dependent on our relationship status or our position within the company. He gives us a hope that's secured based on His love for us which is guaranteed, which is unchanging.

He saves us and gives us this living hope. Our salvation is a big deal. He saves us from these dead hopes and gives us a living hope. Peter continues on.

He says, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. He says, God is giving us an inheritance. The interesting thing about an inheritance is it has nothing to do with the person receiving it.

An inheritance is wholly dependent on the wealth and reliability and generosity of the one giving it. The inheritance that God is giving us is not dependent on us.

It's not dependent on our goodness. It's dependent on God. The infinitely wealthy, infinitely generous God who loves us and saves us and promises us this inheritance.

[11:29] Not based on what we've done but on grace that saves us when we are rebels and don't deserve it. And it's not just some throwaway inheritance either. He says, it is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

It's something that is pure and perfect and can't be ruined or corroded or destroyed. It's an inheritance that will last, that doesn't end when we die, that continues on throughout eternity. That is what God is promising us. And then he says that this inheritance is kept in heaven for us. The picture here is sort of like a parent who goes to the store and buys a toy for their kid for their birthday.

Right? You go out and you buy a Nerf gun for your kid and you take it home and you hide it because it's not the kid's birthday yet. And you have this present, this Nerf gun for your kid and you're keeping it.

And it's not that you're keeping it because you never want your kid to have it but because there's a specific time on their birthday that you're going to give them this toy. And so you have it and you're keeping it. And it's not a question of are you going to give it to them?

[12:37] It's just a question of when is the time going to be right? And that's what it's saying about this inheritance here. That God has this inheritance for us and it's not a question of oh, is he going to be good enough to give it to us?

Is he going to be capable of giving it to us? No, it's just a question of when is the time right? He's got it. He's keeping it. It's secure. It's guaranteed.

It's just a matter of time until he gives it to us. And then he continues on. He says, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.

As if it's not enough that God has saved us. As if it's not enough that God has given us this living hope. As if it's not enough that God has this inheritance that he's promising for us. he's also maintaining us.

He's guarding us. He's protecting us. He's keeping us going. He's starting off saying your salvation is a huge deal.

[13:37] Your salvation gives you hope that nothing else in the world can give you. Your salvation is dependent on God and God takes it seriously.

And he says to these Christians that he's writing to you need to understand this. You need to get this. Because as great and awesome as that is the existence of this great salvation doesn't mean life is going to be always easy.

Actually because of this great salvation life's going to be hard at times. Because it means that your hope is different than the world around you.

It means that if you're living in light of this great salvation you're going to be different and people are going to notice it and you're not going to fit in. Because you aren't going to have the same hope as them.

They're not going to have the same hope as you and things are going to get awkward sometimes between you. There's going to be times of trials and suffering that come because of your different hope and it will lead to suffering.

[14:47] suffering. He's not saying go out and try to suffer. No, he's just saying if you live in light of this hope if you live as who you truly are in Christ there's going to be times of suffering.

I think we don't like to talk about suffering today. We live in a society where we want things to be comfortable, we want things to be convenient. Suffering is uncomfortable, suffering is inconvenient and it requires this long-term perspective that we often don't want to have.

I was reading an article this week about a man, he was a computer programmer and he got hired by Goldman Sachs to do programming on their high-frequency trading program. Basically, it's a computer program that makes lots of trades on the stock market really fast so they can make loads of money.

And he got hired to do programming on their high-frequency trading software and realized very quickly that the software they had was old and outdated and it was slow and it was forfeiting loads of profits that the company could have been making.

And he went to his bosses and he said, hey, this software is old and outdated, let me build something new from scratch. It will make us way more money in the long run. It will be way quicker, way more efficient.

[16:03] And the bosses said, nah, we're already making \$300 million a year, US, with the software that we have. And even though your software could make us a few hundred million dollars a year more, in the short term, it would cost the company because we would have to pay you to develop it when it's not making any money.

We would have to go through the difficulty of switching over our software. It's going to cost us in the short term and we can't afford those short term losses. So Goldman's forfeited hundreds of millions, if not billions of dollars of profits, because they had this short term perspective, not a long term perspective.

And I think that's typical in our world today. We want to be comfortable now, we want to be safe now, even if it costs us in the future.

But what the Bible is calling us to do is to have a long term perspective. The Bible says, look, we have this great salvation, we have this great hope. It's going to cost us today, but it's going to be worth it in the future.

And again, this is an attitude that we've all seen before. Think about an expat family coming to Hong Kong. The husband works for some big bank and the bank sends them over here on an assignment for two or three years.

[17:19] And they know that once they get back to the States, he's going to get a huge promotion, cut 15 years off of his advancement through the company. It's going to be amazing, they're going to be making way more money, life's going to be good, but they come over here and things are frustrating because people don't speak their language and there are strange smells in the air.

And they can't tell the cab driver how to get to where they need to go. And they can't find their favorite foods. And there are difficulties that come into their life specifically because of the long-term hope that they have.

If they had just stayed in America, stayed comfortable, these issues wouldn't come up. But because they have the hope that in a couple years life will be better forever, they go to Hong Kong and they endure these difficulties specifically because they know that things are going to be better in the end. They endure two or three years of hardship for 30 to 50 years of having more money, of being further along in the company. And it's a similar picture that in living in Christ, it's going to be difficult, but it's worth it because he's calling us to have this long-term perspective, to endure some difficulties that result directly from this long-term hope, but to endure these difficulties with hope

because we know that in the future it's going to be worth it.

And again, he's not just saying go out there and look for difficulties. He's saying no. As you go through life, there are going to be difficulties. Like, again, that expat couple. They move to Hong Kong.

[19 : 01] It's not like they need to go out and look for ways that life is going to be difficult for them living here. They just come up and they're like, why Hong Kong? At least a lot of families that I've met have that feeling.

And he's saying, you know, this hope, though, it's worth it. This hope is what gives us the strength to endure through those times because we know it's tough right now, but it's not going to be this way forever.

It's tough right now, but I know that because things are going to be better in the future, I can endure these difficulties for a little bit. Depending on our circumstances, maybe the trials that will come up will be things like loss of friendships.

People don't want to hang out with us because we have different hopes than them and they can't understand why we would hope for the things that we do. Maybe it will cost us a job because we're not willing to forfeit our families for the company.

Maybe it means that we'll be at our job and we'll see people around us making huge profits that we have to pass up because it involves exploiting vulnerabilities in other people that we're not willing to exploit.

[20 : 15] Maybe it means that your family will disown you. Maybe for tens of thousands of Christians in Iraq and Syria this week, it means that you're going to be driven from your home and executed.

Suffering can look different in different circumstances, but the Bible says if we are following Christ, if our hope is in him, there are going to be times of difficulty that come directly because of that.

I think for a lot of us, again, it's strange. We don't feel like we suffer for our faith. We don't necessarily want to suffer for our faith. We hear about it, and in theory, it's like, yeah, I guess I could do that if I had to, but I don't want to.

Please don't make me do it, God. But what's happening here is Peter is saying if we're living our lives as Christians, if we're living with a true hope in God, that we're going to suffer.

And I think if we look at our lives, most of us would see that we actually are willing to suffer for things that we want to be great at. If we're at work, we're willing to clear out our evening schedule and suffer a late night of work to be great at our job.

[21 : 28] If we're on a sports team and we're a little bit injured, we're willing to push through that injury and suffer for the sake of being great at our sport. If we're parents, a kid wakes up screaming at 3 a.m., we're willing to suffer sleep loss for the sake of being a great parent.

And because we care so much about being great at these things, we don't think of it as suffering.

We just think of it as life. We think of it as investments. I'm investing in my future. I'm investing in my kid's future.

But anything in life that we want to be great at, we're willing to suffer for. But I feel like for me and a lot of people that I know, suffering for our faith is something that's really rare.

And I sometimes wonder why that is. Is it because we live in the world in such a way that they don't think we actually have a different hope?

They see us chasing after the same things that they are. We're investing our lives to get all the money we can, all the power we can. And they look at us and they say, this person is no different than I am.

[22 : 46] Is it because we maybe deep down on the inside we're different, but we're so concerned about fitting in that we let the people around us dictate the way that we act more than we let Christ dictate how we act.

And again, I'm not throwing these questions out there, asking them just for you. I'm asking them for me, too, because this is something that I struggle with.

Sometimes it feels like life is so easy, and I have to ask myself, why is that? And it's not intended to be a guilt trip, but Peter's saying here, if we're living as Christians, there will be suffering.

It's not that we go out and seek it, it's just going to happen. And if it's not happening, there's a valid reason for questioning, why is that? But he says, despite the suffering that we'll endure as Christians, the hope that we have in Christ gives us the strength to endure them, to endure

suffering with hope and with joy.

That's why he started out talking about the salvation that we have and how great it is, because it's the foundation that sustains us through our suffering. He continues on. He says, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it's tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[24 : 14] If you think about gold, a lot of times it'll be mixed with different metals. And if you're working with the gold and you want it to be pure, you take it and you throw it in the fire. And the fire melts it so you can take everything that's not gold out and be left with just pure gold.

Peter's saying that when we suffer as Christians, when we go through trials as Christians, it's like God taking us and throwing us into that fire. It's not meant to destroy us.

It's not meant to hurt us. It's meant to test us and prove to us what is real. Maybe we think that we have this great outstanding faith and we get into the middle of a trial and we realize that we're despairing because the hope that we thought we had in Christ was actually hope in something else that's gone now.

We can't lean on it anymore. And when I first moved to Hong Kong, I had, I thought I had this hope in Christ, but I actually had a lot of hope in the fact that I was just a good person.

And I just got to Hong Kong and I realized that my goodness is not enough. And there was a time of trial where I realized I can't rely on my goodness.

[25 : 23] But because I had spent so long relying on it, I reached a point where I was like, I don't know how to not rely on it. It was God's way of sticking me into that fire, of testing me, of taking away everything that was not the true, pure gold, true, pure faith and hope in him and showing me that it wasn't able to sustain me.

And that's what trials do. They test us. They show us where we're falling short. And when we endure trials well, he shows the world around us and ourselves what is the pure gold, what is the true hope that's within us.

He continues on and says that it will result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And I think this is a two-fold thing. It's one where God and other Christians see us and they say, look, you endured well.

Great job. But also where us and other Christians look at God and we say, look, you gave us the strength to endure well and we praise him. The picture I get is sort of, this is really cheesy.

It won't be this cheesy. But the picture is like in a sports movie about a little kid's sports team. And you know, the little kid runs down the field as the seconds are ticking off in the championship game and he kicks it into the goal and the game ends and his team wins and he runs over to the sideline and the dad's there on the sideline.

[26 : 44] He's like, you did it, son. And the son goes, I couldn't have done it without you, dad. And then they run over and they give each other a hug and everyone's cheering. It's like that type of thing where God looks at us and he says, great job, you did it.

And we look at God and we say, we couldn't have done it without you. And we, there's, there's this praise of him saying to us, great job. And us saying to him, great job. And everyone around us looking and saying, what an amazing God.

When we endure our trials well, it results in praise and glory and honor and shows others how amazing our God is. This means that in the midst of our trials, we can hold out hope because it's not meant to destroy us.

It's meant to strengthen us. It's meant to purify us. It's meant to draw us closer to God. Again, the suffering, it'll be real.

It's not going to be easy. But it'll be worth it. Because God will give us the strength to endure. It's like that expat family.

[27 : 45] The difficulties of living in Hong Kong, if you're from a foreign culture, it can be difficult at times. That's real. But they endure those two or three years of hardship for the sake of a better 30 to 50 years afterwards.

In the same way, God's calling us to endure 30 to 50 years of hardship for an eternity that is better afterwards. And then he says, he goes on back in the passage, he says that it will result in the salvation of our souls.

I think growing up in a Christian circle, it's easy to think about salvation of our souls as our souls get saved and go to heaven and our bodies just sort of die and rot on the ground. But that's not what

Peter's actually saying here.

If you look at this word soul, it's actually the core of our being. And if you look at the story of the Bible, you see that God has created this physical world and that God is all about restoring and redeeming this physical world.

If you look at the picture that the Bible gives for our eternal hope as Christians, it's actually us being raised back to life just like Jesus was, having a real physical body, living in a new earth that God's creating.

[28 : 53] That it's not just us spiritually in some never-ending church service in heaven, but it's us in new bodies living a perfect life on the perfect earth as God intended it to be from the beginning.

And he sets this out here as our hope that when we endure trials well, that that's what's going to result, that it's going to be perfect, it's going to be good, there's going to be an eternity of amazing goodness with God.

And then at the end, there's this strange thing about concerning the salvation, the prophets, and those next couple verses. Basically, he's saying, look, the fact that we have Christ, the fact that we have this great salvation, it should encourage us to suffer well.

It should encourage us to suffer with hope and with joy. But if that's not enough, look back at your Old Testament. Look at the times before Jesus came.

The prophets then, they heard that there was a Savior coming. They wanted to know what he was like. They couldn't. But they still obeyed.

[30 : 07] They still endured difficulties for Christ or for God. But now we have Jesus. We have seen so much more of how good God is than they ever could have dreamed of.

We've seen so much more of how gracious God is than they ever could have dreamed of. We understand God in a way that they never, ever, ever did.

And yet, they were willing to endure suffering for God. And if we've seen so much more how great God is, how much more should we be willing to endure hard times?

Because we've seen how great and amazing God is. We've seen the proof of his love. We've seen that he sent Jesus. That Jesus suffered for us.

That Jesus died for us. To save us. And that should be our strength and our motivation. When suffering gets hard, when trials come, we should look to Christ.

[31 : 21] The one who saved us. The one who offers us this living hope. This perfect inheritance. That's going to save us. Looking to him is the only way that we'll actually have strength.

To endure trials when they come. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for today. We thank you for your love.

And for the way that you work in our lives. We thank you for the salvation that you give. And for the fact that it is so good. That it's good enough to sustain us in hard times.

That it's good enough to give us hope when suffering comes. God, we pray that that as we live our lives, that we would live lives that are marked by the fact that we follow you.

That we wouldn't be concerned about suffering when it comes, but that we would be able to hope in you and trust in you and follow you through difficult times. I pray that we'd have a long-term, eternal perspective.

[32 : 26] Knowing that even though it may cost us today and be uncomfortable today, that it will be worth it. God, we love you. We want to love you more. In Jesus' name, amen.