

I PETER 1:1-12

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Peter chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God, and we begin this new book.

And let me say this, and I believe with all my heart that this applies to every book of the Bible we are studying. I don't think we are in I Peter this evening for no reason. I believe the Lord wants to give us hope, comfort, instructions on how we are to live out our faith even during the most difficult of times and I guess I should say, in spite of the difficult times we are facing!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this,

“While there's life, there's hope!”

That ancient Roman saying is still quoted today and, like most adages, it has an element of truth but no guarantee of certainty.

It is not the fact of life that determines hope, but the faith of life. A Christian believer has a “living hope” (1 Peter 1:3, NASB) because his faith and hope are in God (1 Peter 1:21).

This “living hope” is the major theme of Peter's first letter. He is saying to all believers, “Be hopeful!”

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 892

I like that and how important it is for us to understand these things because, if we don't, we are going to live our Christian life in a way that will not shine the light of Jesus, but will mimic the actions and words of this world, which truly has no hope apart from Christ.

But we have Jesus in our lives and thus, we should shout for joy because of that. And yes, it is not easy, but again, if it was easy, we would not need Jesus. But let's face it, with the things that are going on today, we can't do it on our own, at least not with the joy of the Lord flowing from our lives!

And so, tonight we are going to embark on an adventure of encouragement, hope in the day's we are living in.

And Peter is not speaking from some ivory tower or just speaking forth without any knowledge or experience of persecution. He understood what it was all about, and he is encouraging others who are experiencing these things.

You see, Peter wrote this letter to a group of Christians who were being persecuted for their faith and that persecution was only going to get more intense under Caesar Nero.

And, as we are going to see in the study of this letter that Peter's exhortation is two-fold.

First of all, he wants them to have a *steadfast endurance* during this time and to *live a life of commendable behavior* in spite of what they were facing.

Now persecution should be no surprise to us as Christians and yet it does often catch us by surprise.

This is especially true in America when we want to grow in the Lord and yet we don't want any difficult times, we just want an easy road and then be taken to glory.

But remember what Jesus said in Matthew 10:24-25, "**A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!**"

Ever since the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost, it has been persecuted.

But now it is not just by the Jews or local communities, Rome is coming down hard against them.

But why did this happen? Why was Rome so hard against Christians? What occurred that brought this on?

Remember Paul's first imprisonment in Rome as he appealed to have his case brought before Caesar? Paul was under house arrest, chained to Roman soldiers 24 hours a day and when that day came, as he appeared before Caesar, I believe he gave a powerful witness of Christ that left this leader to either accept the truth of Christ that was presented to him or to reject the truth.

He ended up rejecting the truth and since Paul committed no crime, he was released for a time. This was around 62 A. D.

Who was the Caesar at this time?

It was none other than Nero, who started out not too bad of a guy. But after this rejection of Christ, things began to change and Nero either went insane or was demon possessed or both!

His actions were that of a madman as he began to persecute Christians.

Then, on July 19, 64 A. D. Nero had his men burn some of the old buildings in Rome and the fire got out of control and burned for six days and six nights.

He basically wanted to burn some of the old buildings to build new ones but like I said, it got out of control and the people were not happy and rumors started to spread that Nero had done this.

To help deflect the blame of this disaster from himself, Nero blamed the Christians for burning Rome, and they were the perfect scapegoat!

Of this the Roman historian Tacitus wrote, ***“But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor and the propitiations of the gods did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration [fire] was the result of an order by Nero. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most tortures on a class hated for the abominations, called Christians by the populace.”***

It would seem that Peter arrived in Rome sometime in the year 62 A. D., after Paul was released from his first imprisonment there.

That would place the writing of I and II Peter around 63 and 64 A. D.

And Peter was put to death for his faith shortly thereafter, around 64 A. D.

And so this was a time of great persecution against Christians, things were heating up against Christians!

And again, Nero was a crazy man. He would burn Christians at the stake; he would place them in animal skins and then let out the lions to eat them.

It is said that he put Christians on poles and lit them on fire and rode naked on his chariot past them as they burned to death!

That is not normal, obviously!

Now please keep in mind that Nero died in 68 A. D. and Nero martyred Peter probably in 64 A. D. or so, as I have said.

Also, Nero wanted to crucify Peter, but Peter felt that he could not die as His Lord and Savior did, so he was martyred for his faith upside down on a cross!

Paul was also rearrested, and Nero had him beheaded for his faith in around 66 A. D.

It does seem that at the end of his life Peter was in Rome but not when Paul wrote Romans from Corinth, because he does not mention Peter's name.

And not during Paul's first imprisonment since once again Paul does not mention Peter being there in Rome with him.

Now I believe Peter wrote this letter from Rome.

Why do I believe that?

Listen to what Peter says as he concludes this letter in I Peter 5:13, "**She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son.**"

Now some see Babylon as the ancient city of Babylon, but I don't think that is what Peter is saying here.

Keep in mind that Rome is persecuting Christians and that persecution is growing. Thus, if Peter wrote from Rome, which I believe he did, he didn't want any further trouble with Rome, so he speaks of Rome as being Babylon, a cryptic name for Rome, which was wicked, immoral and full of idolatry!

Like all the letters of the New Testament, there are those that reject what the historical record says is the author, they reject Peter as being the author of this letter.

Folks, the early church never doubted who wrote this letter, they believed it was Peter.

First century believers like Ignatius taught that Peter wrote this letter.

In the second century we have men like Polycarp, Justin Martyr who believed it was Peter.

In the third century we have men like Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement said it was Peter.

In fact, we have this writing from the fourth century by church historian Eusebius of Caesarea and he wrote, "*As to the writings of Peter, one of his epistles called the first is acknowledged as genuine. For this was anciently used by the ancient fathers in their writings, as an undoubted work of the apostle.*" (Ecclesiastical History 3.3).

One of the problems that critics have is the Greek writing of this letter; they don't believe that a Galilean fisherman could have enough grasp of the Greek language to write like that.

First of all, that is like saying the good old country boy can't read or write, why?

Because he is a country boy!

That is foolish thinking!

There is no reason to believe that Peter was not educated just because he was a fisherman from Galilee.

Secondly, in Acts 4:13, as two fishermen, Peter and John appeared before the Sanhedrin for their faith in Christ, we are told, **“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”**

The Living Bible puts this verse like this, **“When the Council saw the boldness of Peter and John and could see that they were obviously uneducated non-professionals, they were amazed and realized what being with Jesus had done for them!”**

You see, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in their lives, by being with Jesus, it blew these religious leaders away because they spoke in a powerful way.

That same power is available to us today if we spend time with Jesus!

Also, in II Peter 3:1 we are told, **“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder).”**

In other words, Peter speaks of this first epistle – that he wrote it.

I think it is plain enough for us to understand, Peter wrote this letter and to deny it would be contrary to what the Scriptures are saying, what the facts are.

Now, if you want to sum up this letter, it can be as simple as this – ***WHERE THERE'S CHRIST, THERE'S HOPE!***

I think that is so important for us to understand, especially in the days we are living in where we see people coming against the things of God and are hostile to those who are following Jesus Christ.

And I believe it will only get worse in this country because man does not want to go to the light of Christ because they love the darkness more, they love their wickedness!

But, like I have said, ***WHERE THERE'S CHRIST, THERE'S HOPE!***

Make no mistake about it, He will see us through life's most difficult situations. Let me share this with you and then I will give you the outline for I Peter.

We are told,

Life is difficult. But this harsh truth has not always been understood by those following Jesus Christ. Many Christians today have trouble sorting out the complexity of their identity and calling in Christ. They were reared to believe that a Christian should only experience the joys of being one of God's elect. They have been taught nothing of our exilic state.

With these three simple words in the opening of this letter, Peter gives us the biblical corrective – a profound clue for finding life's true horizon. We are the "***elect exiles of the dispersion***" (1:1). . . .

Throughout the Scriptures, the way up comes by going down; restoration comes after trials (5:10). It is this inversion in attaining glory that marks Peter's theme throughout this letter.

Christians' future inheritance and exaltation – our eternal share in the glory of Christ – will be awarded to us on the day of his appearing (1:13; 2:12; 4:13; 5:1, 4, 10).

But that promised day only comes *after* this brief season of present-day sufferings. For suffering always precedes subsequent glories. As it was for God's Son, so it will be for all of us who are in him.

This bringing together of two seemingly incompatible truths – our status in Christ and *our* sufferings on earth – is how Peter's letter begins (1:1, 2).

And in the body of the letter these incompatible ideas are continually joined to one another.

- David R. Helm, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude – Sharing Christ's Sufferings, pp. 17-18

And, as we will see, these things are spoken of and then Peter shares how we are to live or endure these trials, these persecutions that come upon our life. Faith and works coming together to show that our faith is real!

Now, I want to give you a quick outline of I Peter before we get to our text this evening.

THE LETTER OF I PETER – OUTLINE

1. ***THE SALVATION OF THE BELIEVER*** – I PETER 1:1-2:12
 - A. SALVATION – I PETER 1:1-12
 - B. SANCTIFICATION – I PETER 1:13-2:12
2. ***THE SUBMISSION OF THE BELIEVER*** – I PETER 2:13-3:12
3. ***THE SUFFERING OF THE BELIEVER*** – I PETER 3:13-5:14
 - A. HOW WE CONDUCT OURSELVES IN SUFFERING – I PETER 3:13-17
 - B. CHRIST, OUR EXAMPLE IN SUFFERING – I PETER 3:18-4:6
 - C. GOD'S COMMANDS TO US IN SUFFERING – I PETER 4:7-19
 - D. HOW WE ARE TO MINISTER IN SUFFERING – I PETER 5:1-14

Thus, in these three points we see **HOLINESS** in our salvation and sanctification.

We see **HARMONY** as we submit our lives in all walks of life – to those in government, business, marriage, family life and-so-on.

And lastly, we see **HUMILITY** as we humble ourselves as we suffer for Christ.

It is as John MacArthur said, *“Peter wanted his readers to live triumphantly in the midst of hostility without abandoning hope, becoming bitter, losing faith in Christ, or forgetting His second coming. When they are obedient to God’s Word despite the world’s antagonism, Christians’ lives will testify to the truth of the gospel.”*

So, with that as our introduction to this letter, let’s begin reading in I Peter chapter 1, beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word and we see this glorious and encouraging truth come forward – **WHERE THERE’S CHRIST, THERE’S HOPE!**

I PETER 1

VERSE 1

Once again we don’t have to guess who wrote this letter because Peter starts out by saying he wrote this letter. And, as we have seen, the early church supported that fact.

And then Peter tells us his calling by God, to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Peter was an important leader in the church and thus, placing his name on this letter would mean a lot to his readers.

Now folks, in saying that Peter was an apostle he is not alone.

You see, when you think about it, in the broadest sense of this word, we are all apostles.

The word “**apostle**” means one who is sent out or an ambassador.

Now we are not part of the apostles in the sense we were part of the 12 men God chose, but we are ambassadors for Christ.

That is exactly what Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:18-20, **“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”**

We represent Christ to a world lost in sin and thus, may we do so in such a way that we point people to Jesus Christ who is the Giver and Sustainer of life!

Peter also tells us who he is writing to. Peter tells us that he is writing to pilgrims who have been dispersed, a term used of Jewish believers.

Now Peter was probably writing to Gentiles but like the Jews who were dispersed for their faith in Jesus, these Gentiles were spread out also. (I Peter 1:18, 2:10, 4:3).

Now these cities that this letter was going to are five cities located in Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey.

And Peter calls them **“pilgrims”** and not a John Wayne western! This word speaks of someone who has settled in a foreign land temporarily and is living alongside a group of people from which they don’t belong to.

Isn’t that exactly what the Bible says about us as Christians? You bet it is.

You see, we are no longer of this world, our citizenship is in heaven, (Philippians 3:20), and we are just passing through on our journey home.

In I Peter 2:11 we are told, **“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.”**

The Amplified Bible puts it like this, **“Beloved, I implore you as aliens and strangers and exiles [in this world] to abstain from the sensual urges (the evil desires, the passions of the flesh, your lower nature) that wage war against the soul.”**

The Living Bible says, **“Dear brothers, you are only visitors here. Since your real home is in heaven, I beg you to keep away from the evil pleasures of this world; they are not for you, for they fight against your very souls.”**

In other words, don't live like the world because you are not born of this world anymore.

You are a child of God as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:17, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”**

We are in this world ministering the love of Jesus Christ to the lost, but we are no longer of this world, this world is no longer in us, Jesus is! At least that is the way it should be, but sometimes we do allow the world into our lives and if we allow too much of the world in us, like too much water in a boat, we will be sunk!

As we read on, I want you to see this important point that some have denied, and the cults also deny this truth.

VERSE 2

Remember what I Peter 1 to I Peter 2:12 is all about – ***THE SALVATION OF THE BELIEVER!***

And Peter is speaking specifically here in I Peter 1:1-12 about our – ***SALVATION!***

And as much as some like to deny this fact, Peter shows us how the Holy Trinity is involved in our salvation. They deny the Triunity of God, and we will see they are wrong!

He starts out with our election or how God the Father chose us out of His grace for the kingdom. He said, “**... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. . .**”

Now please understand that this word, “**foreknowledge**” in the Greek speaks of “*knowledge known in advance.*”

In other words, God knows all things before they happen, He knows the beginning from the end of all things. And thus, He knows who is going to be saved and who is not going to be saved.

Now some come to the conclusion, like the five-point Calvinist, that God has predestined some for heaven and some for hell and you have no choice in the matter.

In other words, if you want to be saved and yet God does not predestine you, then there is nothing you can do to change that. You are headed for Hell and you can't do anything about it!

Also, if you are predestined to be saved and yet you don't want to be, there is nothing you can do to change that, you are in.

That is foolish.

In fact, in II Peter 3:9 we are told, “**The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**”

God's desire is that all should be saved.

Then why aren't they?

Because of our free will, we have a choice to enter in or reject what God is showing us.

Now, if we enter in, we are predestined and if we reject Jesus, then we are not!

It is 100% God's sovereign will and it is 100% man's free will to choose. I know that is 200% but that is what the Scriptures say, God invites us in, and we must enter by faith.

It is as Jesus said in Revelation 3:20, **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”**

In Matthew 11:28-30 we are told, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

And in Isaiah 1:18, **“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.’”**

It is an invitation!

And that invitation is open to all, as Jesus said in John 3:16-17, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”**

I think that is pretty simple and yet, there are Calvinist who believe that the word **“world”** is only speaking of those who will be saved. In other words, *“For God so loved those who He was going to save that He gave His only begotten Son . . .”*

Let me be clear on this, that is not what Jesus was saying when He used that word. He meant anyone and everyone can come to saving faith by believing in Him! The door is open for them to come, and then they must come!

Think of it like this. *“On the door to heaven, from our side, it says, ‘Whosoever will, may enter. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved.’ Any man, that means you and that means me! You can come in and find pasture and find life. When you get on the other side of the door someday in heaven, you’re going to look back, and on the other side of that door you will find written, ‘Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.’”*

Secondly, it is the sanctification of God the Holy Spirit working in our lives to perfect us, to make us like Him.

In II Thessalonians 2:13-14 we are told, **“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

And then there is the blood of Christ that cleanses us from all our sins, it makes us as white as snow.

In I John 3:5 we are told, **“And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.”**

And in the last part of Revelation 1:5 we are told, **“... To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”**

Now, in sharing those three points, do you see how the Holy Trinity is actively involved in our lives?

Yes, the word *“Trinity”* is not found in the Scriptures, but it doesn’t have to be. The Scriptures speak for themselves that there is one God manifested in three distinct persons; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

We see an example of this in Matthew 3:16-17 as Jesus was being baptized in the Jordan River and we are told, **“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”**

And the argument that the word *“Trinity”* is not used in the Bible is an empty argument.

You see, there are many biblical concepts that people believe in that don’t have a specific word describing them used in the Bible.

For example, the word *“Bible”* is not found in the Bible, but we use it anyway to describe the Bible.

Likewise, *“omniscience”* which means “all-knowing,” *“omnipotence”* which means “all-powerful,” and *“omnipresence”* which means “present everywhere,” are words not found in the Bible either, but we use them to describe the attributes of God.

We don’t have to see a specific word in the Bible in order for the concept it describes to be true.

And make no mistake about it, the concept is seen throughout the Scriptures, from the Old Testament on into the New Testament!

And then Peter says, **“Grace to you and peace be multiplied.”** Like Paul, Peter speaks of the Siamese Twins of the New Testament, Grace and Peace.

And as I have said before, you will never experience the peace **OF** God until you first make peace **WITH** God through Jesus Christ.

Paul spoke of this in Romans 5:1-2, **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”**

I like the way that James Denney sums it up. He says, *“Grace is the first and the last word of the Gospel; and peace – perfect spiritual soundness – is the finished work of grace.”*

You see, when you realize that the work was finished by Christ and is based upon His faithfulness and not yours, when you realize you don’t deserve life but God freely gives it to you, that weight is lifted off your shoulders, you don’t need to carry it any longer because Jesus will and does!

IT IS FINISHED!

Kenneth Wuest summarized what Peter is saying about the work that each Person in the Trinity does to save us. He wrote, *“We have therefore the three steps taken by the three Persons of the Triune God. God the Father chooses the sinner to salvation. God the Spirit brings the sinner thus chosen to the act of faith. God the Son cleanses him in His precious blood.”*

So we have seen that God saves us and now Peter is going to show us that He not only saves us but He sustains us, we won’t be lost, we can’t lose our salvation, a very hot topic and yet, for me, I am confident in what the Scriptures teach on this subject. And I think Peter nails it in the next few verses!

VERSES 3-5

Keep in mind that this section deals with our salvation and as Peter speaks of what God does in our lives. And what does Peter tell us that God is doing in our lives?

Praise unto God for His abundant mercy that He has bestowed upon us!

Now Jeremiah illustrates the problem for us as he tells us, **“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.”** Jeremiah 13:23.

Obviously, an Ethiopian can't change the color of his skin nor can a leopard change or remove his spots, it is part of their make-up.

What does that have to do with us?

Simply, apart from Christ we are dead in sin and the flesh controls our lives.

Thus, we can't do anything good because it is not part of our nature apart from Christ.

You see, whoever is on the throne of your heart will be manifested in your actions.

Now here is the thing. God has **“begotten”** us, or we are born again in Christ. That old man is now dead, and the spirit controls us. That flesh nature will be with us until we go to be with the Lord, but it does not have the power to control us unless we let it!

That is Paul's point in II Corinthians 5:17, and we spoke of it earlier, but it bears repeating. Paul said, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”**

We are a new creation in Christ, not because we can change our ways, but God can, and He has!

Now think about our earthly inheritance, is it safe, is it everlasting, will it not fade away?

Of course not, nothing of this world will last, it is always moving from order to disorder, from new to rotting and decaying, from yours to someone else's. You can't take it with you.

But look at our heavenly inheritance, it is **“incorruptible”** or it will not be destroyed, it will never be lost.

Our heavenly inheritance is “**undefiled**” or it is unstained or unpolluted.

And our heavenly inheritance will not “**fade away**” which speaks of a flower that does not wither and die.

The kingdom of this world, the things of this world, the things we tend to treasure and hold onto so tightly will all go away but what God has for us will not!

And Peter calls this our “**living hope**” and Charles Spurgeon expounds on that as he wrote, “It is also called a ‘living hope,’ because it is imperishable. Other hopes fade like withering flowers. The hopes of the rich, the boasts of the proud, all these will die out as a candle when it flickers in the socket. The hope of the greatest monarch has been crushed before our eyes; he set up the standard of victory too soon, and has seen it trailed in the mire. There is no unwaning hope beneath the changeful moon: the only imperishable hope is that which climbs above the stars, and fixes itself upon the throne of God and the person of Jesus Christ.”

Amen to that and folks If you think you can lose your salvation, think again because Peter tells us it is reserved in heaven for us.

If God has a place reserved for us do you think He will lose it or give it away to someone else?

Of course not because our salvation is based upon His finished work, His faithfulness and all we must do to receive that gift is to receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior!

Notice that Peter does not say that our salvation is secure “***As long as we hold on real tight to Jesus. If we don’t, if we let go, if we lose our grip on Him before we die, we are going to lose our salvation!***”

If he did say that then there would not be much hope in this salvation because it would be based upon my finished work and not His finished work!

Maybe you are not convinced yet. Maybe you still think you can lose your salvation. But you can't and I will show you that we are not saved by our strength, but by His!

Look at I Peter 1:5 once again and as you do I want you to notice that Peter says that we **“are kept”** or PHROUREO, (froo-reh'-o) in the Greek, and it was a military term used to refer to a garrison within the city. (The same Greek word is used in Philippians 4:7)

Here is the point. If God is on guard over our salvation do you really think the enemy is going to be able to take it away? Of course not.

Paul said in Philippians 1:6, **“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”**

Do you see that? He will complete the work He has started in our lives because we are kept by the power of God through faith! What peace that should bring to each of us!

Meyer sums it up like this, *“To have been told, as in the preceding verse, that our inheritance was reserved in heaven could have yielded us little comfort, unless that assurance had been followed and capped by this, that the heirs also are being kept for its full enjoyment.”*

Our hope is in the Lord. He has saved us. He will sustain us. And one day He will take us to glory!

VERSES 6-9

Peter opens up this verse by saying, **“In this”** and this is not speaking of our salvation, but it is speaking of our inheritance in Christ!

We rejoice in all that God has given to us in Christ Jesus and yes, we are going to go through trials and difficult times, but compared to what we have in Christ, it is minor!

And like with James, we see Peter speaking of joy and trials, various trials, all kinds of difficulties mixed together.

How can that be when they seem to oppose each other, joy and trials?

Because of all that God has done for us, because our salvation is secure, because our inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, it does not fade away and it is not only reserved for us in heaven but our salvation is kept by the power of God.

You see, in that we rejoice in our incredible inheritance we have in Christ!

Make no mistake about it, Christian joy is independent of the circumstances we face because our joy is based in the Lord.

But what about trials in our lives?

Remember what James told us, **“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”** James 1:2-4.

As we saw in our study in James, God brings trials into our lives to test our faith, to see if our faith is real and to help us to grow as we look to Him to be the strength of our life.

We also need to keep in mind that these difficult times that come upon our lives are only temporary and as we endure through them, as we grow, we will bring glory to God, and when we are called home to be with Him, God will receive the glory for the work He has done in us and through us.

Remember the Parable of the Talents and what the Lord said to His faithful servants, **“... ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”** Matthew 25:21.

We too will receive praise from the Lord and rewards for our faithful service to Him!

And here's the thing. We all will experience trials in our lives to test our faith. As the fires are heated the garbage from our lives is purged as God is refining us, sanctifying us. And we all know what Paul said in Romans 8:28, "**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**"

Notice, Paul didn't say that we *SEE* the good in the various situations we face.

But we *KNOW* that all this will somehow and someday work out for good.

We walk by faith trusting in the Lord. Job tells us in Job 23:10, "**But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.**"

Here is a fascinating thing. Peter saw Christ before and after His resurrection but none of us have seen the risen Lord and yet, we love Him, how can that be?

Because we have read His love letter to us, the Word of God and have fallen in love with him.

It is as John said in I John 4:19, "**We love Him because He first loved us.**"

And we now have seen the goodness of God in the past experiences we have faced and that gives to us the strength and assurance for our present situation – that God will see us through it and as He does He will teach us lessons of faith.

It is as David said, "**Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!**" Psalm 34:8.

And Peter says that love, that knowledge of God and what He has done in our lives gives us joy that is inexpressible.

It doesn't get any better than that! It is as Jesus said in John 15:11, "**These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.**"

God wants our joy to be full and that only comes as we spend time with Him, as we keep our eyes upon Him!

And notice the end result – *the salvation of our souls!*

Praise the Lord and a big *AMEN* to that!

One writer summed all this up for us as he wrote,

Our willingness as Christians to endure earthly affliction says a lot about our trust in God. He is fashioning us into praiseworthy and honorable vessels for his glory. Malcolm Muggeridge, having come to Christ late in life, understood this well. His ability to embrace life's woes was never put more succinctly than when he wrote:

I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have ever learned in my seventy-five years in this world, everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my existence, has been through affliction and not through happiness, whether pursued or attained. In other words, if it ever were to be possible to eliminate affliction from our earthly existence by means of some drug or other medical mumbo jumbo, as Aldous Huxley envisaged in Brave New World, the result would not be to make life delectable, but to make it too banal and trivial to be endurable. This, of course, is what the Cross signifies. And it is the Cross, more than anything else, that has called me inexorably [inevitably] to Christ.

It was this same belief – that God is at work in the muck of life – that enabled Dietrich Bonhoeffer to write the final stanza of his poem “New Year 1945.” That day was a mere three months and nine days before he was executed by Hitler at the close of World War II:

*Should it be ours to drink the cup of grieving
Even to the dregs of pain, at they command,
We will not falter, thankfully receiving
All that is given by thy loving hand.*

The responses of Muggeridge and Bonhoeffer are only made possible by embracing Peter's words as divine truth. For without a deep and abiding trust in God's words, we will try to flee trials at all costs and will miss out on the very lessons God has for us.

- David R. Helm, I & 2 Peter and Jude – Sharing Christ's Sufferings, pp. 42-43

How true that is. There are lessons in the trials we go through, the testing of our faith.

Or, as Paul put it in II Corinthians 4:16-18, **“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”**

May we not forget that!

VERSES 10-12

Keep in mind that grace and the coming Messiah was not a New Testament idea but was spoken of way back in Genesis 3:15 and onward, throughout the Old Testament.

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 for example, we are told, **“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”**

You see, this is a New Covenant not based upon the faithfulness of man but God, not written on tablets of stone, but upon our hearts!

Yes, these prophets wrote about this coming Messiah and this New Covenant, but they didn’t fully understand all that they wrote.

In Matthew 13:16-17 Jesus said, **“But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”**

And these prophets knew that they were ministering not only to their own people but future generations that would read these words.

And now we see what the prophets wrote of coming to pass, being fulfilled and the apostles shared these truths with the people as we do.

Not only were the prophets trying to understand all they wrote of but the angels in heaven looked at this wonderful grace that has been extended to us by God.

Why?

Paul, in Ephesians 3:10-11 tells us, **“to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

In this grace the goodness of God shines forth and I’m sure the angels are blown away by this gift that God extends to us!

We are going to stop here, and we will finish up I Peter chapter 1 next week.

As I begin to close this evening, let me share this with you. We are told about this amazing salvation that we have in Christ,

The story began one summer’s day toward the end of the nineteenth century when an English city boy was on a visit to rural Scotland.

That afternoon the boy went swimming in a small countryside lake.

After swimming quite a distance from shore, a severe cramp seized him so he could not continue swimming. He was in great pain and soon cried out at the top of his voice for help.

A farm boy working in a nearby field heard the city boy’s screams and ran as fast as he could to the lake.

There the farm boy threw off his shirt, dived into the water, swam to the imperiled city boy, and brought him safely to the shore.

Several years later the two boys met again. The city boy, still filled with gratitude that the other boy had saved his life, was thrilled to see the farm boy again and asked him what career the boy had decided to pursue.

The farm boy said he had chosen a career in medicine.

Since the city boy's parents were quite wealthy and were greatly indebted to the other boy for saving their son's life, upon hearing of the farm boy's career choice they immediately promised to pay for his medical education.

They followed through on their promise and the young man went on to have a brilliant career in scientific investigation.

In 1928 that farm boy, then both a physician and bacteriologist, discovered the famous wonder drug penicillin.

In 1945 he shared the Nobel prize with two other scientists for the discovery and development of that antibiotic.

That Scottish farm boy turned scientific researcher, who died in 1955, was Alexander Fleming.

The rescued city boy also gained great renown.

During World War II he contracted a life-threatening case of pneumonia. He recovered at a hospital after receiving penicillin, which meant that indirectly the one-time farm boy Alexander Fleming had saved his life twice.

The city boy's name was Winston Churchill, the famous wartime British prime minister and world statesman.

Interestingly, just like Fleming, Churchill won a Nobel prize.

But in this instance, he won the 1953 award in literature for his incisive writings on the history of the Second World War.

It is wonderful to save a life, and even more wonderful to save someone's life twice, especially when the one saved was such an influential person as Winston Churchill.

But the hard-working selfless contributions of Alexander Fleming are nothing compared to the greatness of saving people's eternal souls.

The great salvation is the heart of the apostle Peter's concern in this passage. He wanted his believing audience to focus on that full, final rescue from sin, Satan, death, and hell that God so graciously chose to give them through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Peter celebrates salvations' greatest by reminding his readers that no matter how difficult the circumstances or how severe the persecution, they can confidently hold to the hope of eternal salvation.

- John MacArthur

What a picture that paints for us!

Remember when the seventy returned from their mission trip and they were excited, they were pumped up at all that they saw God do.

They told Jesus that even the demons were subject to them!

They were excited to say the least and many times that is where we are at and we miss the bigger picture.

Notice what Luke tells us in Luke 10:18-20, as Jesus said to these men, “**. . .I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.**”

Folks, may we rejoice that our names are written in heaven and God has a place reserved for us that no one can take away!