

1-2 PETER



nature^A yet still
the grace of life,
be hindered.

Do No Evil

⁸Now finally, all
minded and sympath
ers,^B and be compa
⁹not paying back ev
insult but, on the co
since you were called
inherit a blessing.

- ¹⁰ For the one w
and to see go
must keep hi
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¹¹ and he must
and do what
He must see
¹² because the c
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and His ears
to their re
But the face
those who do

Undeserved Sufferi

¹³And who will ha
committed to what
you should suffer
are blessed. **Do not**
be disturbed,^G ¹⁵but
Lord in your hearts.
defense to anyone wh
for the hope that is in
with gentleness and
conscience clear.^{K,L}



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PETER—STUDY AND TEACHING / DISCIPLESHIP

ERIC GEIGER

Vice President, LifeWay Resources

MICHAEL KELLY

Director, Groups Ministry

JEFF IORG

General Editor

JEREMY MAXFIELD

Content Editor

Send questions/comments to: Content Editor, *Explore the Bible: Small-Group Study*; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234-0152.

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▶ ABOUT THIS STUDY

CHRISTIANS WILL FACE HARDSHIP AND EVEN PERSECUTION.

When we hear of the persecution of Christians today, it's easy to think we're facing a situation believers have never before encountered, but that's not the case. Followers of Jesus all over the world today suffer and die for identifying with the name of Christ. Throughout history believers have faithfully endured hardship and persecution.

The first Christians faced dangers inside and outside the church, and yet they found strength to endure. This hope came from the Word of God and from the teaching of their leaders. We too can learn much from the letters of Peter about living for Christ in a difficult and threatening world.

Explore the Bible: 1–2 Peter reminds believers of the hope they have in Jesus. This foundational truth of the Christian life is essential to enduring hardship and even persecution.

The **Explore the Bible** series will help you know and apply the encouraging and empowering truth of God's Word. Each session is organized in the following way.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT: This page explains the original context of each passage and begins relating the primary themes to your life today.

EXPLORE THE TEXT: These pages walk you through Scripture, providing helpful commentary and encouraging thoughtful interaction with God through His Word.

OBEY THE TEXT: This page helps you apply the truths you've explored. It's not enough to know what the Bible says. God's Word has the power to change your life.

LEADER GUIDE: This final section provides optional discussion starters and suggested questions to help anyone lead a group in reviewing each section of the personal study.



For helps on how to use *Explore the Bible*, tips on how to better lead groups, or additional ideas for leading, visit:
www.ministrygrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible.

➤ GROUP COMMITMENT

As you begin this study, it's important that everyone agrees to key group values. Clearly establishing the purpose of your time together will foster healthy expectations and help ease any uncertainties. The goal is to ensure that everyone has a positive experience leading to spiritual growth and true community. Initial each value as you discuss the following with your group.

PRIORITY

Life is busy, but we value this time with one another and with God's Word. We choose to make being together a priority.

PARTICIPATION

We're a group. Everyone is encouraged to participate. No one dominates.

RESPECT

Everyone is given the right to his or her own opinions. All questions are encouraged and respected.

TRUST

Each person humbly seeks truth through time in prayer and in the Bible. We trust God as the loving authority in our lives.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Anything said in our meetings is never repeated outside the group without the permission of everyone involved. This commitment is vital in creating an environment of trust and openness.

SUPPORT

Everyone can count on anyone in this group. Permission is given to call on one another at any time, especially in times of crisis. The group provides care for every member.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We agree to let the members of our group hold us accountable to commitments we make in the loving ways we decide on. Questions are always welcome. Unsolicited advice, however, isn't permitted.

I agree to all the commitments.

Date

➤ GENERAL EDITOR



Jeff Iorg is the president of Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention. He has authored numerous books, including *The Case for Antioch*; *Seasons of a Leader's Life*; *Unscripted*; and his latest, *Ministry in the New Marriage Culture*. Dr. Iorg maintains a leadership-resources website at www.jeffiorg.com.



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A LIVING HOPE

Jesus' resurrection gives believers a living hope.



...all of
...patheti
...compassi
...g back evil
...t, on the contr
...you were called for
...t a blessing.

For the one who
and to see good
must keep his t
and his lips from
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and do what is g
He must seek pe
because the eyes
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But the face of
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Unmerited Suffering

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...3:19 Or In whom, or At

...20 It could... X3:21

➤ ABOUT 1–2 PETER

AUTHOR

The Books of 1–2 Peter were written by one of Jesus' closest friends. The writer left little doubt that he was Peter the apostle (see 1 Pet. 1:1).

DATE

Simon Peter, the fisherman turned disciple (see Matt. 4:18-20), experienced highs and lows during the ministry of Jesus. Then he struggled with the expansion of the gospel to the Gentiles. However, through a heavenly vision God admonished him not to call unclean what He called clean (see Acts 10:9-16). This experience led Peter to a ministry far beyond Jerusalem, which eventually ended with his death in Rome in the middle 60s.

When the apostle wrote 1 Peter, he was most likely writing from Rome, as evidenced by his reference to Babylon in 5:13. This would date his writing near the end of his life, when local persecution was just beginning to surface against Christians. Only a few years later this persecution would become empire-wide during the reign of Nero.

PURPOSE

As one of the original twelve disciples, Peter witnessed the persecution, arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection of his Savior. In these letters he wrote to believers who were facing severe persecution for their faith, drawing on his experience with Jesus to strengthen them.

Peter encouraged his readers to see their trials as a way to increase their faith. We need the same message today. Oppression isn't the end. Because of the eternal hope we have in Christ, we can look beyond our current troubles and rest in God's power.

When people endure suffering, whether mental, physical, or emotional, they need real hope. They need a hope that's alive and able to offer them something that will give them strength in the trial they're enduring. False hopes, like false promises, aren't worth the energy expended on them. Christians need to know God is present and will comfort those who've been afflicted.

"HOPE RESULTS
FROM A FIXATION
ON THE FUTURE."

—Jeff Iorg

➤ 1 PETER 1:3-9

Think About It

Underline all the phrases in verses 3-5 that describe the living hope.

According to verses 6-9, how did this hope fuel Peter's audience in its trials?

3 Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead **4** and into an inheritance that is imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. **5** You are being protected by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** You rejoice in this, though now for a short time you have had to struggle in various trials **7** so that the genuineness of your faith—more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **8** You love Him, though you have not seen Him. And though not seeing Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, **9** because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

➤ UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

USE THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO PREPARE FOR YOUR GROUP TIME.

Peter had experienced his share of difficulties in his lifetime. His great confession of Jesus as the Christ at Caesarea Philippi was immediately followed by Jesus' accusation that Peter was sharing Satan's viewpoint by refusing to accept Christ's suffering (see Matt. 16:16-23). Later Peter came face-to-face with his own shame as God revealed the prejudices of his heart toward Gentiles. To Peter's credit, he obeyed God's vision and preached the gospel to Cornelius and the other Gentiles in his household (see Acts 10:17-48). Yet this led to even more hurt when Peter refused a meal with Gentiles in Galatia, leading Paul to confront him (see Gal. 2:11-13).

How did Peter deal with these struggles? We catch a glimpse as he wrote to Christians facing difficulties in 1 Peter 1.

Peter addressed his first letter to "the temporary residents dispersed in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1:1). These were Roman provinces located in the northern part of Asia Minor, or modern Turkey. Peter listed them in the order of the way someone might visit them if traveling in a circle throughout that region. Though Peter's letter may refer to suffering in general, it's primarily directed to those who were suffering because of localized persecution against Christians. Peter referred to persecution on seven occasions in five chapters (see 1:6-7; 2:18-20; 3:1,13-17; 4:1-4,12-19; 5:10).

Peter chose to begin his letter by reminding the believers of their election in Christ. He reminded them that they were chosen through "the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1:2). That election wasn't based on their merit but on the Father's plan for them. Peter said they were "set apart by the Spirit for obedience and for sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ" (v. 2). Because of God's grace they had a living hope to help them endure the suffering they experienced.





► EXPLORE THE TEXT

HOPE DISCOVERED (1 Peter 1:3-4)

³Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

To a group of Christians in Asia Minor suffering from persecution, Peter began his letter with praise. Praise has a way of taking a person's eyes off suffering and putting them on the eternal God. The concept of new birth originated with the teachings of Jesus (see John 3:3).

Peter emphasized that new birth came through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Because of His victory over death, Jesus offered a living hope to those who endured persecution. Because of Jesus' resurrection, death was nothing to be feared.

One of the present dangers of suffering is a lack of proper perspective. Suffering is real and may seem long, but in light of eternity, suffering isn't hopeless. Peter pointed to the inheritance given to Christians by their Father. In the New Testament the term *inheritance* is associated with the hope of believers beyond our lifetimes (see Eph. 1:11; Col. 3:24). Thus, Peter contrasted the temporal nature of suffering with the eternal nature of salvation.

Peter described our inheritance in four ways. First, he said it's imperishable. The inheritance of God will neither perish nor decay. Second, the inheritance is uncorrupted. It will never lose its luster or beauty. Third, it's unfading. Unlike earthly wealth, salvation continues for eternity. Finally, our inheritance is kept in heaven. The tense of this verb indicates that it's a past action that has continuing results. Our salvation is secure, not because we're able to hold on to Christ but because Christ holds on to us.

How does praising God for the new birth help a Christian who's suffering?

KEY DOCTRINE

Salvation

Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace by which believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

HOPE ASSURED (1 Peter 1:5)

⁵You are being protected by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

In the New Testament, *salvation* could be defined as a rescue from God's judgment on the last day (see 1 Pet. 4:17), but it could also be described as a present possession long before the final day (see Eph. 2:8-9). Though it's obvious that Peter used the term in 1 Peter 1:5 to refer to a future event, the point of the passage is that the future event brings encouragement and strength in the present. For believers going through difficulties and trials, the hope of eternal life propels them to faithfulness to Christ even in the suffering they endure at the present time.

So that those being persecuted wouldn't feel like giving up, Peter reminded them that the full benefits of God's salvation may have been hidden from them at the moment, but God stood ready to fulfill all of His promises in due time.

How does the assurance of God's faithfulness give you encouragement to endure?

HOPE CELEBRATED (1 Peter 1:6-9)

⁶You rejoice in this, though now for a short time you have had to struggle in various trials ⁷so that the genuineness of your faith—more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

When we put suffering in its proper perspective in relationship to eternity, it produces joy. Facing persecution, the Christians struggled but still had joy in knowing that their suffering was for a short time. After that they would inherit the promises of God.

Suffering served as a test for faith. A faith that wasn't genuine wouldn't last, but those who endured suffering with true faith would continue to remain true to the Lord. No amount of persuasion could cause them to renounce their faith in Christ.

Peter contrasted faith with gold, which endured the heat of refinement to burn away impurities. Despite being one of the strongest metals, gold was part of the world order that would perish. Unlike gold, the faith of a believer would endure and result in praise to God, the very thing Peter had encouraged the Christians facing trials to express (see v. 3). Faithful believers who endure suffering will have the opportunity to return praise, glory, and honor to the Lord at the revelation of Jesus Christ. God's purposes may not be completely known in our own lifetime, but they'll be revealed when Christ appears in His second coming.

How is Christian joy different from a sentimental feeling of happiness? In what ways is this joy more satisfying?

⁸You love Him, though you have not seen Him. And though not seeing Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy⁹because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

BIBLE SKILL

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.

In 1 Peter 1:3 Peter talked about being born again. Read passages that use similar language that suggests God's making us alive or our being born of God. See Ephesians 2:4-5; Colossians 2:13; James 1:18.

Now read 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18.

What do these verses add to your understanding of the new birth?

Even though believers in Asia Minor hadn't seen Jesus in physical form, they still loved Him. Why? Because they believed in Him, and the living hope He provided produced a joy that was beyond explanation. Some people might have expected these believers to be crushed by their circumstances and their hardships, but instead, they had a real hope that caused them to look to the future with optimism. They knew a day was coming when they would overcome.

The reason for the joy that believers in Asia Minor felt was that they would in time receive the goal of their faith. By using the present participle *receiving* here, Peter revealed that not all the effects of salvation are future-oriented. The Christians certainly had a future hope, but they also had the presence of the Holy Spirit to strengthen them in their trials (see v. 12). However, the goal of faith wasn't merely to give strength in trials but to provide the salvation of their souls. Peter didn't mean that God cared only about one part of their lives, as opposed to their bodies. The term *soul* was often used interchangeably to represent the whole person.

Why is it important to celebrate hope when we face difficult trials? How can we celebrate hope?



► OBEY THE TEXT

Jesus offers a living hope to all who place their trust in Him. The promise of a secure salvation gives believers a reason to rejoice even when facing difficulties. In Christ we discover a clear picture of God's grace and salvation.

Share with another person in the group how you came to place your trust in Jesus. Emphasize how doing so gave you hope. How does hearing other people's stories encourage you?

List trials and difficulties you face today. Evaluate your response to the things you listed. Then list beside each item ways you can rejoice in that trial or difficulty.

Spend time in prayer celebrating God's grace and salvation in your life.



MEMORIZE

"You love Him, though you have not seen Him. And though not seeing Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy."
—1 Peter 1:8

USE THE SPACE PROVIDED TO MAKE OBSERVATIONS AND RECORD PRAYER REQUESTS DURING THE GROUP EXPERIENCE FOR THIS SESSION.

MY THOUGHTS

Record insights and questions from the group experience.

MY RESPONSE

Note specific ways you'll put into practice the truth explored this week.

MY PRAYERS

List specific prayer needs and answers to remember this week.

