

1 Peter 1:3-5
Hope in the storm

The Living Hope



*Corrie ten Boom and her sister, Betsie, both young single women in Holland, were committed Christians activists who had committed themselves to helping Jews escape the clutches of the Nazi forces that were occupying Holland during WW2. They succeeded at this for most of the pre-war and then the war years, until Feb.1944 when the ten Boom family was arrested and imprisoned along with others attending a prayer meeting in their home. The Jews hiding in their secret room remained undiscovered! While most of them were eventually released, Corrie, Betsie, and her father, Casper remained in prison. Unbeknownst to the sisters, their father sickened and died almost immediately in another facility – within 2 weeks. After a few months, Corrie and Betsie were both transferred to an extremely crowded internment/concentration camp in Germany. They were ushered into the barrack where they encountered extremely crowded conditions - bunks stacked almost to the ceiling with the narrowest of isles in-between. These bunks had thin cushions of filthy, foul-smelling straw scattered on bunk's framed surface. As they settled in, Corrie was almost immediately bitten by a flea! In alarm the sisters jumped out of their bunk, skin crawling, and conversed quietly together. Betsie had read in her devotions that morning, ***“...comfort the frightened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus ...”*** (1 Thessalonians 5:14-18) Betsie had the novel idea that this was God's answer to their prayers that morning. So they prayed again and thanked God for the things they could - for the miracle of being able to be together, for the little Bible that Betsie had been able to smuggle into the camp, for the gross overcrowding in the barracks so that more could hear when they spoke of Jesus or read their Bible aloud. And they almost choked as they thanked God for the thing they detested most, the biting fleas! Later, when they notice the guards refused to come into the crowded bunk area for any reason whatsoever, they learned that it was the guard's fear of getting fleas that kept them out! Therefore the barracks were never searched and their little Bible was never discovered! On the day they learned this fact, it was an epiphany about why God asks us to be thankful in all things, not just the good things! Their obedience in gratitude them a great sense of relief that in these unbelievably difficult circumstances, God held them secure in His love!



Before going on to our text this morning in vs. 3-5, I have to go back to the end of vs. 2 to a phrase I did not have the time to point out last week. It is Peter's greeting. It is a great example of the oxymoronic Christian faith. There are many seemingly contradictory elements to it. Here the church was under great stress everywhere! The security and livelihoods of Christians were being threatened on a continual basis. Their *lives* were being threatened and the lives of their family members by the peoples who hated them! Their beloved pastors/teachers, and the elders of their churches were in extreme danger in many places. And here, in this environment of danger, Peter greets Christ-followers with, not just the usual greeting, "*grace and peace to you*", but, "*grace and peace be yours in abundance*"! It is absolutely ludicrous to wish an *abundance* of grace and peace to people under the kind of pressures that his intended audience was under! Peter was an intelligent man! How could he make such a glaring mistake as this in his greeting?! Was it a gaff?! Nowadays I can just imagine the outrage on social media !



Well, of course it isn't a mistake! This was something that Peter had personal knowledge of. He was repeatedly a target of government harassment and his life perpetually under threat – real and **substantial** threats! The authorities would have liked to have been rid of him - as in Peter not being on the planet anymore! Yet, in the midst of this, he seems to have discovered a great miracle in his life! A man who has experienced the wonder of an abundance of grace and peace in the midst of the storm is a man who can wish and pray for that very things for others, don't you think?! Because of his personal prominence in the Christian movement, he had it worse than anyone, but he could testify to the miracle of Jesus being in the boat in the storm. I am reminded of an incidents when Jesus was still with the disciple that He was teaching them this very thing! This one is when the storm threatened to swamp the boat. [Matt. 8:23-27] [see also Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25] Jesus berates them for their faithlessness! They weren't going to die! He had plans for them! Until those plans were fulfilled, they weren't going anywhere!

Listen, our only real security in this world, is in Jesus. He is with us. We are in Him, and He is in us! Nothing can jostle us out of His hand! We are grasped securely! We will not slip from His grasp! In John's gospel chap. 10, Jesus says in verse 28 that we are in His hand, and in verse 29 that we are grasped in His father's hand also! Doubly secure! There could be no more secure a place of safety in the universe! So we can relax and let go! *I have gone into surgery a few times in my adult life, and I have to say that leading up to the surgery, I have experienced some anxiety - some nights of precious little sleep. But on the day of surgery, a strange peace has come over me. As I go through admissions, to my name being called, to undressing and putting that awful gown on, to laying in the pre-surgery room waiting for my surgeon to be ready to begin – a strange sense of peace has come over me – a letting go to the fact that it is totally out of my control and there is nothing I can do about it! I have to give my life over into the care of my surgeons and their assistants, and ultimately, into the care of God! And it's okay! No matter what happens, it's okay! I'm covered! I have Jesus in my boat! I'm trusting Him to get me through the surgery and its recovery period. I'm not going anywhere until the work He has for me is completed, or, if He does not have anything left for me to do, He can take me to my *new* home! I'm telling you, to give it all up – to stop grasping for more time on earth – to let go and trust in the love of God - is a place of *abundant* peace! I think that this is what is what Peter is referring to in his greeting – abundance of grace and peace - even when we do not like the way things are going – even when life is hard!



In 3-5 - Peter starts by bringing up the resurrection of Jesus. It is our source of hope! If we are "*in Christ*" – by faith "*born*" into Christ – then He is bringing us along with Him into His life, and immortality! Remember, I have spoken to the fact a week or two ago that when we are "*in Christ*" by faith, we are in position to get everything He has - titles, achievements, position, honor, and even His resurrection according to vs 3! Everything He has is transferred to us! We need it, because we come to God with nothing of our own, *with the exception of faith*. Faith is clearly differentiated from works in the apostolic writings, (clearly, and extensively) so if someone tells you, (and they will) that faith is not our own - that God gives faith to specific people, and only those that He gives faith to can come to Him and the rest are just out of luck, that is not the message of Jesus or the apostolic writings! God has done everything that we need to provide salvation for us. We simply believe and embrace His provision. That is faith! That is our part. We just say "yes". That is not works righteousness or us working for our own salvation. The people who tell you that if faith was on our part we would somehow be responsible for our own salvation – well, they are barking up the wrong tree - an empty tree. *Coon dogs do that sometimes – and there they sit baying around an empty tree – no coon in it! There is just no evidence in scripture of the faith/works equivalency that you hear so much about these days! On the other hand, there is an overwhelming amount of scriptural evidence *differentiating* faith from works and works from faith! I would not even concede that there is remotely ANYTHING in scripture that equates them! You would have to redefine the term "faith" by adding an outside philosophical view, to come to that conclusion that faith is "works" in the eyes of God. No, we are admonished in scripture to simply choose to welcome Jesus and His rule into our lives, and we are saved – secured for God by being placed "*in Christ*". Then, in time, we learn to love Him, and love Him being in charge, and increasingly so as we get to know Him and He is continually proven to be on our side and to be right about *EVERYTHING*!



Summary - So, verses 1,2 can be summed up with the apostolic assertion that God preplanned to have a people for Himself, even on a spiritually barren planet – a people who would be different from the others - **vs 2)** by way of Holy Spirit led obedience [**Rom. 8:12-14**]! He was intent on establishing His kingdom of light right in the middle of enemy territory – the kingdom of darkness! Going back to the first two verses in 1 Peter, God preplanned that He would have a people who renounced their rebel status – who no longer abused the God-given privilege of free will – who would switch sides and come over to Him, satisfied and happy to live under His rule!



HOW SECURE?!

But the question that was being asked even then by the people of God was “*Just how secure am I in my salvation?*” Times were precarious for Christ-followers, and in that uncertainty they wondered if **ANYTHING** could really be counted on – including their salvation! Peter is assuring them here that their salvation was built on the most certain of all foundations – upon Jesus Christ Himself!

Vs. 3 - “*...in His great mercy*” – God picked us out of the mire of a broken life with all its malfunctioning parts – misplaced **values**, inappropriate **reactions**, unjust and unwise **judgments**, damaged and uncontrolled **emotions**, a fatal attraction to **falsehood**, self-destroying **lusts**, and **passions**, and **impulses**, and **instincts** - **low relational IQ**, the lack of understanding about what **real love** is! All of this and so much more was the damage of self-rule and the abuse of free will! Yet our Creator loved us with His Son’s life and words of truth, in a place where truth was lost! Then there was His Son’s death and resurrection, and the continued advocacy of Jesus on behalf of the saved ones in Heaven’s court! Listen,.. we were wrecked – by our own hand! But He did not give up on us because He is a **great God** who is also **great in mercy**! When we by faith, believed and trusted Christ, requested His salvation, and were consequently secured in Christ by the Holy Spirit, we were given a new start, or “***new birth***”! Like Adam was fashioned out of the soil, we became clay in the hands of the great Potter, submitting to His eminently capable hands to shape and mold us into His very own likeness. We signed up for that when we gave our lives to Jesus!

You see, originally we were made in the image of God, but then we turned away from Him and remade ourselves in our own image. Peter uses the words “***new birth***” here in vs. 3. In being ***reborn*** then, we are back to our origins – back to being fashioned in the image of God! The spoilage of creation is so deeply imbedded into our human DNA – our fundamentally flawed character. ***BUT***, the work of the Holy Spirit changed us when we came to Jesus in faith, and He keeps on changing us, recreating us - ***perpetually*** recreating us and making us right (right in the head as the expression goes) and in the heart/core being – and ***all of it*** by God’s ”great mercy” showered upon us in Christ! We are a miracle of God! We are healed and made useful!



The foundation of all this new birth into a new life - of getting our head on straight, and our heart right, and our lives pointed in the right direction by way of our head, heart, and life **is this Living Hope!** We haven’t placed our hope in a historical figure who died long ago! We have a LIVING Savior who is still busy on our behalf! He is The Great I Am – the Ever Present One! He is the Creator of the universe and what He says goes! If He says we are saved and are truly in His possession, then that is exactly what we are – SAVED – saved unto God! It is not something we should waste our time worrying about! We have been secured into Christ by the Holy Spirit and ***nothing - could - be - more - secure!***

But what happens when we do wrong and know that we have sinned. What happens when we ***keep on*** sinning/doing wrong? All Christians have failed God and themselves! Do we then lose our salvation and have to win it back by not failing anymore? All Christians have sinned and continue to sin. John observed in **1 Jn. 1:6** says that “***if we say we have not sinned we deceive ourselves and there is no truth in us***” We are blind to the truth! People that are blind to their own sins, own faults, own flaws, are people who are hopelessly beyond the help of the living Christ! They are lying to themselves, to God, to others. Of course God and others already know the truth - I promise you! The “sinless” will never change! Why should they? So they are stuck in a prison of their own making! They cannot grow because they are not wrong! But, **1:10** says that if we really believe we haven’t sinned, we are calling God a liar! He says we ***have*** sinned and that we have continued to sin. [**1 John 2:1-2; 1:9**]