

1 Peter 1:4-7
Hope in the storm

The Faith/Hope/Love Nexus



Some things are just connected. They go together. They work well together. One leads to the other and then back again. They are more complete together. *Some sets of friends are that way. When I was a kid there were a group of neighbor kids that hung out together – there may have been about 9 of us between the ages of 9-12 or so. We actually called ourselves “the gang”! In an empty city lot we played baseball, hard-fought sandlot football games, kickball. We played a bruising game of king of the hill on a nearby dirt pile! What we called “the riverbank” was a river valley that ran through the middle of Wausau, and by our part of town, it had a steep 150 foot wooded incline from the city street level, down to the river. So we took advantage of our seclusion down there, shooting off firecrackers and exploring the big storm sewers that emptied into the Wisconsin River - crawling up them as far as we dared, playing tag on the trails! We could have gotten in a lot of trouble, especially down the riverbank, but we never really did! Those kids rarely if ever even swore! I actually don’t remember even one fight in the gang, and nothing perverted happened. We just got along, and there was never a dull moment - just so many adventures and fun times! We just all shared a great connection! It was sad when that group was broken up by age differences - some were older and hit puberty sooner, and that really changed the group dynamics. And some moved away eventually. There was no easy and quick way in those days to stay connected when someone moved away. Anyway, I remember the sadness of watching my band of friends dissolve and disappear from my life rather quickly - in about a year’s time. But I will always remember those days with real fondness. They were good days when life was just,.. well, just nonstop comradery - laughter, competition, roughhousing, just hanging out with your buddies. I mean, what more could a boy want! We had that “thing” together, and when one or more were missing we felt that too. It certainly cut down on our options for the day, and what each member of the gang brought to the group with their unique personalities - well, the chemistry of the group wasn’t the same if they were gone!



The *nexus* of spiritual friends. *Nexus*: a connected series, or group.



Vs. 3 – Hope

Vs. 4 – Security

Vs. 5 – Faith

Vs. 6 – Joy/rejoicing

Vs. 7 – Adversity

Vs. 8 – Love – (for Christ first)

Vs. 3 – Hope – (“a living hope”)

Hope is a must-have for the human. It is like human contact. You wouldn't think you would need that to live, but without it people are desperately unhappy. An amazing number of people are desperate enough, and feel isolated enough, and are so miserable that they end their own lives! *I remember the Tom Hanks movie “Cast Away” from about 20 years ago or so where he was marooned on a deserted island, and he found a volleyball in a Fed Ex package that had washed up on the shore. He had cut himself badly trying to make firewood, and his hand was all bloody when he grabbed the volleyball. A little later, he drew a smiley-face in his handprint, named it “Wilson” and talked to the volley like it was his friend. I mean, that is desperation, but no one who saw the movie thought it wasn't realistic - that it wasn't something someone might do who was *that* lonely for that long. *Right now we have had to endure this social distancing. It was okay for awhile while this virus scared us - and then as time has gone on, people have just had it! It is like a great thirst for human contact has built up over the weeks, and now months. People are trying to remain a few feet apart, but are also breaking the rules now almost with impunity!



Well, **hope** is that way. We are living creatures that are dying from the moment we are born! Yet our strongest instinct is to *live* and to go on living, even though we absolutely know that we must die at some point within the usual amount of a human lifespan! Without the hope of life after we die, of something more than experiencing this tiny blip in time, and it is a pretty miserable predicament to be in. I mean, some people do not think about it, and are surprised when the doctor announces that their run is over. But I think most *do* think about it and get that panicky feeling as if they are trapped with no way out – and actually we all are – trapped with no way out from our death! Except for the fact that we *know someone* who died, who was murdered, come back to life! Over 500 of his followers, depressed and discouraged, saw Him alive – and then went out with joy and gave their lives away to the cause of spreading the good new of HOPE through Jesus! This Jesus defeated death and has promised to defeat death in His followers too! Not that our bodies won't die, but that we will go on existing and and *really* existing in a way that is far more real and satisfying than anything this earthly life has to offer – and I have to say that this life has some pretty good parts to it. But this life's best cannot be favorably compared to the next life's worst! The best thing about this hope is that it is completely invested in the Risen One! His power and purposefulness in delivering on His promises to His people is the surest bet in this world!

Closely related to **hope** is **SECURITY** in this beautiful “nexus” of interconnected friends. And we see this in vs. 4 – an inheritance “*that can never perish, spoil, or fade*”! Why will it never perish, spoil, or fade? Because it is in the eternal person of Jesus Himself – not some inanimate object, like a bank vault or buried in a hidden cave were it could decay over time or be discovered and stolen by thieves, but it is held for us in the immortal, all-powerful, First Person Himself – the origin of *all* life and immortality! It is kept in Jesus in the security of His heaven and therefore it is a sure thing! There is no chance of our salvation being lost once it is secured in Him as He waits for us in His heaven. Like I said last week and (I think) the week before – when we place our faith in Christ, He saves us for Himself. He intends to include us in the retinue of people who will be with Him forever in His heavenly home! But to do that we must have the qualifications to enter. Many people think of God as **The Great Measurer**. They think that when they die they will be placed on the great scales of heaven, and if their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, they will get in. If not they will end up in hell! But that is definitely NOT the way it works! God indeed IS the Great Measurer, but he uses one measurement for every applicant, and it is more like a ruler than a scales! *It is like some of those rides at the fair. There is a painted line on a vertical board next to the gate, and a child has to stand against it and measure up to that line to get into that ride. Otherwise they are turned away and can only watch the others! Well the way it works in getting into heaven is that it is like Jesus stands up to the line and we get to climb onto His shoulders! He is the only one tall enough, **really good** enough, **pure** enough, **honorable** enough, **royal** enough to get in. He is the only one that was **chosen, elect, predestined, exalted** to the highest, **perfect** in character and obedience, unmatched in **courage and determination** to finish the mission He was sent here to accomplish! And **THAT** is what is waiting in heaven for us! Everything we need to get in is something Jesus has earned Himself! And when we get there, He is our ticket in! All He has accomplished, all He has earned, **is ours!** It is ALL contained, secured and protected in Him and since we are “**in Him**” by faith, **we** are given everything He has! We are **outfitted by Jesus** - given the gear we need - or eternal life with God! AND,.. it will not be like now, when we have Christ also, but are flawed, still do wrong, are encumbered with the baggage of our past with its many blunt traumas to our mind and spirit. No, nothing to hold us back - nothing to plague us and battle against our mind and will! No, in heaven we **become** what we have been given in Christ! In our earthly mindset now, we tend to be overcome with the thought or temptation of sin, as if doing a wrong thing will spice up our life and make it more interesting! That would make heaven a very boring place, right? But do not think it for a minute – not even a second! I think being perfect in obedience to God will enrich our lives and obliterate our earthly limitations in ways that we cannot imagine! But,.. the point is – it is **so very secure!** Nothing could ever be more secure than what we have in Christ now and what we will be handed/gifted on that day when we so desperately need it to get in! *It is **our** ticket, but it has Christ’s Name on it! I will live at ease in this knowledge, and when I am at ease, when I feel secure, I do better, not worse at following Jesus and putting Him first! I am able to trust Jesus with my choices in life. I am not afraid! It is a lock! That’s **REAL** hope!



In verse 5 we see our third friend – **FAITH!** I cannot see Jesus or touch Him! I know He is there in heaven, but I cannot see Him. I do trust the people who were the witnesses of His life and ministry though! They did not take on the life-long task of bearing witness of Jesus to a hostile world for the sake of **money, sex, or power** – the usual motives! What these eyewitnesses said about Him rings of truth, consistency, authenticity, vibrancy, credibility, relevance! I believe Peter! I believe Paul! I believe John! I believe James! They write of Jesus, and of the will of God for Christ’s followers, and they write with a sincerity and profundity that cannot be faked/ manufactured! I’ve read in many other “holy” books. They have read to me as fake as a wooden nickel painted in chrome! It is the right color, but it is still unauthentic – still just wood underneath the paint! It is startling that so many people could fall for it! But this, [**hold up Bible**], this is so different, so beautifully authentic! It is through my trust in the Spirit of God that I firmly believe that He was able to use the human authors represented in here to write perfect scripture even though they were imperfect men - like me! They were “*carried away*” like a prophet possessed by the Spirit of God, speaking things that God wanted them to say in exactly the way He wanted them to say it, but still retaining their own personalities in their writings! It is just the most amazing document! And so, it is through them that I know at least some of the inheritance of faith that He plans on bestowing upon me - the many gifts and honors He will be passing on to me. It is through the apostolic witness and instruction that I know *what* I know! I have every reason to believe that they are telling the truth of God to me/to us! I have spent a lifetime of inquiry – of looking into these things to see if it could be fake or just plain wrong! Everything I have uncovered in my lifetime says that it is right, sensible, reliable, powerful, bringing health and balance to mind and body, making me into an instrument of the True God – forged, fashioned, and ground and honed to a sharp edge to become a useful asset to His purposes!



I do not have time today to **finish** explaining the interconnectedness of this nexus of spiritual traits and I don’t want to skip over any. I have gotten through three today. There are six listed in the text, so we will finish up on those next week.

Well, I see this text breaking down into 6 main sections that are like good friends – totally interconnected. They are all excellent qualities on their own, but any one of them is *not as good* on its own as when it is interconnected with the others. There is so much more that can be done when God finds that they are all present and working together in one person, and especially in a group of such individuals! Those individuals become the true church and are very useful to the purposes of God!



Vs. 3 – Hope

Vs. 4 – Security

Vs. 5 – Faith

Vs. 6 – Joy/rejoicing

Vs. 7 – Adversity – the proving ground of hardship and testings

Vs. 8 – Love - for Christ first! He has to be the focus. The focus is not the love we have for each other, but the love of Him! Once we are loving Him, the love for each other follows like a train follows its locomotive! It only has one way to go. It follows behind, down the tracks. Then it is in its proper order and can't be ruined by the normal pettiness and human foolishness that normally erode human love!