**Week 2**

***A Living Hope***

***1 Peter 1:1-12***

**18–19 April 2022**

**Peter’s Past –** As Peter wrote this letter, he was well aware of his many “failure spots” from the past. But he wanted his readers—including us!—to learn from *the truth* of what God has to say and from *his example* (laid up many times against the example of Christ).

**Peter’s Description of Himself –** We tend to blow past the opening greetings in the epistles, but there is always “good stuff” in them, so we want to closely observe how Peter began this letter. Peter identified himself as an *apostle* of Christ, i.e. a person to whom Jesus had personally appeared and called to follow Him. We believers today are *disciples*, but we are not *apostles* since Jesus has not appeared to us in bodily form. So Peter refers to himself as “an apostle”, but note that he does not say “ Peter, the chief apostle” or “Peter, one of The Three.” We can sense his humility because he doesn’t overstate his role, and this is all the more impressive since he would have been very highly revered among Christians of his day.

**The Intended Recipients of the Letter –** As you marked the map in the workbook, you may have noticed that the five areas Peter mentions in his letter form a rough circle in Asia Minor. The letter was probably intended to be circulated around and read to churches in each of these five areas. Peter describes the recipients as “elect exiles”. They are elect because they are *chosen*. Note that there is a future inference to this term. Just as a “bride-elect” is not yet a bride, even though she has been chosen by her husband-to-be, so believers have been chosen by God to receive some very important future blessings as the bride-elect of Christ.

Peter also describes his readers as “exiles”, meaning *scattered foreigners*. Even if they weren’t foreigners in the literal sense, they had been called as believers to live a life that was radically different from the lives of the people around them. Just as Abraham was called out of Ur to become an exile for the rest of his life, so were these people…and so are we. We, too, are called out of a former way of living.

**The Triune Nature of God –** The *word* “trinity” does not appear anywhere in Scripture, but we find the *concept* of a triune God in many places. Peter begins his letter with a reference to all three members of the Godhead (1:2). He gives his readers three important facts about themselves in relation to God: we are foreknown by the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, and made holy for obedience to Jesus Christ. These three statements reveal the role of each member of the Godhead in our salvation:

1. The Father *initiates* the plan of salvation. He planned it from before the foundation of the world.
2. The Son *accomplishes* the plan of salvation. He goes to the cross and dies the death that we could not die to cover the sins that we could not atone for and then rose again on the third day.
3. The Holy Spirit *applies* our salvation. He speaks truth to us through the Word of God.

**We Were Chosen for Obedience to Christ –** God’s purpose in choosing us was that we would become “obedient to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood.” When he mentioned the blood, Peter was alluding to the covenant ceremony described in Exodus 24:4-8. The nation of Israel had just received the Law for the first time, and they solemnly swore that they would obey everything that the Lord had commanded. Moses, knowing that they would often fail to obey, took some of the blood from the altar and sprinkled it on the people as a covering for their sin. We, too, should desire and love to obey God’s law because we want to be like Him. For example, we should want to be people of truth because we worship a God who is truthful. We should want to be faithful in our relationships because God is faithful in His relationships with us. The law illustrates the character of God, and we want to obey the law because we love the God it reveals. Ours is a joyful obedience out of gratitude for the finished work of Christ on the cross. Christianity is *not* just about relationships: it is also about rules that we should delight to follow. As David said, “O Lord, I love Your law and on it I meditate day and night.” David knew that there is joy in seeking to obey . . . and provision for when he did not. The apostle John said that our keeping Jesus’ commands is evidence that we have truly been born again (see 1 John 2:3-6).

**Grace and Peace –** This little blessing incorporated elements relevant to both Gentile and Jewish believers. “Grace to you” was the common greeting used among Greek Gentiles, while the Hebrew word “shalom” (peace) was a greeting commonly used among the Jews. So Peter used this combination greeting to include all his hearers at once and to remind them that they are all one in Christ.

Peter continues to skillfully use common practices that were familiar to some of his audience, but adapt them to his particular purpose in writing. As he moves from the greetings to the main body of his letter, he invokes a blessing on God, which was customarily done at the beginning of a Jewish worship gathering. Peter takes this familiar custom and connects it to the Lord Jesus Christ. He has already introduced the concept of the trinity, and now he begins a discussion of God the Father.

**Born Again –** Peter says that God the Father has caused us to be born again; i.e. we placed our faith in Christ and became a child of God at some point in the past. This is the first of “three P’s of our salvation”: at the moment of our salvation, we were freed from the *penalty* of our sin. We refer to this as our *justification*. Peter also says that we were born again to a *living* hope, i.e. not a false hope or a dead hope or a misplaced hope or a partial hope. Nor were we born again to hopelessness in any form. Our hope is living because the One who secured it for us is alive and seated at the right hand of God the Father.

**Our Inheritance –** Our inheritance *is* our salvation. This inheritance is:

* imperishable – It cannot die.
* undefiled – It cannot spoil.
* unfading – It cannot disappear.
* kept in Heaven for us – It is absolutely safe.

So we have an inheritance waiting for us that is better than anything here on earth. But how do you get an inheritance? Someone has to die. In this instance, we can rejoice in our inheritance now because while it came at a great price, the One who secured it for us is now alive.

**Glorification –** There are aspects of our salvation that will be revealed in the future. There is some way in which we will be saved that we haven’t yet experienced. We refer to this as our *glorification*. It is the third “P” of our salvation, when we will be freed from the very *presence* of sin.

**A Cause for Rejoicing –** Right now, however, it doesn’t feel like there is reason for hope. We are grieved by the sin around us and in us, as well as by all the hardships that we see. But Peter reminds us that this condition is only for “a little while”, echoing words that Paul also used when speaking of suffering and affliction. He isn’t saying that we rejoice because of our trials, but we rejoice because one day there won’t *be* any more trials. Trials are only for this time of our exile.

But we can also rejoice because our trials serve a very definite purpose. They reveal the tested genuineness of our faith. Peter paraphrases Job 23:10, when Job said, “He knows the way that I take; when He has tried me, I shall come out as gold.”

**God the Son and the Holy Spirit –** In verses 7 and 8Peter moves on to the second member of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, and says that we love Him even though we can’t see Him now. Peter explains that we can rejoice because we are *now obtaining* the salvation of our souls. This is not a past sense or a future sense of salvation, but the present sense when we are being freed from the *power* of sin, the second of the three “P’s” of salvation. This is our *sanctification*, a work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Spirit gives us new desires that allow us to choose rightly. The outcome of our faith is that we grow in holiness.

**Peter’s Words of Encouragement –** Peter commended these believers for their faith in Christ and their obedience to Him. Remember that Peter had had the privilege of seeing Christ face to face and sitting under His ministry personally for several years—and yet he had denied Christ at one point. But these believers in Asia Minor had never seen Christ, and yet followed Him faithfully. They were actually in an enviable position because they had the Holy Spirit indwelling them and helping them to live holy lives—as do we.

**The Prophets –** In verses 10-12 Peter tells his readers that **the Old Testament prophets were excellent students of the parts of the Bible that they had**. They had been given pieces of the picture of the gospel, but certainly not all. Yet they scrutinized and carefully studied the scriptures they had, trying to understand how the pieces fit together.

**The Apostles and Teachers –** Who was it who had “preached the good news” to Peter’s original hearers? It was the apostles and the teachers who had come after Pentecost. So Peter is telling them, “You have the whole thing! You have all the pieces of the gospel puzzle. The prophets only saw part of it, but you get to see all of it.”

**Angels –** Peter closes this section of his letter by saying that angels long to look into these matters. Just think about that: angels cannot fully understand the gospel! The reason they can’t understand it is that they have never sinned. They can look and rejoice as we have it applied to our hearts, but they have no firsthand understanding of what it means to be redeemed. Peter was telling his hearers in the midst of their deep trials, “The prophets, whom you revere so deeply, did not have what you have. And do you understand that in possessing a salvation that was and that is and that is to come, you are the very envy of the angels!”