

A living hope

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[0 : 00] 1 Peter 1-12 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood, may grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what personal time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

[1 : 54] It was revealed to them that they were serving, not themselves, but you, in the things that have now been announced to you, through those who preached the good news to you, by the Holy Spirit, sent from heaven, things into which angels longed to look.

Why don't I lead us in prayer as we start? But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Amen. Peter, in his letter, has a grand, grand goal. And he wants to build a people, and that's what it's going to be for us this morning.

He wants to build a people dedicated to a single, unrelenting, and glorious cause. And the cause has one goal, and only one, to win the worship of the world.

To win the worship of the world. In other words, Peter wants to build a people of worship winners. Now, David Foster Wallace, he was a leading philosopher, and he said this, about worship.

[3 : 13] Everyone worships. The only choice you get is what you worship. And it would be worth thinking, what is that for you this morning? We live in a world of worship.

Everyone has something they live for above anything else. Perhaps it's family, perhaps career, perhaps prestige. But everyone worships. And Peter wants to raise our eyes and ignite our hearts and prepare the exiled saints for battle to wage a war of worship on the world.

To win the worship of the nations. To become worship winners. And what Peter wants to win worship to is the glory of the one true God.

And 1 Peter is perfect for this. You'll see that the title, do keep it on the back of your service sheets. There's a handout which will be useful for following our time together this morning. It's a manual or manifesto on how to win the worship of the world.

And Peter makes abundantly clear in his letter that that is his goal. The verse that I read in our prayer. Have a look with me again at 2 verse 9. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.

[4 : 30] That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Or 4 verse 11. Whoever speaks as one who speaks oracles of God.

Whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies. In order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. In other words, we proclaim and live in such a way that the nations proclaim the glory of God. We proclaim and live in such a way that we win the worship of the nations.

We proclaim and live in such a way that we become worship winners. That is what Peter means by attaining the glory of the nations. Peter is jealous.

He's jealous for their worship. In fact, glory is all over this letter. Have a look with me. 1 verse 7. So that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold, that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[5 : 40] Verse 11. Inquiring what person or time the spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 2 verse 9.

Proclaim his excellencies. 4 verse 11. As we've said. 4 verse 14. It comes up again. Over and over and over you can see that glory, glory, glory is the big idea for Peter.

And often I worry when I've heard 1 Peter taught in the past, and I won't say who for the sake of not disparaging them. I think that 1 Peter is often taught in a very passive way.

That the saints of Christ are to stand firm, buckle down, white knuckle it, hunker down and survive the onslaught. But that is just not the tone of this letter. That is just not the tone of this manifesto.

This is a wartime manifesto. It is active, aggressive. It is front-footed. In other words, Peter wants his readers to steal themselves and strike out into the world to win their worship.

[6 : 46] Have a look with me at 1 verse 13. Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded. Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 verse 22. Love one another earnestly. 2 verse 12. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

3 verse 13. Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? Zealous for what is good. Over and over, we see in this letter, this is a deeply aggressive, active, front-footed letter. But there's an added complication to this role. Yes, Peter wants to win the worship, but it comes at a cost. It comes at a cost.

Persecution. Constant, uncomfortable isolation and alienation. Slandering and low-level hostility always.

[7 : 51] That's the suffering that Peter says will happen, will happen, when we engage in this war of worship. 1 verse 1. You are elect exiles.

Precious, yes, but you're foreigners. 1 verse 6. Grieved by various trials. 2 verse 4. Rejected by men.

2 verse 12. When they speak evil against you. I could go on. But Peter wants to make clear, and this is going to be the big idea that we're going to be focusing on this morning, that this suffering is not a bug.

This slander is not a fault. This ridicule and hostility is not a mistake. Rather, and I need us to hear this this morning, rather, Peter sees our suffering as the vital ingredient of winning the worship of the world.

I'm going to say that again so that we don't miss it. Peter sees our suffering as the vital ingredient of reaching the world. Because the more the saints suffer and rejoice in doing so, the more they show the all-surpassing majesty and glory of the one true God.

[9 : 09] And so here we are in the introduction of Peter's wartime manifesto to win the worship of the world, to turn the saints in Turkey into worship winners.

And he lays out just two key ideas, which he's going to spend the rest of the entire book unpacking for us. The first is, saints of Christ, what you have is supremely valuable.

What you have is supremely valuable. Therefore, joyfully suffer for it. Therefore, joyfully suffer for it. So that leads me on to my first point.

This is what we're going to see about the eternal value. Point one, a glorious inheritance, eternal life. A glorious inheritance, eternal life.

Now our passage this morning from one all the way through to 12 is arranged in three parts. And it's like a sandwich. Okay, I love sandwiches. So this is a very useful illustration for us this morning. It's a sandwich.

[10:03] And it's arranged in future, present, past. Yes, that's the order. Future, present, past. So future is verses 2 to 5. Present, verse 6 to 9. And the past, 10 and 12.

And it's a future, past sandwich. Okay, you're with me so far. Future, past, sandwich with present in the middle. So we're going to look at the outside of the sandwich first. So don't worry about verses 6 to 9 at the moment.

We're looking at the outside of the sandwich first. Future and past. So to begin with, future, verses 2 to 5. Have a look with me. According to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood, may grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

Who by God's power being guarded through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Here in these verses, Peter lays out his stall to the identity of true Christian believers.

[11:18] Loved by the Trinity, verse 2. For knowledge of God the Father. Sanctification of the Spirit. Sprinkled by the blood of Jesus. Born again, verse 3. He's caused us to be born again through a living hope.

They are new people. And compared to the world, this is glorious and far, far better. Now, one of my favorite people in the world was my parents' best friends at university.

And they are an incredible example of what it means to love the most vulnerable in society. And they had four children of their own. And if that wasn't enough, they decided to foster two babies at the same time.

So there were six. It was a pretty ridiculously loud household. Somehow, the husband only needs four hours of sleep a night. I don't understand how he does it, but there you are. And they fostered two babies for the best part of ten years.

And the last baby that they fostered was a little boy called Jimmy. Now, Jimmy had a pretty horrible upbringing. Well, not even an upbringing. He was a heroin addict in the womb. He was taken from his mother, who was 15, and his father, who was 40, and a violent criminal, at two days old.

[12:24] And he never cried, because we found out later that he was severely autistic. And Fiona and Julian fostered him to the age of two.

And two is about the age that you're meant to give them up for adoption. And when they gave Jimmy up for adoption, no one would adopt him, because of the severe learning difficulties, severe autism, and addiction problems that he had.

So what did they do? Well, they adopted him. They adopted Jimmy. Jimmy is now 11 years old, full of energy, full of zip. He curses like a sailor. And he's wonderful.

He's wonderful. But Jimmy is a new man now, isn't he? He has a new identity. He's loved beyond his wildest dreams. He's provided for. He has a new last name, a new passport, a new identity.

Jimmy is no longer from that crushed and horrible family. He has a new identity. And that is a small picture of what every saint in Christ has now received.

[13:24] You've been taken out of this vile, perishing, dead world, and been brought again into a glorious, eternal, and never-fading inheritance.

Christian, if you are a Christian here today, you are richer than you could possibly imagine. And if you don't think you are, that is an issue with our hearts, rather than with the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And C.S. Lewis, in his essay, *Weight of Glory*, had this to say about the supreme value of what man has in Christ. It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak.

We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition, when infinite joy is offered us. Like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum, because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea.

In other words, we are far too easily pleased. Christian, what you have in Christ waiting for you is supremely valuable and glorious.

[14:27] That's the future, an eternal inheritance. Second part of our sandwich, which we're going to look at, is verses 10 to 12. And Peter turns from looking to the future to looking to the past.

Have a look with me at 10 to 12. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit

of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Can you imagine how comforting those verses would have been to our little scattered churches? We saw, as Helen very well read, those very difficult names in chapter 1, verse 1, these little, little house churches, six Christians in Bithynia, seven Christians in Asia, nine Christians in Pontus, tiny little house churches.

Can you imagine the temptation that it must have been for them to feel so utterly insecure? Utterly insecure. What do you mean, Peter, that we are the high point of God's great plan?

[15:41] There's eight of us and we're being persecuted. And you can also imagine the insecurity they must have been feeling given that persecution. So Peter lays out for them here wonderfully that not only is this the plan, but you little Christian house churches, you are the culmination of God's great and wonderful narrative.

Have a look with me again at verse 11. The prophets inquired and searched carefully, and that's the Old Testament writers, inquiring what personal time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and subsequent glories.

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you. In other words, little house church of eight, little church in a school in Dulwich.

Isaiah was not writing for anybody else other than you. Ezekiel was prophesying about you, little house church in Asia. The whole Old Testament and the angels in heaven were longing to finally see the day when they would see the glory of Christ displayed in you, little church of eight.

Now some of you know that I find Mormonism fascinating, not thinking of a career change, but just as an intellectual pursuit. And I found out, because I was very interested in my lineage, and I was looking into the details of how I might find out who my great-great-grandparents is, but I was sad to find out that, I don't know if you know this, that Mormons own all heritage data in the world, if you know that.

[17:13] So you know if you go on heritage.com and you put in your details, it's the Mormons that own that. So I didn't really want to give my money to the Church of Latter-day Saints, so I had to call up my opah, who's very, very into this stuff.

And it was wonderful. He managed to trace that my great-great-aunt Ethel, or whatever it is, is from Orkney, and her family originally from Norway. So maybe that explains the kind of Viking anger issues, I don't know.

But it was interesting seeing my lineage. It wasn't particularly encouraging, but it was interesting. But imagine the Church here seeing that your lineage, your lineage, little eight Church, is the great Isaiah himself.

Your lineage, little nine-person Church in Bithynia, is Ezekiel himself. They were writing for you.

And this is what the Saints have. This is our sandwich, a glorious inheritance.

They are the high point of Scripture. What they have is a glorious inheritance, eternal life. And that leads me on to my second and final point. A glorious charge.

[18:11] Suffer joyfully. A glorious charge. Suffer joyfully. We're still not clear, though, are we, on how this dispersed, isolated group of tiny little churches are supposed to win the worship of the whole world.

We haven't answered that question. How are they supposed to get the nations around them to worship and give glory to God? Well, this is where Peter focuses in on the present, verses six to nine, and shows us that the way that the Saints do that is by rejoicing in their suffering.

Have a look with me at verses six to nine. In this being your inheritance, you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you've been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you've not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him. And rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

In other words, it is the suffering, the joyful suffering, that results in the praise and glory of Jesus Christ. In other words, as the world sees the Christian joyfully suffering, well, then they are certainly

left with questions to ask.

[19 : 42] The images of gold being refined. Now, I'm not an expert on gold, but in order to get pure gold, you need to apply immense heat to it, so maybe you could bring it into this room.

You take your rock with gold minerals in it, and you bake it at extreme temperatures of about 700 degrees C, which is, I hear, what the temperature is going to be like on Monday. The hotter the fire, the more of the impurities you remove.

So in other words, as the heat goes up, the gold becomes more pure. So that when the gold is presented before you, you can see its value, as more and more of the impurities are removed.

Well, that is exactly the case for the Christian with suffering. As the heat of suffering burns around the saints, and they rejoice, they are demonstrating the purity and value of their faith, more precious than gold.

A little heat removes few purities, and a little suffering shows little value of our faith to the world. But as the saints suffer, and then they rejoice as the flames of suffering grow, purifying more and more, the value of their faith will become more and more clear.

[20 : 58] The more they suffer and yet rejoice, the more they show how valuable their inheritance is. Now this probably feels like an immensely alien concept to us.

How on earth can rejoicing in suffering lead to evangelizing the world to the one true God? Well, let me illustrate. Richard Wombrant, and I'm probably mispronouncing his name, but he was a Christian in communist-occupied Romania, and he said this in his book called *Tortured for God*, about how the suffering of the saints wins the world.

When one Christian was sentenced to death, he was cruelly allowed to see his wife one more time before being executed. His last words to his wife were, quote, You must know that I die loving those who kill me.

They don't know what they do, and my last request of you is to love them too. Don't have bitterness in your heart because they killed your beloved one.

We will meet in heaven. These words impressed the officer of the secret police who attended this discussion between the two. How did Richard Wombrant know this? Well, because he later told me the story in prison where he'd been sent for becoming a Christian.

[22 : 15] In other words, that same guard, when he saw that exchange, what did he see? What did he see? He saw a Christian exile, certain of his future inheritance and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, rejoice and love his persecutors on the verge of his execution.

Given what our brother was about to lose, how valuable is his faith? How valuable is his faith? How valuable did it look to God and to the world in that moment?

Particularly in the context of verse 9. Do you see verse, sorry, verse 8? Though you've not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him. This is a faith that our brother who was executed, well, he's never met Jesus.

He was about to, but he'd never met him and he'd never seen his inheritance. Yet he was still willing to forego execution for the sake of his beloved. How valuable did his faith look in that moment?

Valuable enough to lose his wife. Valuable enough to die. Valuable enough to be murdered.

Valuable enough to love and pray for his executioners and ask his wife to do the same.

[23 : 31] And that God could not help but marvel and turn to the one true God. So much so that he ended up in exactly the same prison he used to work in for murdering the saints of Christ.

Do you see, Christian brother and sister, as the persecution rises and the saints continue to rejoice, the value of their faith and their inheritance is demonstrated to the world.

Suffering is not a bug. It is a vital ingredient in the winning, the war of worship in the world. It is essential. So Peter has laid out his soul to conclude.

I'm very excited that we're going to be spending time in this letter together over summer, but I am slightly concerned that the implications for me as I've been reading this are large. It's wonderful that we have Jackie here.

Peter has made absolutely clear that these Christians have a wonderful inheritance to look forward to, but they have a job to do in the meantime. They are to show a dying world the supreme value and excellence of their inheritance.

[24 : 42] And they are to do so by rejoicing in their suffering for that very inheritance. They are to be worship winners for a lost and dying world, and they are to do so as they rejoice in suffering.

As I said, this book, I think, for us, could have some very terrifying implications in its scope. I think often, and I include myself in all of this, to be clear, I think often we as believers think that the best way to evangelize the world, to win their worship, is to just keep our heads down, be nice people, and wait for someone to ask us about our faith.

Certainly that's what I do. We choose the path of least resistance, the path of the least amount of suffering. We pick our battles, as we say. We win the right to tell people about Jesus, as we say. But that, I think, if we follow the logic of 1 Peter, means we lose out on the greatest weapon of our role of worship winning. Suffering.

If we suffer little, we have very, very little opportunity to show the world the value of our inheritance. It's very easy to rejoice in front of the world in the things that the world already values, but they won't care about your faith.

[26 : 05] If our lives look just like the world's, if we rejoice in, take pleasure in, and spend our time pursuing exactly what the world does, why would they trust in the one true God?

How could they trust in the one true God? It is much, much harder, and more glorious, to live in a way that suffers now, incites ridicule now, and is infinitely more effective at winning the glory of the world.

Now, I'm not saying, don't mishear me, that suffering in and of itself is good. It is not. Nor am I saying, just go and suffer for the sake of it. Certainly, Peter would want to make clear, don't suffer for being sinful, but do seek opportunities to suffer for your faith, and rejoice in doing so.

Because suffering for your faith is glorious. It wins the worship of the world. Now, as I was preparing this, I thought very easy in many ways to think, well, Richard Wunbrandt, it was quite easy for him to rejoice in his suffering because there was so much of it.

But how does that apply, or what might that look like for us here? And I've come up with some examples. I would love you to talk about this with each other. Challenge me on it. It would be great for us to be thinking this through together.

[27 : 21] You might, as a mum, go into school and refuse to let your child partake in pride, sex ed classes, or to read gender fluidity affirming books.

You would be called a bigot in the parents' WhatsApp group. And so then you go out of your way to pray every day for those parents, serve them practically, and love them to the best of your abilities. You might go on a pro-life march, hand out flyers to your office, telling them you're doing so because Jesus Christ is Lord and he determines who gets to live or die. Your colleagues tell you you're a woman hater, HR takes out a disciplinary action against you, and you go out of your way to serve and help with the work of those who malign you.

You honour your boss and never engage in office politics or gossip. You read your Bible on your desk in the office in the morning, and you joyfully engage with those who mock you because you get to rejoice in your suffering.

You might be told to stop inviting people to read the Bible with you at work or join the CE group that you're trying to set up. So you keep doing it. You get pulled in front of HR and told to stop.

[28 : 29] So you then write to HR asking as part of the diversity scheme, could you run a Christianity Explore course at work whilst taking the time to ask how their kids are doing, not sarcastically, and if their building problem has been rectified.

You get fired, but you leave in such a way rejoicing and being persecuted for Christ that leaves everyone in your former office shocked to the core that you count this job worthless in comparison to the surpassing glory of what you have in Christ.

You might be at school. Your classmates take the mick out of you, mock you for being a Christian, so you go out of your way every morning in form time before register to read your Bible and do your quiet time in front of them so that when they mock you, you can identify the ones that you need to love.

You remember their birthdays, you buy them a thoughtful gift, you tell them you're praying for them when you see them struggle, and you take every opportunity you possibly can to speak of the joy that Christ has won for you and his eternal gift.

You might, at the cricket club you play for, be taken to one side and asked to maybe stop with the Jesus stuff so much at a secular organization. So obviously you keep sharing your faith with your mates at the club, and whilst doing so, you're at every practice, you remember their struggles, you tell them you're praying for them, you never belittle or malign anyone so that when they ask you to leave the club, they will be ashamed to realize they did so simply because you shared the gospel of

the Lord Jesus Christ.

[29 : 52] Around the family dinner table, you might be the only Christian, so you speak of the joy that you have in knowing that Christ has died for you and won you an imperishable, underfiled inheritance. You can see your family members looking uncomfortable.

Your dad takes you to one side after to ask you, please stop talking about Jesus in front of the family. It's weird. You cheerfully and lovingly tell him you couldn't possibly do that, but you absolutely go out of your way to be the best daughter and family member that you possibly can. You might invite friends from the area around to your house, and they see the fact that you haven't done it up. You haven't done major building works at all. Your furniture is tired, and your garden is plain. In fact, it's slightly embarrassing how plain your house is, and the food isn't great. It's average. You can see them rolling their eyes at how little you've done with your house, and you joyfully talk about how you use your money to support overseas mission in countries hostile to the gospel of your Lord Jesus.

In fact, you share that you've budgeted to only live on 10% of your salary and to give the rest away. Your guests think you're insane and let you know as much, but you rejoice because they have seen the immense and surpassing worth of the gospel that you live for.

[31 : 01] You might not send your children to private school, even though you could afford to do so, and instead make clear that the only thing you care about to your non-Christian in-laws is that your child lives to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

You give the money away to Christian camps for teenagers that you would have spent on their education, and you joyfully accept the criticism from your mother-in-law for not putting your child first. Finally, you might, just insanely enough, quit your well-paid job and give your life to full-time, word-based teaching work, and your family think you're mad, your parents take the mick out of you, or sorry, are worried about you, your friends mock you, and you rejoice because you've shown them the surpassing worth of the glorious inheritance you have.

The more we suffer, the more we show the value of what we are living for. And all of this, as I finish, can be summarized in a question I want us to leave thinking about this morning.

If our lives, where we spend our time, what we spend our money on, what our houses look like, what we hope for our children, looks just like the world, well then you will never suffer for it, and the world will never follow the one true God.

And why on earth would we expect them to? Why would we expect them to? Our mouths tell them one thing, Christ is eternally valuable, and our lives tell them the opposite, that the world is what to live for.

[32 : 33] We can either confirm the world in how they are living, or we can challenge them in living distinctively, joyfully suffering for Christ. So this is the introduction to Peter's radical manifesto to create an army of worship winners.

I hope we're beginning to see how the implications of this book could be radical for us. I hope it is. My great prayer from 1 Peter is that the community of Grace Church Dulwich would live so obviously as exiles in the world that you would suffer for it.

That's my prayer for you, that you would suffer. You can come and call me out on that later. It's my prayer for myself as well. Why? Because then we get to display more and more the all-surpassing worth of our glorious inheritance in Christ.

Let me pray. Dear Lord, thank you so much for this message in 1 Peter. Thank you that it is not naive, that it is honest with us about what living for you might look like.

Please help us to think through what it might look like to be grieved by various trials because of how we live for you, but to rejoice in the fact that we get to do so so that we might win the worship of the world.

[33 : 56] Amen.