

Gospel of Hope

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[0 : 00] So, we are blessed today to be continuing in our study of 1 Peter. And 1 Peter is, we're preaching straight through it, and we've gotten, today we'll finish chapter 1 and begin into chapter 2.

And this book is by some called the Book of Hope. Some have said that Peter is the New Testament version of the Book of Job.

That he often talks about when you're in the midst of suffering and struggle and difficulty, then still have hope. And so, that message comes up many times in this book, not as much in today's section as in some other sections.

So, let's go to the Lord in prayer as we begin. Heavenly Father, we praise you today, O God. You are good. Hallelujah.

The songs we just sang reminded us of your blood shed for us. The forgiveness we have in Christ. The victory that's ours. And in you we stand.

[1 : 08] Hallelujah. The world has tried to knock us down many times. Lord, we know each other in this church. And we know the difficulties and trials that we've gone through.

But we're standing. And we stand firm and strong in the name of Jesus. Lord, now speak to us through your word again. Teach us your ways. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. In today's section of this book, we're in 1 Peter and we're going to start with around verse 13. But Peter in this section is really saying, he wants to remind you who you are.

And he's saying, be who you are in Christ. And then he's also at the same time talking about, you need to become who you are in Christ.

Now, you're all familiar with a chameleon. The most amazing thing about a chameleon is that this lizard, whatever color it's on, it's able to change its body to the same color.

[2 : 12] So if it's on green leaves, it's kind of green. If it's on brown grass, it turns brownish. It's an amazing thing that God gave these chameleon lizards the ability to do.

Well, unfortunately, we human beings by nature tend to be chameleons. Wherever we go, we kind of sense what's going on in the group and what's the environment like.

And we kind of tend to blend in. We don't want to be different. We had this urge to go with the crowd. But God has called us to be more than chameleons.

He has said to us, no matter where you are, no matter what you're doing, you are still to be like Jesus Christ. Because you have been born again.

Because this blood of Christ has been shed for you. And because you are no longer a part of this world. You've been called out of this world. So Peter is encouraging us.

[3 : 13] He's saying, be who you are. Don't be like the rest of the world. Be who you are in Christ. And also become who you are. Now, becoming like Jesus is one of those things in the Bible that's a case of, yes, you're already there.

But then, not yet. And an elephant is actually a pretty good example of that. Many times in the Bible, we come across this theme or this concept.

Yes, it's already yours in Christ. And yet, you haven't fully realized it. The promise is there. The hope is there. We see again the theme of hope in the book of Peter.

But there's more to come. And they say, well, what's an elephant got to do with that? Well, when an elephant becomes pregnant, it's going to be two whole years before the baby elephant comes into the world.

Now, you mothers that have had babies, somewhere around eight or nine months, you've had enough. What if you had to carry that young'un for two whole years?

[4 : 32] That would be a challenge. And then the story's not over. Here, this baby elephant's in the world. So, that baby elephant, if it's a female, doesn't reach full growth until she's 20 years old.

And the males don't reach full growth until they're 35 or 40. Now, what's the point I'm trying to make? How is an elephant like what Peter's talking about? From the moment that that elephant became pregnant, she wasn't a little bit pregnant. She was completely pregnant. And that was a baby elephant. When that baby was born, it was completely already an elephant. But then 35 or 40 years later, it is now finally reaching its full potential as a full-grown elephant. But it's been nothing but an elephant the entire time. And so, as a follower of Jesus Christ, you already are like Jesus.

[5 : 38] He, from the time you turned from sin and understood what Jesus had done for you, and you said, Dear Lord, forgive me. I am a sinner.

I believe Jesus died for me and took my place on the cross. Lord, I'm going to, with your help, I'm going to turn from sin, and I'm going to follow Jesus. Forgive me. Jesus Christ forgave you. You were completely forgiven. You were completely in the family of God. You were completely a believer. So, yes, already.

But, Peter's going to talk to us in this passage today about, you're going to keep growing and becoming more and more like Jesus as life passes and as you walk with him.

So, it's a case of, yes, you're already an elephant, but you're going to be more an elephant. Yes, you're already in the family of God, but you're going to be more and more like Jesus as time passes.

[6 : 39] Now, last week, Phil told us in verse 3, and he's talking, Peter here is talking about who we are in Christ.

And so, he says, We have been born again because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. We now have a living hope. So, here you see he's talking about new birth.

Everybody in here, you were born once, and when you received Christ, you were born again. You received a new life. God planted a seed of righteousness in you that's going to keep growing all through life as you become more and more like Jesus.

And notice there that he talks about a living hope. We're going to have more to say about that as Peter continues on through this book. Born again, there's a living hope.

But what is this living hope? Well, a part of being who you are. Now, we're going to skip on down to the last part of 1 Peter 1, verse 13.

[7 : 45] And he says, To set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.

Your hope, your living hope. And this is the theme all through Peter. You have this great hope. Because you believe and you know what's going to happen in the future.

When Jesus is revealed. When you have this great hope. Jesus is coming back one day. Turn to somebody and say, Jesus is coming back. That's really good news.

That's the living hope you have. That's the living hope you have. He's coming back one day. And because of that, we can endure any storm.

We can go through anything. So, Peter is saying to us, focus on that. Set your hope fully on that. In other words, don't set your hope on your job.

[8 : 49] It'll let you down. Don't set your hope on your friends. They'll let you down. Surely, don't set your hope on your preachers.

They'll sure let you down. Don't set your hope on politicians. Don't set your hope on anything in this world.

The only thing that you can really place your hope in. And be confident about forever. Forever is the living hope. Because Jesus Christ will be revealed one day.

And then everything will make sense. So, turn my page here. Okay. Skipping on down to verse 17. 1 Peter 1, verse 17. That God will judge or reward you according to what you do. So, you must live in a reverent fear of him.

[9 : 51] During your time here as a temporary resident. And let's talk first about this temporary resident part. We'll look at this verse backwards. You're a temporary resident of this earth.

This is not your home. When you became a Christian, you became a citizen of God's kingdom. That's your permanent home. You're just passing through this place.

And so, you're a little bit like somebody that goes to visit a country that they're going to live in. And, well, I'm going to pick on our friend Suri.

Because she's definitely a temporary resident. She's here living with us for three months from Columbia, South America. So, now what is she having to do? She's having to learn about new foods. She's willing to try anything. She likes most everything. But grits. That just didn't do much for her.

[10:50] I understand. If you didn't grow up with grits, forget it. You know, anyway. She's also constantly learning a new language.

There's hardly a day, Suri, that we don't sit around a table and you say, let me ask you a question. What this word, what exactly does it mean? How do you use it?

And then we'll discuss the different meanings and so forth. And then occasionally we'll get into things like, you teach, but you didn't teach.

You preached, you preach, and you preached, but you teach, and you didn't teach. English is a weird language, folks.

And so, we'll have many discussions about that. She's also learning new customs. We do some things differently than they do there. And, you know, different cultures have different ways of doing things.

[11:50] A really, really big deal for her. We haven't even talked about it. Did you have a big quinceañera party? Yeah. Really big? Yeah. So, that's her 15th birthday.

I don't know that anybody celebrates a huge girl's 15th birthday party much here. We don't even think about it. But, so there's customs differently. Well, now that you are a temporary resident here, and you're on your way to your permanent residence in the kingdom of God, when Jesus is revealed at that second coming, here's what's going on.

You are learning to live there by practicing while you're here. You're learning a new way of talking while you're here.

You're learning new ways of interacting with other people while you're here. I don't guess we're learning new foods. I don't, but I am getting ready for that great banquet that we're going to have in heaven, whatever that means.

It's going to be wonderful. Okay, well, so we're passing through. Now, the other part of this is the reverent fear of God. It says God's going to judge, and He's going to reward.

[13:08] Takes a reverent fear. You say, Matt, I don't know. Now, that sounds weird. That's Old Testament or something. Fear of God. Let's just say respect. Well, respect is a part of it.

But I think about my own daddy. He loved me, and I loved him. But I sure was going to obey him, or I was going to be sorry.

Well, God, our Father, loves us more than our parents. Knows us completely. And one day, He will judge, and He will reward.

We better have a healthy, fearful respect for a God that powerful. Even Jesus said, don't fear human beings. They can only kill you.

Fear God, who could destroy the soul. I mean, Jesus had that right, and we're learning from Him. So, keep this reverent fear.

[14:05] And by the way, on this subject of rewards, I'm going to put in a little plug here on something. We often joke around here, which is just fine. And we say, I don't care if I just get a shack in a corner of heaven.

I'll be so glad to make it. And I understand that. Nothing wrong with that. But don't you know that God is not going to have poverty-stricken children in heaven? Don't you know He's going to reward you beyond anything you've ever imagined?

Don't you know heaven's going to be the best place ever imagined, ever? You've never heard music so wonderful. I see my friend, good friend, Mike Lilly and his family back here today.

Sorry for picking on you, Mike. But I know he loves pipe organ and magnificent music. He loves it. That's nothing compared to the music we'll hear in heaven.

And I know that I love cinnamon rolls. That's Cinnabon when I'm going through the mall. Man, that fragrance grabs me and I just start drifting.

[15:14] Where's that Cinnabon store? That's nothing compared to whatever fragrance we're going to have in heaven. I know that relationships here can be wonderful. There are times when Becky and I are so close and it's so wonderful and so beautiful.

She says, I can't remember when. That's nothing compared to the relationships we'll have in heaven when there's no sin to interfere.

I'm telling you, the rewards there are going to be great. So live for that. Let your hope rest in that great reward that's coming. Well, moving on.

As we get to, oh, one more part here. Now in verse 22. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have a sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart.

Look at that again. Now you have purified yourselves. By doing what? How do you purify yourself? It's interesting. Jesus said, I am the truth.

[16:27] You obeyed the truth when you received Christ as your Savior. That's what purifies you. It's not by your works. It's not by your good deeds. No one's going to be able to brag or boast, the Bible says.

But you are purified by obeying the truth. By receiving what Christ has done for you. What the truth has done for you. That purifies you.

And then Peter felt like this next part is such an important thing that he said it twice. Look at that. He says, a sincere love for each other.

Love one another deeply. He says it twice in the same sentence. It's really important that we love one another. That's a part of who you are in Christ right now.

Loving one another. Now, there's a place in the world for mega churches. In big cities is the place. Not in my entire church.

[17:29] But even in a mega church, if you don't get to be a part of a small group, you're going to miss out on true discipleship.

Because how are you going to love one another? I haven't. You know, COVID, so many people quit attending church. A lot of them still have not gone back. And I was talking to a guy in the same group a couple years ago.

I said, how's things at your church? He said, well, as far as I can tell, watching it online, I think things are going pretty good. I said, what? He said, yeah, I got out of the habit.

I just tune in the same. I get to hear the same sermon and the same music in my pajamas with my cup of coffee. And I just very gently said, yeah, but how do you bear one another's burdens?

How do you love one another? And how do you, you know, weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice? And how do you forgive one another if you're sitting at home on your sofa with a cup of coffee?

[18:32] He said, I haven't thought much about that. See what I love about this church? And then I can kind of, I can start anywhere. Brother Sandy hasn't been in the church, this church, real long.

But we've known each other now for some months. And I know some issues you've been through. Some surgeries. Some things with your former church. And it makes me love him.

And there's Brenda. I know some of the things in your past that you've dealt with. And the loss of a son that broke your heart. And yet God has blessed and given her beautiful grandchildren and joy in her life.

And, you know, I can just kind of go around the room. Every person. Christine. I don't know how often I pray for Ryan. And lift him up. And just know that God's at work.

And Janet. Praising God for your new hearing aids. And yet also praying for your Jennifer and Troy and the Howard family about them needing water.

[19:41] And praying about those things. And there's Ben and Gretchen. Boy, they would most love to have a new, better job that's better suited them. They're thankful for what they've got now.

But they're seeking more. And, you know, y'all can go around the room. Here's a young lady in graduate school and studying nursing. And they're both working at home now. Which is a new kind of thing.

How do you not give each other nerves? Love. Love. Peter said love one another.

Amen. You don't find that in the world that much. But you find it in the family of God. And that's a part of how you're already in place. You love one another.

And that's what I do love about. I think it's even in a mega church. You've got to be in small groups. Or you're not going to really be doing church. The way Christ intended it. Well, let's move on.

[20:40] The next word we're going to come to is the word therefore. It's the first word in chapter 2. Now, whenever you come to the word therefore. You all, you know, this is an old saying.

You have to see what it's there for. But it just means you look at what came before. And you say, because all this came before. Therefore, what's going to happen?

And so everything that's come before has been about being who you are. So let's just review that real quickly. What we've just said. First of all, you are looking and expecting Jesus to return. You're living your life with that hope. And so you also are living like a stranger here on the earth. This is not your home.

And you know it. You also have a great love and a fear for God that helps you to obey him. And you love the brothers and the sisters in the church.

[21 : 41] And you can see I'm cool. I put bro up there. I'm cool. All right. So you love the bros and the sisters in the church. All right. Well, because of all of this, who you are, that's who you are in Christ.

Therefore, what happens? Therefore, you can now become more of who you are. But how? How can I become more of who I am?

That's what Peter is going to lead us into now after this word, therefore. So let's go into the next chapter. And we've only got these two last verses to look at in this sermon.

In this first verse. Therefore, because of all that stuff, get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with deceit. Deceit. Deceit. Every kind of way that we're dishonest and scheming and trying to always look out for ourselves. You know how we are.

[22 : 46] He says, get rid of that. Get rid of hypocrisy. Acting like something you're not. We all do some of that. That's some of that chameleon stuff.

Get rid of that. Jealousies. You know we're jealous of each other. I could go on and on about that. Get rid of it.

Unkind speech. Oh my goodness. If I would just, as the scripture says, if I could just put a guard over my mouth. If I could just control this tongue.

Then Becky would have a much better life. So would everybody else I know. If I could just shut up when I should shut up.

But anyway. He's saying, get rid of all this stuff. And then. Instead. You know. Always in the Bible. When it says to get rid of an old thing.

[23 : 42] It usually tells you what to replace it with. And so he's saying. Instead then. The new way is. Like a newborn baby. You must crave the pure spiritual milk.

So you will grow into a full experience of salvation. See here's that growth. To become who you are. Don't just be satisfied with who you are.

Get rid of the old. And press on with something new. Now. I want you to imagine with me. Suppose. You know. Well this isn't supposed.

We're new friends. But suppose. You move out of the area or something. Or I do. And five or six years go by. And we haven't seen each other. And so I call you.

And I say. When can you get down here. Come on down. It's been a week with us. Yeah. We miss seeing you. Come on down. Just stay at our house a week. This will be great. We make all the arrangements.

[24 : 39] So you come to my house. And I greet you at the door. And say. Oh I'm so glad you're here. And give you a big hug. And I take you back to your bedroom. And I say. Here. This is your room.

Just go ahead. Make yourself at home. We're going to be having dinner in about a half an hour. Come on back to the kitchen. And then I leave you. And so you think. Oh man. This is nice. It's great to be here.

I guess I'll unpack. You open up your suitcase. And you think. I'll stick a few things in some drawers. And you start opening drawers. And they're all full. You say.

I'll put it in the closet. And so you go open the closet. Stuff starts falling out on your head. You know. It's like. Good land. Let me get it all back in here. And shut the door. And you say.

I guess I'll just live out of my suitcase. This week. It's not a big deal. I've got a few minutes. I think I'll just lie on the bed. And here. And rest. We're driving. And so. You go over and discover.

[25 : 34] That I haven't made the bed. All I've done is throwing the bed spread over it. And there. You pull that back. There's just a bare mattress. And you think. Well. He said to come to eat. Well. I guess it's about time.

So you walk on into the kitchen. And I've left you a note. And the note says. Some friends called. I'll run over to their house. I'll be back in about three hours.

I know that's crazy. But. Actually. When we came to Christ. Originally. And we were born again. So we were new babies. Our life was so full of junk.

So full of sin. Habits. Hobbies. Just so full. We really didn't have room for God. We didn't have room for Jesus Christ.

And so what Peter is saying. In the old part. He's saying. Get rid of stuff. And make room. For the new life. That God has for you.

[26 : 39] Be. As God shows you those things. Get rid of them. Don't let that consume you. You know. Some folks are so into. Whatever.

Sports. Music. Cars. Hobbies. What. You're so into some stuff. We all are. That. Christ doesn't just take second place. He's down here in about 15th place.

Wishing that he could get into our lives. Where we invited him to be. So Peter's saying. Get that out of here. Get that out of here. Instead. Begin to crave this spiritual milk.

And then you will start to become. Who you really already are. Now let's talk some more about this thing. Of being born again. I see my boy Steve right there.

About the way. When they were teenagers. And I first started preaching. After about our third sermon. We're sitting around the kitchen table. After church.

[27 : 44] And I don't remember if it was Steve. Or Ryan. Or Emily. Or all three of them. But they said. Dad. You've got to make us a promise. Do not use us in any more sermon. In this way. We can't handle it.

So I stopped. But now you're not a genie. I remember when you were born. We were there in the delivery room.

We'd have about 18 or 20 hours of hard work. Somebody worked hard. I was taking coffee breaks. Anyway. And they.

He was probably less than two minutes old. They wrapped him up in a blanket. And handed this little bitty person to me. And I remember holding little baby Steve.

And his little toothless mouth. With the tiniest little chin. His little chin was just quivering. And he was going. I looked at him.

[28 : 46] And I said something like. Welcome to the world little man. And I'm telling you what. I fell so in love with you.

I'm better not go there. If you had messed with that little boy right then. I'd have been worse than a mama bear. I'll tell you what. That was my little boy.

So we took him home. And he got lots of good mung milk. And we kept him clean. And dry.

And we talked with him all during the day. And we did all. You know. We read books to him. Before he could even know what a book was. Or know what we were talking about. Or we did all those things that you love.

I played with him on the floor. And you know. I noticed this morning. A little auto crawling around on the floor in here. Took me back a few years.

[29 : 44] But those are sweet crazy times. When you gotta child proof your house. Right. So anyway. Anyway. And you may not know this. One of my special things.

For probably the first six or eight months of your life. It was my job every night at bedtime. I would sit in a rocking chair. And just hold you right here.

And rock you. Until you fell asleep. I did that. Six or eight months. Every night. I just loved that. And then I'd take you over. And be super careful.

Don't wake the baby. That's a golden rule of parents. Don't wake the baby. So just put you in the crib. Cover you up. Say God bless this little man.

And walk out of there. And you know what? He grew up. I didn't have to teach him to grow. That was programmed in him.

[30 : 44] Now on the other hand. We did everything we could to help him grow. You all know horror stories. And some of you have lived through some of it. In your own lives maybe.

Or family members. Of bad circumstances to grow in. You hear about parents that lock children in closets. Starve them. Beat them mercilessly.

You hear these terrible things. And when that happens. That child will grow up with stunted growth. They will grow up sickly.

Emotionally broken. Their lives will be a mess. So now. Why am I discussing all of this? Because. This really relates.

To what Peter is trying to say here. And that is. You're now a new child. In Jesus Christ. You can either help that growth.

[31 : 42] Or you can hinder that growth. Now. Let's talk about. How would you help that growth? By craving pure spiritual milk.

What is this pure spiritual milk? That's going to help you become. Who you are. First of all. It is daily Bible study. He didn't miss too many meals.

And y'all didn't either. We love that daily food. Don't we? Spiritually. Your spirit craves that daily word of God. And the more you'll think on it.

And read it. And consider it. The more you'll crave it. And there will be parts of it. That are special to you. Don't you have this favorite verses.

That come to your mind. At times. Surya. I'm going to come back to you. I know she's going to say. I hope he doesn't preach anymore. Just last night.

[32 : 45] We were talking about food. Because. Glenn had taken her off. And stuffed her full. Of all kinds of things. And she said. I can't eat another thing. So she came. She was just sitting at the table.

And Becky and I were even. And so. We started saying. Well. Becky said. Is there anything in Columbia you missed? Her face lit up. And she said.

The way we take plantains. And make these things. Called patacones. And then. We make a special salsa. That goes with it. And she says.

Oh. How I missed that. And she says. As full as I am. If it was here right now. I would start eating. And so guess what.

Becky and she went straight down. To the Latino grocery store. And bought plantains. And all the fixings. And today. We're going to eat that stuff. She's good.

[33 : 42] She's real good. We're going to eat it. So. The baby grows up. And some foods become favorites. And it's the same with the word of God.

As you keep eating. The word of God. And the prophets talked about that. The prophets said. This word that came from God. Was like a scroll. And I ate it.

And it tasted like honey. And so. As you consume the word of God. Some parts of it get so special to you. Oh my goodness.

What would you do. Without those special parts of the scripture. When the hard times come. What would you do. Well we can talk more about that. But. It's time to wrap this up.

Well. Crave that daily Bible study. Oh by the way. This is really interesting to me. I like all the translations of the Bible. I really do.

[34 : 38] All of them. I grew up on the King James. And then I did a lot of New American Standard. And now I do mostly NIV. But John's converted me.

I've been doing some of that New English translation. And so. Anyway. I read all these. And I read that verse. And I thought. Wait a minute. I was reading it in the NIV.

And I had always read it in the King James. Where I had memorized some of this verse. And it said. Crave the pure spiritual milk of the word. But it didn't say of the word.

I thought. Well I'm sure the net Bible's got it right. So I looked in there. It didn't say of the word. I thought. What? So then I literally looked it up in the Greek.

And it doesn't say of the word. So how King James and others put of the word. I don't know. So I like that it's not. It doesn't say of the word. Because before. I had thought.

[35 : 36] The only spiritual milk is the word of God. But it didn't say that. It just says. Crave that spiritual milk. So I think. Number one. It includes the word of God. But it has to be the word of God with prayer.

There's a professor at Chapel Hill. Who knows the Bible better than all of us put together. He teaches New Testament. And he writes books on how the Bible is not true.

And how you can't trust any of this. And how Jesus was not the son of God. And the freshmen that take his religion. Or his New Testament class. He teaches New Testament. With all of his heart. He tries to talk them out of believing in the faith of Christ. So just knowing the word of God is not good enough. You've got to eat that scripture with prayer.

So that the Holy Spirit of God is working through those words. And making them alive in your heart. And then along with that. You've got to have regular fellowship. That's why you don't sit home in your pajamas.

[36 : 36] And watch it on TV. And say yeah. But Joel Osteen is a whole lot better preacher than Matt Garrett. Or whoever your favorite preacher is. Because you don't do that.

Because you need the fellowship. You need to hear everybody pray together. You need to sing together. You need to see each other face to face. That's a part of this spiritual milk you need. Here's another part. Part of your spiritual milk. Is telling other people about it. It also helps you grow in the Lord. Now we could add some other things. But if you do these four.

You will grow and grow. On the other hand. You can hinder your growth in Christ. You can just spend all your time reading social media. And politics.

And whatever. And only listen to worldly music. And only hang around with lost people. And just never drink in that spiritual milk.

[37 : 35] And you may be a believer. I'm not sure if you are. You may be a believer. But you won't grow much. You'll end up with that stunted growth. So then.

Back to what he was saying. Get rid of that old stuff. To make room for the new life in Christ. And it will help you to grow. To be who you are. So to review then.

Don't be a chameleon. Realize you're an elephant. You were a Christian from the first moment you got saved. And now you're still a Christian.

It's who you are. Be that way. But you're also growing and becoming. As you drink in that beautiful spiritual milk. Now to help you remember.

Would you repeat after me. The two parts of this. Would you repeat. I am like Jesus. I am like Jesus. Let's say it again.

[38 : 35] I am like Jesus. I am like Jesus. Now repeat. I am becoming more like Jesus. I am becoming more like Jesus. You really are.

It's programmed. The growth is programmed in you. God is going to bring you to completion. Because he is the author. And the finisher of our faith.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. While our musicians come for a closing song. Lord thank you for your word.

And help us to grow in Christ. Help us to. Receive that spiritual milk. And be more like Jesus. And Lord.

This morning. Work in our hearts as we sing. Help us to. Lay aside the old. And receive the new. It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

[39 : 35] I noticed that this. Screen is flashing. In and out a little bit. So if that continues. You can turn to him. Fifteen. And say long.

Let's stand and sing together. Thank you.