

Unlocking Freedom: “1 Peter: Hope in a Foreign Land”

Sermon preached by Chris Lofquist

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Introduction

Please open your Bibles to **1 Peter 1:1-2**. I have entitled this sermon series, “Hope in a Hostile Land” due to one of the major themes of this book, which is hope – over the next two weeks we will be making our way through the first 5 verses of Peter’s letter in which he speaks of this theme of hope in a hostile land. **Verse 3** speaks about a “living hope” that can only be understood and had when entering into a relationship with Jesus Christ as your Savior. And what we will find out today is, that it is salvation that brings about this living hope within our lives. Now the word hope gets thrown around a lot in the world today. I know I wished some “hope” this week, I said, ‘*I hope you had a good birthday!*’ And although that ‘hope’ was genuine, and showed my authentic feelings for my friend, it was not a living hope. It was simply a hope anchored in uncertainty. It was at best wishful thinking. And I am so glad that Biblical hope is not worldly hope. Because it is this hope founded in Jesus Christ our Savior and the Salvation that we have due to His enormous sacrifice, that helps us continue to obediently put one foot in front of the other. Our faith in Jesus Christ is the source of our hope, which propels our behavior, perspective and ignites each day as we seek to follow Christ in a hostile world.

This morning, my prayer is that we will be amazed at the depth of our salvation and that our lives founded in a living hope, anchored in the cross, will point people to Christ.

Read **1 Peter 1:1-2**.

Open in Prayer.

Did you catch it? Did you see the incredible depth of your salvation? There is so much happening prior to, during, and after your salvation that should amaze your spirit, and propel you toward a life of obedience.

1. **The Depth of our Salvation** (vv. 1-2)

In **verse 1** we are reminded that Peter is writing this letter to the scattered Church in Asia Minor. The reason he has called them ‘aliens’ or ‘strangers’ is because of the persecution they were facing. In the day in which Peter puts pen to paper, Emperor Nero is beginning his reign in Rome. What we know in history about Emperor Nero, is that he is one of the greatest enemies of the Church. The persecution of the Church during his time as Emperor would be catastrophic. And when Peter wrote this letter, it was at the very beginning of this era of persecution. Families of believers were chased out of their communities, fired from their jobs, and kicked out of their families because they believed in Jesus. And yet although they may not have land to call home, or much of a roof over their heads due to this persecution, they have been chosen, uniquely picked out (separated from the world) by God Himself. As **verse 1** rolls into **verse 2**, we read, “**Who are**

chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...”. This statement is true of every believer. Now I want to spend a few moments talking about this wonderful truth.

Believers have been chosen (which is the Greek word *eklektos* and is where we get the concept of biblical “election”) according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. This emphasis on God’s choosing reminds us that salvation is not dependent upon us. But it is rather the absolute and sovereign work of God. Therefore, our relationship with Him, beginning at the moment of belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins, does not depend upon our weak grasp on Him in the moment, but rather on God’s infinitely eternally powerful grip on us. This is where Peter begins as he shines some light on our glorious salvation. It is not our doing; it is God’s doing! He is the One who chooses, and it is according to His foreknowledge. Now this word ‘foreknowledge’ often gets misunderstood. And there are a large group of people who believe that this verse means that God peered down through history, saw who would believe in Him and put them on His list. As if God looked into the future and said, “Oh, I do hope that Saul of Tarsus will believe in Me, because He would make such a nice apostle! Oh, good!! He is going to decide for Me! I’ll put him on my list of the chosen!” And yet, this runs contradictory to what God is saying in these verses. God is not simply adding people to His list because He knows they will choose Him, He is the One doing the choosing.

“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will...” Ephesians 1:4-5.

The foreknowledge of God has to do with His loving planned relationship with us.

Illustration: It is much like the way a man chooses a wife. Before a man asks a woman to marry him, his love for her begins much earlier. First of all, as a young child, he was created in the image of God and therefore with the ability to love another. Then through the early stages of life, he knows that somewhere out there his wife is living her life. And as he grows and becomes a man, he plans on getting married one day. Then one day he meets his wife, and through much time together, he falls in love with her and seeks to persuade her to love him too. Then, based upon his love for her (before he even knew her), he chooses her to be his wife – he does not force her. From the earliest of years, this man loved his wife, even before he knew her and asked her to marry him.

God loved us before the foundations of the world, prior to speaking forth creation, before we were born, He chose us to salvation. This is the absolute beauty of God’s love and grace – He always planned on a relationship with you.

Now this does not negate human responsibility – for Scripture also teaches in multiple places that each person will be held responsible for their belief or unbelief in Jesus. We are told that salvation is offered to all who with their mouths confess their sins and believe in their hearts that Jesus Christ died for them. So how do the two biblical concepts work together? One would think that if we have been chosen before the foundations of the world to believe than there is no choice for those chosen to reject Christ. How do these two concepts work together? **Illustration:** Perhaps the best way to help us understand this biblical concept of foreknowledge and human responsibility is from the famous American Bible teacher Donald Barnhouse. “Imagine with me a giant cross. On one side is the earth, on the other side is heaven. At the base of this cross is a

door. Over the door as you were entering toward a relationship with God are the words from **Revelation 22:17** saying: ‘Whosoever will, may come’. These words represent the free and universal offer of the gospel – that whoever believes in Jesus will have eternal life. By God’s grace, the message of salvation is for everyone! Every man, woman and child who will come to the cross is invited to believe in Jesus Christ and enter eternal life. On the other side of the door a ‘happy surprise’ awaits the one who believes and enters. From the inside, anyone glancing back can see the words from Ephesians 1:4, ‘Chosen in Christ before the foundations of the world.’” The concept of election, spoken of by Peter is best understood in hindsight, for it is only coming to Christ that one can know whether one has been chosen in Christ. Those who make a decision for Christ find that God made a decision for them in eternity past.” Perhaps, that helps clear things up for you. But maybe you still have trouble wrapping your mind around this biblical concept.

This concept can be very confusing, I’m not even sure I have my head wrapped around it completely, but I do rest in my heart in the complete sovereignty of God – He knows what He’s talking about. And what I do gather from this verse, is that God’s love for me and for you, for the Church, began prior to my first breath. Which speaks greatly to the immeasurable and infinite love of God for you, and for His purpose for your life. Imagine the encouragement and hope it must have been to hear of this truth in the midst of persecution. *You are not alone; I have always loved you and will always love you. Your future is secure.* Be encouraged by this truth today!

Peter then continues on in showing us the depth of our wonderful salvation, and says, “*by the sanctifying work of the Spirit*”. This is the salvation that God has chosen us for. The word ‘sanctification’ means ‘set apart’ and is often translated as ‘holiness’. This speaks to what happens to every believer at the moment of salvation. At salvation the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit sets believers apart from sin to God, separating them from darkness and bringing them in to the light, from unbelief to faith, from enemies to children of God. You were once dead in your sins, but because of God’s immense eternal love and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, you are now alive in Christ – and your filthy rags are white as snow. This is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit upon your soul at the moment of salvation – others have called this positional sanctification.

But we also know that the Holy Spirit continues in His sanctifying ministry in our lives in the days following our salvation. You see, once the Holy Spirit separates believers from sin, He continues to make them more and more holy, like Jesus. This is a life-long process of sanctification – many have called this progressive sanctification. We don’t have time to go to every Scripture speaking of this, but there are many passages throughout the New Testament where we are told to be holy, or live a pure life. **Ephesians 1:4** says that we ‘*would be holy and blameless before Him.*’ That process begins at salvation, and positionally we are set apart – sanctified by the Holy Spirit – but progressively we are to continue in the process, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, in being more and more holy and blameless before God.

“*To obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.*” Do you see the depth of your salvation? It began with the eternal love of God to choose us for salvation, then

continued with the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit to wash away our sinful stains, making us ‘not guilty’ before God, and more like Christ each day. And all of this is accomplished because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When God looks upon us, in His infinite love, He no longer sees the sin that courses through our veins distorting our appearance, He sees His Son. Like the Passover Lamb of the Old Testament, Jesus’ blood sacrifice, covers our sins, freeing us from the penalty that accompanies them. This is the new covenant that God enters into with each believer. That because of the death of His Son, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, we have entered into a covenant with God – His blood being the seal to that covenant – and in that covenant is our eternal salvation. So when we hear Peter reference the *sprinkled blood of Jesus Christ* – we understand the price of our salvation, and the eternal security of our salvation – because God does not break His promise.

The final thing I want us to look at this morning is found in the final words of verse 2, as Peter points out to us the blessings that accompany our salvation. It began before the foundations of the world, involves the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit, is accomplished through the blood of Jesus Christ (which motivates us toward obedience), and brings grace and peace to you in its fullest measure. **“May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.”** (v. 2b). Peter is desirous that the truths of our salvation would shine a light upon the amazing grace of God and that these truths would also bring peace in a difficult time. Peter is the Apostle of Hope – and as we have read these 2 opening verses, he uses them to propel us to the wondrous truths of our living hope.

Conclusion

Next week, we will dive into these verses that speak of our living hope. But before we close in prayer, I want to ask you about your salvation? Does understanding the great love of God before the foundations of the world help you today? Does it point you toward God’s grace and peace? Sometimes, when we get caught up in all the busyness and stresses of this world, it helps us to remember the immense love of God and the depth of our salvation. May you find comfort today as you are pointed to God’s grace and peace.

Let’s pray.