

Refuge City Church — January 10, 2021

“Hope-Filled Life” (1 Peter 1:1-12)

Introduction (1 Peter 1:1-2)

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 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.

- Do we remember Peter?
 - Peter was bold. He got out of the boat to walk on water. He spoke up often, once even to rebuke Jesus, but also to proclaim Jesus as the Christ. He acted out at the arrest of Jesus. He denied Jesus 3 times. Yet was one of the first to run to the tomb. He's the one Jesus restored and mentioned the establishment of His church. Peter would become a great Apostle and helped to establish the Church.
 - The Apostle of Hope.
- Peter's letter was written to Christians living throughout Asia Minor **[modern day Turkey]**, around 64-65 A.D.
 - Christians living in a non-Christian world.
 - Written for the purpose of encouragement, strength, focus, and hope in the grace of God, amidst trials and tribulation they were experiencing or would experience.
- We can rightly say this letter is written to us in America, as we live in a post-Christian nation.
 - According to Pew Research Center (October, 2019), 65% of Americans identify as Christian; down 12% from previous decade.
 - Atheism, Agnosticism, or 'nothing' has risen from 17% to 26% since 2009.
 - Silent Generation (1928-45): 84% identify as Christian
 - Baby Boomers (1946-64): 76%
 - Generation X (1965-1980): 67%
 - Millennials (1981-96): 49%
 - Generation Z/Zoomers (1997-2012): 42%
 - Overall, Church attendance is in decline from 54 to 45% **[based upon once a month attendance or more]**; however the percentages progressively decline within each generation.
 - Amongst those identifying as Christian, 62% say they attend church once or twice a month.
 - According to Barna Research, they listed the top 100 'Post-Christian' Cities.
 - Post-Christian metrics: To be considered 'post-Christian' individuals need to meet 9 of the following, or meet 13 to qualify as 'highly post-Christian'.

- Do not believe in God
- Identify as atheist or agnostic
- Disagree that faith is important in their lives
- Have not prayed to God (in the last week)
- Have never made a commitment to Jesus
- Disagree the Bible is accurate
- Have not donated money to a church (in the last year)
- Have not attended a Christian church (in the last 6 months)
- Agree that Jesus committed sins
- Do not feel a responsibility to “share their faith”
- Have not read the Bible (in the last week)
- Have not volunteered at church (in the last week)
- Have not attended Sunday school (in the last week)
- Have not attended religious small group (in the last week)
- Bible engagement scale: low (have not read the Bible in the past week and disagree strongly or somewhat that the Bible is accurate)
- Not Born Again
- #30: Los Angeles... #38: San Diego... and nestled in between...
- But in all this, which doesn’t even scratch the surface, a strong majority of those in America, California, and Riverside County claim to believe in Heaven (71%) and Hell (60%), and believe in God (85%).
- The examples are too numerous to list as to how this is being played out in our nation.
 - Most recent: the opening prayer to the 117th Congress
 - “We ask it in the name of the monotheistic god, Brahma, and god known by many names by many different faiths. Amen and a women.”
 - There was a vote to eliminate references to gender in congressional conversation.
 - The 2020 Census will reveal more data, but the best estimates we have is that 0.5% of the population identifies as transgender and/or nonbinary; roughly 1.5-2 million people.
 - In a God-forsaking society, biblical marriage, sanctity of life, and morality will be threatened and redefined to appeal to those who shout the loudest.
- As Christians: God chose us. Jesus by His blood justifies us. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us. We live in and by all 3 members of the Holy Trinity.
- It is imperative we stand firm, operating upon Christ-centered biblical principles, understand the truth of God’s Word, and ‘armor up’, so we operate and live Jesus-focused, love everyone, and present the gospel of hope to a hope-fading world.

Scripture Reading (1 Peter 1:3-12)

3 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, **4** to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, **5** who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, **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. **8** 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, **9** obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. **10** Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, **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. **12** 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 long to look.

- **Who are you? [Verses 3-5]**

- Through Christ, who was born, allows and calls to be born again. [John 3:3, “Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”]
- Through Christ, who died and rose again, allows and calls us to die to our sin, and truly live in freedom with our HOPE set on eternity.
 - **Romans 6:5**, “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”
 - **Proverbs 4:18**, “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.”
- Our HOPE is that which awaits us in eternal glory! What will be revealed can not be destroyed. Can not be touched by sin or death. And will last forever!
- **REMINDER:** Your salvation [justification] is protected by the power of God, not by your works.
 - How we then live in this world, by faith in God, is a *response* to our salvation and future HOPE.
 - Not a test to see if you’re good enough to make it to Heaven.

- **Our Eternal Perspective [verses 6-9]**

- Despite the trials that will come by living in a Godless, post-Christian nation, our focus remains on eternal glory.
- We have and will face trials that will test our faith and hope. They are necessary.
 - **James 1:2-4 NLT**, “Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.”
 - **2 Corinthians 4:17-18**, “For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”
 - COVID, Political divisiveness, Economic instability, disease, etc.: it too is temporary and will fade. Do not allow it to affect your faith in God and hope of glory.

- Example #1: Leonid Stadnik. Due to the result of brain surgery at 14, something occurred that caused him to continue to grow. In 2004, he was 8'4" and growing. He stated his perspective on his life by saying, "My height is God's punishment. My life has no sense." He died 2015.
- Example #2: Stuart Scott. Afflicted by cancer. His differing perspective of life as he stated, "When you die, it does not mean that you lose to cancer. You beat cancer by how you live, why you live, and in the manner in which you live." He died in 2015.
- How we live, our hope set on Christ, will show the world why we live the way we do...Faith. Hope. Love. Joy!
 - **1 Corinthians 10:31**, "...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."
 - **[verse 8]** Remember what Jesus said to 'Doubting' Thomas?
 - **John 20:29**, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."
 - Our faith, hope, and love for Jesus will deposit the same in to our world around us. We have purpose in this life. It is not a 'waiting game'.
- It is a choice you decide to make NOW. What are you going to live in? Light or Darkness? Hope or Despair? Love or Indifference?
 - **Isaiah 61:1-3**, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified."

Response/Prayer

1. Think about our 'spiritual birth', what that means to you, and why God saved you.
2. Suffering and Glory are promised. We don't set out to deny the reality of our trials. But we take comfort in the fact that God is in control, and that can bring us comfort.
3. How have you responded to your trials? In what ways can you improve and/or refocus to bring glory to God in the midst of your suffering?