

Praise God for Our Living Hope

SCOTT HOEZEE

In the movie, *The Shawshank Redemption*, that is set inside a prison, one of the main characters is forever talking about hope, and how hope is one of the best things in the world; maybe it is the best thing. This, then, leads another prisoner, over and over, to caution him against giving people in a grim, gray place, a sense of hope. It is a dangerous thing in a place of suffering to give hope when it is not warranted. So, can one have hope? Could hope even thrive, even in the context of suffering? Well, that is a central question the Apostle Peter deals with in his first letter, and on this episode of *Groundwork*, we will begin to dig into this very important letter. So, stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, with this program, we are beginning a new series that will ultimately be an eight-program series, on the letters of 1 and 2 Peter. We are going to do five programs on the letter of 1 Peter, and then three more on 2 Peter; and today, we are going to take just the opening twelve verses to see what Peter says there, and how this kind of becomes a summary...a setup...for the whole rest of the epistle, or the letter.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and it is really exciting to see, because we know Peter...the Apostle Peter. He has gone through quite the transformation as a follower of Christ. He used to be the brash, outspoken one with a foot-shaped mouth. He always said things before he thought; and now we see that through his relationship with Jesus, he has become this seasoned, mature leader; and now he is writing letters to the Churches.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And here is how it begins: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ²who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, Peter is actually taking his time to write to a wider region of people. Scott, you know that he originally started with his attention focused on Jews, didn't he?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; he mostly focused his work in Jerusalem and on fellow Jews, and on trying to convince his fellow Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah they had been waiting for since the Garden of Eden, as we will see in a little while, since Abraham and so forth. Jesus is it; but then, later Peter expanded his ministry. You know, for a long time, the Apostle Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles...to the non-Jews; but Peter eventually moved on from Jerusalem and Judea, too; and we believe this letter is written largely to Gentiles...to non-Jews...who were scattered throughout the region of Asia Minor. Today, it is the country of Turkey. What is

interesting, Darrell, is that even though he is writing to people from outside the people of Israel and the Jewish faith, he, throughout this letter, addresses these Gentiles using the same vocabulary about election, calling, predestination; the same vocabulary he would use to describe the people of Israel.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think Peter finally understands that there is a new humanity under Christ, and that people have been united, no matter what the background they come from, the gospel is powerful enough to save. He found it out in Acts Chapter 10 at Cornelius' house; he found it out again in his missionary journeys; and so, I am encouraged to see that... I mean, for me personally it doesn't matter what background I come from...you come from...but the gospel is able to save us and bring us under one new humanity.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are right, Darrell. It took Peter a while to kind of accept this. We had a series on Galatians here on *Groundwork*, not too long ago; and as you may recall, Paul, at one point in Galatians 2, recounts for the Galatians the time that he really took Peter to task; that they had an argument...

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Between Peter and Paul, because Peter kind of thought you have to become a Jew first, and then you can become a Christian; and Paul said: No way; and Peter knew better, even then, because of what you just said about Acts 10. He had seen the Holy Spirit poured out on Gentiles who didn't become Jews first. So, he did know better; but it took a little while; but the way he addresses these Gentiles now as the people of God, no distinction between them and Israel, it does show he has come a long way.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; I think that the reason why Paul had a problem in Galatians 2...and we had a series on this...was because he originally had personally seen the Holy Spirit fall on everyone, Jew and Gentile alike; and then, when the Judaizers and those people who were radicals came around, he reverted back to that teaching that you had to be a Jew, and that was why Paul opposed him; but I am so glad that the Holy Spirit actually convicted him and he realized that the Holy Spirit is letting him know we all are together under one humanity, and Christ is that uniting factor.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and actually, Christ, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, as you just said, Darrell, gives us a new identity; and that is... There are kind of three major themes in 1 Peter. This is the first one: that we have a new identity; and what is true of all of us who have that new identity in Christ? Well, Peter goes on to mention that.

DARRELL DELANEY

It says in verse 3: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. New birth, living hope, and inheritance; really powerful.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Very. A *living* hope! What an interesting thing. Hope is not a concept, Darrell. It is not an idea. It is something...hope is a person. Hope is actually a person; and it is the *living* hope that is Jesus, who is alive at the right hand of God the Father in heaven; and that is what we have a new birth into, that living hope. We mentioned the movie *The Shawshank Redemption* at the beginning. Not long ago in a *real* prison a colleague of mine encountered an inmate who had come to faith in Jesus after coming to prison; and he just

radiated hope. So, somebody asked this guy: How can you have hope inside a prison? He said: Because Jesus is here with us, and he is our hope. And that is exactly what Peter is saying here. We get a new birth into a living hope, and then we get a new birth into a second thing, too, Darrell.

DARRELL DELANEY

The second thing that we have hope in is that we have been given an inheritance; and so, the inheritance is not like the ones that are here, you know, that are temporary, that are money, that are possessions and things of that nature; but the hope that we have is eternal. It is a living hope, and it will not spoil or fade because it is a spiritual hope.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; you can inherit stuff from your parents: you can inherit the house, you can inherit some money; but you know, that stuff...it gets old, it breaks down, money can be stolen, it can get lost; but the inheritance we have in heaven...our new birth into a living hope...into an inheritance...nobody can touch it. It is not going to ever lose value. It is not going to depreciate...

DARRELL DELANEY

Depreciate...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Like a car does. It is not going to get stolen. Nobody can take it away. It is kept in heaven for us. The other thing interesting that he says here is that because we have this birth into a living hope, and because we have a new birth into the spiritual inheritance kept in heaven for us, Peter says that that also means we are shielded by the power of God. That is an interesting line.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is a beautiful thing. I think that when Peter wants us to focus on the treasure that is actually spiritual and in heaven and not temporal on earth, it echoes the Sermon on the Mount, because Jesus also tells us not to store treasures on earth, but treasures in heaven; and wherever your treasure is, Jesus knows that is where your heart is; and so, if my heart is focused on what God is, and what he has done, then it is going to help me to endure any personal hardship that I am going through.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is an important thing because that sets us up nicely, Darrell, for what is going to come up in the next part of this program; because if one of the major three themes of 1 Peter is our new identity, the other major theme of the letter of 1 Peter is suffering, because the people to whom Peter was writing were suffering; and so, they need to hear those words, that if you have this new hope, if you have this inheritance in heaven, you are shielded by God's power. He is going to have more to say about that; and in just a moment, we will dig into it. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are in the first program of what will ultimately be an eight-part series on 1 Peter and 2 Peter; and we just introduced the first of three major themes in this letter, which is we have a new identity—a new birth into a living hope and into a secure heavenly inheritance; but now, Peter moves to a second major theme, suffering; and here it is, beginning in Chapter 1:6:

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now, in that section, where there are only a few words in a couple of sentences, Peter really explains in great detail of what they are going through in this time period, under this government of people who do not care anything about the Christian faith; and so, he just said a lot in a little bit there, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; in the Greco-Roman world of the First Century, once the Church got established, it didn't take too long for what Jesus predicted, that you are going to be persecuted. Jesus predicted that in Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount. The world persecuted Jesus, it is going to persecute Jesus' followers; and these people were persecuted. There were verbal insults hurled at people, and so forth, even in the First Century; but there was also active physical persecution, harassment, arrests, and yes, even murders; and when you live in a hostile environment like that, Darrell, it takes its toll. It raises a lot of questions.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; the questions are: Why is this happening to me? Why does God allow this? Why doesn't God physically shield us; or why doesn't God take up our case in a way that will eliminate threats to us and enemies to us? I just wanted to say that if you ever felt like you were alone or that everyone was against you, and you were just trying to do what was right, then you will find yourself in good company with many believers who have gone before you that have endured these kinds of things. So, you are not alone, and it is not strange. We will get to some of that later in the book of 1 Peter, but right now, we just want you to know that you are in good company.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and Peter doesn't want to suggest that God actively sends these persecutions...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

To his people; certainly not; but God may allow them; but as Paul also wrote to the Romans in Romans 8, God is also able to somehow bring good even out of bad circumstances; and in this case, Darrell, Peter wants to suggest that there is a refining process that may go on, you know. If you want to prove the validity that something is made out of gold, if you want to melt away any other metals that may be mixing in with the gold, so that you can end up with just pure gold at the end of the fiery refining process, well, then you apply the necessary heat; and then you know you've got the genuine article. That is kind of like faith, Peter says.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; most people will say in an old legend about this that they keep heating up the gold and heating up the gold to scrape off the dross, and then they know it is done when they can see their reflection in it; and so, the Lord doesn't always cause the things that are happening to turn up the heat in our lives, so to speak; but when he can see his reflection because we have held onto our faith in him, then that is actually how the refining process happens; and suffering somehow is tied to that, and God can repurpose it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; I mean, if you go through a fiery trial like a refining process, and you come out on the other side...Peter is saying...if you can come out on the other side of that with your faith still intact, then you know it is the real deal. I really do have faith. It is a gift; I couldn't generate this myself; I really do have faith. It is proof that the Holy Spirit is at work inside of me, so that you won't deny Jesus, even when you are severely threatened—even if you are to the point of death. It reminds me, Darrell, of Charles Colson, who eventually worked in prisons and so forth, but he originally worked for President Richard Nixon; and Colson became a key co-conspirator in the Watergate scandal; and he later wrote in his spiritual memoir that he

became convinced of the validity of the testimony of the disciples and the apostles when he saw that they never backed down. They never backed down, even when threatened. Because the Watergate co-conspirators also: We'll never back down; we got our cover story and we are going to stick to it; and guess what? Every one of them got threatened with a little bit of jail time, and they all crumpled like a cheap suit. They all said: Okay, okay, okay; Nixon did it. Never mind, right? It was like, they weren't being physically threatened with death. They wouldn't suffer for a lie...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The apostles died because it was the truth, and they were not going to back down.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, two quick examples there: One is from the Old Testament, where the three Hebrew boys, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were going to be thrown in the fiery furnace, and they said: We believe that God will deliver us from this; and even if he doesn't, we still will not bow down to your idols. And so, they were actually given help in the midst of that fiery furnace; but then, if you bring it contemporary, I can remember where I was in 1999 when there was a shooting at Columbine and there were two young girls, Cassie and Rachel, who were called to renounce their faith or they were going to lose their life. They decided not to, and they held onto their faith, even though it cost them their lives; and that stuff is still happening to this day; but the point is, because they held onto their faith, they are commended for that, even though God did not cause the trial they were in.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; if you can hang onto your faith despite all that suffering, well, that is mighty encouraging; and then, in verse 8... Here are verses 8 and 9 of 1 Peter 1. Peter goes on to say: Though you have not seen him...(Jesus)...though you have not seen him (Jesus), you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, I love this here: Though you have not seen him... Because, you know, Peter has seen him. He is probably the only one who has been old enough to actually live when Jesus was living and see him. I also think Peter may have been echoing the part when Jesus resurrected, and he talks to Thomas and he says: You put your hand in my side and you said you would believe if you could do that, but blessed are those who have not yet seen and still believe; and these are the people who have not seen him, and Peter is tying the two together, I think.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We live by faith, not by sight. You have not seen him, and yet...and I love this line...Peter says, and yet, you love him! And in loving Jesus, you receive Jesus' indwelling Holy Spirit, and that in turn, Peter says, fills us with an inexpressible and glorious joy...an inexpressible and glorious joy. Peter is really waxing eloquent here, Darrell...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We are in love with our living hope; and if it seems strange to talk about joy in the same context where Peter has been talking about suffering, again, Christians along the ages have testified to that very paradox. There is loss and hurt and suffering; and yet, there is also joy.

DARRELL DELANEY

And all of us can testify to God's goodness, even in the midst of suffering; and because we love Jesus, and because he is faithful, he is the one who fills us with this inexpressible joy that actually shines brighter in suffering times; and it makes people wonder: Well, why are they rejoicing when things seem to be going so wrong? It is because of who God is and because our hope is alive.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You think of this a lot as a pastor. You and I have both done graveside committal services at funerals. Christians are sad at death, and we cry, but we say the Apostle's Creed...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right there at the open grave: I believe in the resurrection of the body...my dad's body, my grandma's body... So, we weep, but as the New Testament says: We don't weep as those who have no hope. We do have hope, even in the midst of that. And that is what Peter is talking about.

In just a moment, we will round out this opening twelve verses of 1 Peter 1, so stay with us.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and let's dig right back into 1 Peter 1 at verse 10: Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. ¹²It was revealed to them...(the prophets)...that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, so they had been looking for a long time for the Messiah. Ever since the Fall, right, Scott?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, yes; ever since God promised in Genesis 3 that he would send somebody to crush the head of that serpent that brought sin and suffering into the world.

DARRELL DELANEY

And God founded a people through Abraham and Sarah that he would allow the Chosen One, Jesus Christ, to come out of; and Israel was that family...the nation, not just the one son, but the whole nation of people who were given the promise from Abraham, which means they are getting land and they are getting descendants; and all of this so that the bloodline of the Messiah would come; so that we could have that hope that Peter is writing about.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And ultimately, once the nation of Israel was established in the Promised Land, we got David, and God promised that it would be through David's line that the Messiah...the Christ...the Anointed One... *Mashiach* ...*en Christos*...both mean anointed one; that he would be a Son of David; and so, the people waited and they watched, and they hoped; and here, interestingly, Darrell, Peter refers to the prophets who pointed

forward, not only to the hope for reality of the Messiah, but they also foretold what the *nature* of that Messiah would be; and he would be a suffering servant. Isaiah in particular made that theme.

DARRELL DELANEY

In Chapter 53 it talks about how he will be the one who all the chastisement of God's peace will be laid upon him, and by his wounds we will be healed. You know, the immediate context would be Cyrus, who is the anointed one—the chosen one—but in the long run, the Messiah, of course, Christ, is that Suffering Servant who would die once and for all for all of us; who understands suffering in such an intimate way that he could relate to people in their circumstances, even now.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The prophets predicted it: Isaiah predicted what you were just saying: the Suffering Servant. Jeremiah said, you know, he would come and give us...not hearts of stone, but flesh. Micah said the Messiah would be born of a virgin. They were doing everything to prepare people for the final Anointed One's Advent.

There is an interesting line here: Peter says that at some point, these prophets realized they were not going to live to see this. What they talked about was going to happen after they were dead; but then, Peter says: You know what? The prophets...you dear readers...they were serving *you*. He points directly to his readers and says: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, all of them...they were serving *you*! The people who now live on the other side of the Advent of the Messiah.

DARRELL DELANEY

I love the fact that God is so far ahead of us that he planned these things in advance; and Peter is saying that the grace was to come to you, and that they were serving you; and so, really powerful to me is that this scripture that he is talking about, that the prophets were testifying to with the Messiah in mind, is now serving *us*, who read the scriptures each and every day in our personal devotions, or when we hear the Word of God preached on Sundays, or when we get in Bible studies. This stuff is still for us, serving us; and I pray that our faith in the Christ that they are talking about in these scriptures will be serving the generations that come behind us; that they would know who the God is who we are talking about—the One who we are willing to worship in the midst of suffering, and the One who keeps us. I hope that our faith stories can continue to be told in a way that blesses others.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And then, Peter delivers one of the most loaded, interesting, lyric lines, I think, in the whole Bible, when he writes: ^{12b}Even angels long to look into these things...even angels long to look... I mean, *wow*! The gospel of Jesus Christ the Lord is such a precious thing, even angels thrill to its story and to its truth; not only that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, but also thrill at how Jesus did this work; and that, of course, is through the paradoxical path of death on a cross, followed by history's greatest surprise ending: The resurrection on Easter morning.

DARRELL DELANEY

There is an old gospel song that says: I have a song that the angels cannot sing; I have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. So, the whole redemption story...the process of it...I am sure angels are like: Man, this is really great! It is like that good movie or that good show that you know the ending. You have seen it a hundred times, but it is still exciting to you every time you see it. Wait for the part; wait for the part; this is it! I think angels are leaning in to see that story happen over and over again when people repent...when people make professions of faith at church...when people rededicate their lives to Christ and say: I want to live for you and I am not going to let you go. It is really powerful to see, and Peter is really letting us know and reminding us of that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Don't be blasé about the gospel, Peter is saying. Angels thrill to it, you should, too; and let no preacher render the gospel bland through colorless sermons, please; no colorless sermons. The gospel is too gorgeous for that.

There may be one last application for this *Groundwork* program, Darrell. It is, we recognize that we need to do all that appreciating of the gospel from various contexts of trial and suffering.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, we live in a world that is pretty messed up. There are a lot of things happening: there are wars, there are rumors of wars; there is famine; there is racism; there is discrimination; there is brokenness all over in families and brokenness in ourselves; and there is a lot of suffering for those who are trying to live according to the way God called them to live, and they are getting opposition; and Peter is letting us know: Oh, God understands that. His Son has been through that kind of suffering, and his Son can give you strength in the midst of those trials.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is how that fiery refining process works. Jesus has been through it himself, and stands with us when we go through it now; and we can come out stronger on the other side; and you know, Peter makes abundantly clear here, too, that all of this is only possible because of the grace of God's Holy Spirit. I cannot do this; Darrell cannot do this; we cannot generate this kind of thing. It is only by the grace of our anointing by the Holy Spirit that we get that new birth into that living hope and into that inheritance kept in heaven; and into all the inexpressible glory and joy that this brings to us. It is all a gift of faith.

DARRELL DELANEY

I pray that all of our suffering that we do in the name of Christ can be repurposed for his glory and for his name sake, so that many people can understand that God is good; and there are so many things that we have that we are going to unpack in the rest of this series; and we pray that you will continue to be with us, because God has a lot to say. Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney. Join us again next time as we continue our study of 1 Peter with the end of Chapter 1 and the beginning of Chapter 2.

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DARRELL DELANEY

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