

I. Introduction

A. Easter: a time to gather, but not always

1. The very first Easter, the followers of Jesus were scattered, in hiding, and behind locked doors afraid of the Jewish leaders.
2. The mood was somber and questions lingered of what would become of them
3. Nature seemed out of control—early morning earthquake, not a calm, picturesque sunrise

*The first Easter, there were no gatherings, no singing, only reflective questions and grief.

B. When it is darkest, it is easiest to see the light. Good Friday

1. A few women went to pay respects and were given hope.
2. Disciples were in a locked room and were given hope.

*The odds were against them. Jesus was crucified and the movement was cancelled. But, in the words of Jean-Luc Picard, "Hope and odds make poor bedfellows."

Easter is not about adding a little meaning to our otherwise pitiful lives while we live. It's not about giving us mere pastoral comfort in the midst of a pandemic. It is about God's decisive act to save sinners through the blood atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ and to save those sinners, as the Bible says, "to the uttermost." We are raised with Christ to a living hope!

II. Living Hope (1 Peter 1:3-9)

A. Victory

1. Vic#1: The resurrection of Jesus
 - a. Forgiveness and salvation
 - b. Already happened
2. Vic#2: The return of Jesus
 - a. Redemption of our bodies and inheritance
 - b. Coming soon
3. What does it look like between those two victories? 1 Peter 1:3
 - a. "... born again to a living hope ..."
 - b. Hope defines the time between victories.
 - c. Living hope
 - 1) Not only do we have a living hope but we are living hope.
 - 2) Living hope is the action we are in right now. We live hope because of the resurrection of Jesus (vic#1) and the return of Jesus (vic#2).

B. Three Questions and Answers

1. What is the reason for living hope? (1 Peter 1:3)
 - a. New birth: absent before, present after
 - b. God's great mercy: humbling, everything we have is from mercy!
 - c. Christ's resurrection: makes new birth possible
2. What is the future benefit of living hope? (1 Peter 1:4-5)

- a. A durable inheritance (1 Peter 1:4)
 - 1) Imperishable: never disappear, won't ever fail
 - 2) undefiled: no sinfulness, no defect, and nothing to jeopardize its greatness
 - 3) Unfading: won't become less glorious, will become brighter and brighter
- b. Guaranteed by God Himself
 - 1) That inheritance is being kept in Heaven for us. And ...
 - 2) We are being kept through faith for that inheritance!

*God is doing all the keeping!

3. What is the present benefit of living hope? (1 Peter 1:6-9)

- a. Inexpressible joy
- b. Temporary sorrow and grief
- c. Conquering faith
- d. Love and believe Him because of what He has done and has promised to do.

*The hope that we live between victories is characterized by faith in Jesus, refined by trials, resulting in deeper love, joy, and belief because of the salvation we have received from Jesus.

*This is why we celebrate the victory of Jesus' resurrection and look forward to the victory of Jesus' return.

*My prayer this morning: that every person watching or listening this morning will live hope. The way to live hope is through surrendering our lives to Jesus Christ. (Invitation for salvation)

*You have a living hope and you are living hope right now. Why? Because of God's great mercy and because Jesus is raised from the dead. We are living hope because we have an inheritance that will never fail or be threatened. So today we love Jesus, believe Jesus, and rejoice in Jesus. And, maybe the best of all, God Himself is keeping you for the rest of your life here for all eternity! We of all people have reason to celebrate and live firmly grounded with the most hopeful of attitudes!



LIVING HOPE

1 PETER 1:3-9

APRIL 12, 2020 | PASTOR MATT WHITEFORD



GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT AS YOU START YOUR CONVERSATION)

- 1 What is the difference between wishing and hoping?**
- 2 What did you place your hope in before Jesus? How did that hope fail you?**

It is not what we do or where we are from that shapes us most. What shapes us most is our highest affection. When anything but the living Christ has our highest affection, we live in constant peril of loss, for everything but Jesus will be lost in death. Only affection for Christ and hope in His resurrection will provide peace in pain and hope beyond the grave. In the resurrected Christ, we have a hope that cannot be shaken!

QUICK REVIEW (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week's message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

DIG DEEPER (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

- 1** Someone read **1 Peter 1:3-9**

³Blessed 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, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in Heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so 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. ⁸Though 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, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

What aspect of our salvation does Peter focus on first here? How does this particular aspect move us to hope no matter where we find ourselves?

What does it mean to possess a "living hope"? How does Jesus' resurrection deliver such hope to us?

God causes everyone who believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior to be born again through the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This secures for us the one hope that nothing can kill and confirms our purpose in the present. Because of what Christ has done for us, we are free from living for momentary affections and can now focus our lives on glorifying God by advancing Christ's Kingdom.

Re-read vs 6-9. How does the hope we just spoke of marry joy and grief in the present moment? How have you experienced this in your own life?

LIVE IT OUT (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

- 1** Matt talked about the reality that we live between victories—Jesus’ resurrection and His return. **How does this living hope play a central role in your life right now, as you live between these two victories?**
- 2** **How might the priority of your affections need to shift to reflect the reality of Christ’s resurrection?**
- 3** **How does the reality of grief we are currently experiencing point us to and cause us to long for the hope of Heaven? How can we express this hope right now with people who do not share it?**

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray with your group to end your time together.

NEXT WEEK: NEW SERIES

PAUSE, WEEK 1: SUFFERING

In thinking about our beliefs... things we were taught and thought, we need to push the “pause” button. We need to say, “Wait a minute, what does the Bible actually say about this?” Each week, we will look at a different belief that we may have formed over the years from our culture or sometimes, even what we have learned in church. Ultimately, we want to regain a biblical worldview of those beliefs so we can live in alignment with Jesus.

PRaise/PRayer REQUESTS (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

How to Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and living like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don’t feel pressure to read all the content during your group discussion or to hit on all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!

Visit cpmodesto.org/groupleaders to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit cpmodesto.org/homegroups and use the Home Group Finder!

1 PETER 1:3-9

1:3. Peter piled up expressions in verses 3-5 to talk about a believer's relationship with God through salvation. His opening words are those of worship and praise, reminding us that salvation did not come because of who we are or because of what we have accomplished. Salvation came as a gift of mercy. Salvation represents a new birth (see John 1:13), a changing of who we are. Salvation makes us dead to sin and alive to righteousness in Christ.

Peter linked our salvation relationship to what he termed a living hope. Amid present and difficult dangers we are justified in viewing the future with optimism because we are securely attached to the God Who deals in futures. Furthermore, our hope is a living hope because it finds its focus in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our living hope comes from a living, resurrected Christ.

1:4. Peter used the word "inheritance" to describe our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Inheritance emphasizes the believer's eternal home in Heaven. Peter used a triple word picture to describe this inheritance. Our inheritance can never perish, spoil, or fade. These three verbal adjectives indicate that the inheritance is untouched by death, unstained by evil, and unimpaired by time. Our inheritance is death-proof, sin-proof, and time-proof. This inheritance is kept in Heaven, for believers. "Kept" means "to guard or reserve." The tense of the verb emphasizes the state or condition and underlines the fact that the inheritance already exists and is being preserved. God Himself has reserved this inheritance in Heaven for believers, and it continues to be there, still reserved for us. The difficulties we experience cannot undermine the certainty of our coming inheritance.

1:5. The salvation that is ready to be revealed is synonymous with the inheritance described in verse 4. Believers are cared for by God the Father. We are shielded by God's power. "Shielded" means "to guard" or to "watch over." This military term describes how soldiers guard someone. The present tense emphasizes the continual nature of this shielding. It does not suggest that believers are shielded from pain, difficulty, or anguish. It means that God Himself guards and watches over our salvation, our inheritance. Our relationship with God now as we grow more like Christ is a foretaste of that salvation which will be revealed when Christ returns.

1:6. This kind of care from God the Father suggests a response of great rejoicing. Verse 8 repeats this emphasis on joy, calling it an inexpressible and glorious joy. Such joy springs from the contemplation of God and of the salvation that comes to us from God.

This joyous response occurs even in the midst of grief caused by suffering through all kinds of trials. Suffer grief forms a metaphor derived from a military expression for being harassed. It includes the inner mental distress or sadness that comes because of painful circumstances. "All kinds of trials" literally means "varied, multicolored, or diversified" trials. This takes on a depth of meaning against the background of the ghastly persecution led by the Roman emperor Nero. In that persecution, Christians were wrapped in freshly slaughtered animal skins and fed to dogs and wild animals. They were dipped in pitch or tar and set on fire as torches to light Nero's gardens at night. This persecution was the first of nine that took place under the Roman Empire during the next 250 years. Peter himself very likely died during this first persecution.

1:7. Why does God allow this suffering to occur? Faith is being proved genuine through the trials. One purpose of trials is to sift out what is genuine in a person's faith. Followers of God, in both the Old and New Testaments, know that God uses trying circumstances to test the hearts and lives of His people in order to mature them spiritually. Through difficulties God often tests whether our faith is genuine. Peter cemented his point with the illustration of a goldsmith. To form a useful object, raw gold must be cast into a mold. For that to occur, the solid ore must be melted, requiring a temperature of 1,900 degrees Fahrenheit. When the gold is melted, the impurities rise to the surface, where they are skimmed off or burned off. A goldsmith knows the gold is ready to cast when the liquid gold becomes mirror-like and he can see his face reflected in the surface.

The parallel in a believer's life is obvious. Through the refining heat of trials, we as followers of Jesus Christ grow spiritually and thus reflect more of Christ's character in our lives. The language of this illustration may also refer to the first-century process of making pottery. Potters baked clay pots to give them strength. The process sometimes cracked pots that had flaws, but the ones that survived the process were then marked with the same Greek word that Peter used here (dokimos) for "genuine."

1:8. How could these Christians face their suffering? They chose to love Christ and to believe in Him even though they had not actually seen Him in the past and had not encountered Him visibly in the present. Most of Peter's readers had no personal contact with Christ while He lived on Earth. They were a generation removed from the time of His earthly ministry. This did not become an excuse. Instead, by accepting the testimony of those, like Peter, who had seen Christ, they entered into a personal relationship with Christ marked by love and belief.

1:9. Not only our joy, but also the assurance of salvation is not contingent upon our circumstances. We are marching, even though in pain, toward the final goal of our faith—our place in eternity and in Heaven. One day believers will enjoy salvation to the full in the presence of Jesus Christ. Pain and suffering will be no more.