

First Peter

1:1-12

Introduction

"You don't know what the future holds, but you know Who holds the future."

Sounds good... **But don't write it down just yet!** I've used those words to encourage folks - especially those who are suffering and sorrowing. It reminds them that they and all their experiences are intimately known to their heavenly Father; and that He has a plan and a purpose for all the things that occur in their life.

It sounds good... *Until you read the opening verses of First Peter.* Peter says that you **do** know what your future holds, and that Jesus not only holds the future but He holds **you** until you get there! Look again at verses three, four, and five:

1. First, while it's true that you don't know what your *immediate* future holds, you **do** know your *ultimate* future! You have been "begotten... again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you..."
2. Second, the One Who holds the future *also* has a hold on **you** until you get there: You "are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Jesus gives you a *living hope* for your future and He keeps a *loving hold* on you until you get there! No wonder Peter twice says, "Rejoice!"

We'll organize our thoughts around these two points: #1 Rejoice! You Have A Living Hope In Jesus, and #2 Rejoice! Jesus Has A Loving Hold On You.

#1 Rejoice!
You Have A Living Hope In Jesus
(v1-6a)

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ," (verse 1) was the author of this letter and the next. He and his brother Andrew ran a fishing business until Jesus called them, saying "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Peter's given name was Simon, but Jesus changed it to Peter, meaning *a rock*. It is a reminder of the new nature he had been given: As Simon he was prone to fleshly failures, but as Peter he was empowered to walk in the spirit.

1 Peter 1:1 ...To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

"Pilgrims" is best translated by a word we don't use very much anymore - the word *sojourners*. It means *a resident foreigner*. Once you become a Christian, you become a citizen of heaven. Everywhere you reside on earth is foreign to the true desire of your heart to be home with Jesus in heaven.

The word "dispersion" means *scattered* and originally referred only to Jews living outside of the Promised Land. Peter adapted it to describe all Christians - both Jew and Gentile. Many of the phrases Peter used in this letter describe Gentiles saved out of paganism rather than Jews saved out of Judaism. Our "Promised Land" is heaven and we are scattered sojourners until we go home.

The cities are listed probably in the order in which the letter was carried to them through the region we call Asia Minor.

1 Peter 1:2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

Wanna talk about divine "elect[ion]?" It's a doctrine Christians have argued about and divided over for centuries - and there's no end in sight to the disagreement. I'll tell you what I believe in a moment... But first I need to point out something.

The word translated "elect" (or "chosen") at the beginning of what is verse two in our English versions is actually found in verse one in the

Greek text. It's there as an adjective modifying the word "sojourners." Peter simply said, "to the chosen sojourners."

Peter's use of the word "elect" was a comparison his readers would have immediately understood. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was God's elect people on the earth. They were often scattered away from their Promised Land on earth; but they could always trust in God's providential care to return them to Jerusalem. In the New Testament, the Church is God's elect people on the earth. We are always scattered away from our true home in heaven; but we trust in God's providential care to bring us home to the New Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem.

It was their scattering as sojourners that was "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," *not* their election. The word for "elect" is *nine words away* in the Greek text. It is their entire earthly situation as scattered sojourners that was foreknown by God. (Grudem).

I spend a little extra time whenever words like "elect" and "foreknowledge" appear in a Bible passage because there's been a resurgence in recent years of certain teachings that came out of the Reformation. Those teachings now attach themselves to these words in ways the Bible never intended. For example: Christians are being told God's election of individuals is according to His foreknowledge and that must mean some people are predestined to be saved and that others are predestined to be damned to Hell. ***Not true!*** That's never what the Bible teaches.

So what do I believe about divine election? I believe you were chosen by God for salvation from before the foundation of the earth; **and** that every human being has free-will to receive or reject His offer of salvation in Jesus Christ. You are chosen but free. The Bible simultaneously teaches both. Attempts to resolve this any further always emphasize one truth over the other and lead you away from truth into error.

He hasn't mentioned it yet, but Peter's readers were suffering and were about to suffer even more. God foreknew the hardships of His

chosen sojourners. God's foreknowledge of their sufferings was a great comfort.

The next words of verse two summarize your daily Christian experience: Everyday you are being *sanctified* but need *sprinkling*.

1 Peter 1:2 ...in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

"Sanctification of the Spirit" is the daily, ongoing work of God the Holy Spirit within you to give you ever-increasing victory over sin. His indwelling presence enables you to walk in "obedience" to Jesus Christ. Still, you will sin. When you sin you have the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" for your sin. It's a reference to the Old Testament practice of people being sprinkled for purification whenever they came into contact with something that defiled them. You are not literally sprinkled; but you are to understand that Jesus' death on the Cross provides a daily cleansing from sin as you confess your sin and have your fellowship restored.

"Grace... and peace" are "multiplied" reminds you that **every** moment spent on earth as a sojourners can be filled - "multiplied" - with spiritual blessings. Peter was getting them - *and us* - ready to put suffering and sorrowing into the proper spiritual perspective.

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

"Blessed" is an encouragement to *bless* God - to worship Him at all times. He showed His "abundant mercy" when Jesus Christ rose from the dead in fulfillment of His promises to save lost mankind. You were dead in trespasses and sins but were "begotten again"; you were born-again and are spiritually alive.

Now that you are spiritually alive you have a "living hope." Suffering or sorrowing will befall you as a sojourner, but you are able to look ahead with absolute confidence to your ultimate future.

Your ultimate future is described in verses four and five:

1 Peter 1:4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

1 Peter 1:5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In heaven you have "an inheritance" that is eternal. It cannot ever be affected by death, or by sin, or by the passage of time. It is being "reserved." Peter is *not* talking about the rewards you might be given by Jesus when He looks back on your life of service. The verb tense means your "inheritance" is *already there*, being reserved by God for you.

What is your inheritance that is already there? The phrase in verse five, "the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," is synonymous with your "inheritance." Your inheritance is the full and complete "reveal[ing] of your "salvation." This is Peter's way of saying that God, Who has begun a good work in you, will complete it. Your "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" is the fullness of your salvation and includes things like your new, glorified body that is totally free forever from sin and death. God's finished work in you is already reserved and waiting for you in heaven.

You are definitely going to get there to enjoy it:

1 Peter 1:5 who are kept by the power of God through faith...

You are definitely going to get there to enjoy the completion of your salvation because **you** are being "kept by the power of God." "Kept" is a military term meaning *guarded, kept safe, and carefully watched*. It's a strong statement of your eternal security as a believer.

God is guarding you, keeping you safe, and carefully watching you. You're going to get to heaven where God will complete what He has begun in you.

He's doing it, though, while you are a scattered sojourner who suffers and sorrows! Thus the words in verse five, "through faith." This doesn't mean you somehow keep yourself a child of God by faith; God is the one Who does all the keeping in these verses! It means you believe God, regardless your situation on the earth, and "through faith" have a living hope in your future.

Your response to these truths is in the opening words of verse six, "In this you greatly rejoice..." If you look back with understanding upon what Peter said, you cannot help but rejoice...

Unless or until reality hits and your sufferings and sorrowings as a scattered sojourner begin to undermine your faith. In those times,

#2 Rejoice!
Jesus Has A Loving Hold On You
(v6b-12)

Jesus' hold on you is never more secure than when you are experiencing hardships. Your sufferings only strengthens His grip.

1 Peter 1:6 ...though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

"Various trials" summarizes just about anything you might experience to cause you to be "grieved." Also please recognize that your grief is very real. The Christian does not simply repress grief by some psychological technique of positive-thinking. He overcomes it with the joy of His Savior's hold upon Him.

Two important things are told to you about your various trials:

1. First, they are **temporary** - only "for a little while." They may last your entire lifetime on earth; but that is nothing compared to your inheritance in eternity.
2. Second, they are **necessary**. Peter said, "if **need** be..." God only allows you to experience what He knows you need.

Peter used an illustration that shows both the temporary and necessary character of your various trials:

1 Peter 1:7 that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

Raw gold is valuable but not very beautiful or useful. In order to be made into something both beautiful and useful it must be cast into a mold and heated to 1900 degrees Fahrenheit. As it is heated the impurities within the raw ore rise to the surface and are skimmed-off.

The craftsman knows all the impurities are gone when the heated gold is mirror-like and he can see in it his reflection.

Your various trials are God's way of refining you so that Jesus Christ is revealed in and through your life. God is at work skimming-off the impurities and He'll do it until He sees Himself reflected in your life.

Your various trials are like a jewelers stamp - but instead of 18 karat gold you are stamped "genuine" faith. Meanwhile all the "praise, honor, and glory" are given to God for what He is accomplishing in you.

"Genuine" faith is not something mystical only available to super-spiritual saints. It is simple and is described for you in verses eight and nine:

1 Peter 1:8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

1 Peter 1:9 receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of *your* souls.

"Whom having not seen you love" looks back at your conversion to Christ. You've never seen Jesus Christ except by faith - but that was enough for you to see His love for you and to respond by giving Him your heart and life.

The rest of verse six describes your faith from conversion until His coming. You still don't see Jesus except by faith - but that is enough for you to "believe" in His Word and the power of His indwelling Spirit.

"Receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls" obviously looks forward to your future. By faith you "receive" the living hope Peter has been describing - that one day you will be in heaven and the salvation God has begun in you will be completed.

Here's another way of understanding this. You're in a trial. You look *back* and "see" by faith Jesus has saved you... You look *forward* and "see" by faith Jesus will complete the salvation He's begun in you. He has a loving hold on your life that must also include your present sufferings. You look *around*, in the present, and "see" by faith Jesus refining you. "Seeing" by faith your whole life is overruled by God - from eternity past through eternity future - you cannot help but have a

deep inner spiritual "joy" that is too heavenly to ever totally express in words but nevertheless reveals something of the heavenly "glory" you are grounded upon.

OK... But again, the reality of my suffering and sorrowing still wants to undermine my faith. It's just hard being a scattered sojourner! So Peter offered one final perspective in verses ten, eleven, and twelve. He pointed out that suffering is not a strange thing but something to be expected and maybe even envied.

1 Peter 1:10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you,

1 Peter 1:11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

1 Peter 1:12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven - things which angels desire to look into.

The Old Testament prophets discovered that the Messiah they were writing about would first of all suffer and then His glory would follow. They knew that their words would find their fulfillment in the future - to a people blessed to live in an age of "grace" who would fully understand their message.

This is that age of grace; **you and I** are those people! The "Holy Spirit [was] sent from heaven" on the Day of Pentecost and now even the least disciple of Jesus, the newest convert, is in a better position than the greatest Old Testament prophet. Even God's "angels" are amazed at what God is doing in our lives. The words "desire to look into" mean they watch with delightful curiosity as you realize the fullness of your blessings. "Look into" can be translated *peep... Peeping angels!*

Jesus would first of all suffer and then His glory would follow. The pattern seen in His life is the pattern for your life. Your suffering is **not** a sign that God has betrayed or abandoned you. On the contrary, it is a sign of your fellowship with Him and of the glory you can expect when you enter His presence in heaven. It is to be envied.

As we continue through Peter's letters we will note that "suffering" is mentioned fifteen times using eight different words to describe your

"various trials." They were already suffering - and it was about to get worse. Nero was on the verge of his official persecution of Christians. Still, they could and would rejoice!

Conclusion

Their historical situation as scattered sojourners could not alter their spiritual situation: They had a living hope in Jesus, and Jesus had a loving hold on them.

You, too, are a chosen sojourner, scattered according to God's foreknowledge. You will suffer and sorrow... But you can also rejoice in His refining of your faith.