1 Peter 1:3-9 Born Again to a Living Hope: The Lord is Good Even in the Times of Trial

Comfort that does not depend on the situation getting better

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, October 11, 2020
PASSAGES	1 Peter 1:3-9; 1 Peter 1:10-25; 1 Peter 2:1-10; Leviticus 20:26; Deuteronomy 7:6; 1 Samuel 2:2; Matthew 10:24; Matthew 27:51; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 2:8-9
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:03:44 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Peter writes to churches under real persecution, and his comfort is not "look on the bright side." It is that God himself caused them to be born again, guards an inheritance for them that cannot fade, and has made them holy – set apart as his own, marked by his presence. Trials may not go away, but in them Christ is being formed in us, and the honor at the end belongs to those who believe.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- God is the active one: he caused us to be born again, he keeps our inheritance, and his power guards us. Jesus did not twist the Father's arm into loving us.
- Peter never promises that applying the right principles or praying hard enough will make bad things stop. Jesus and Paul both suffered.
- Our comfort in an anxious, "corona cranky" election year is not that our candidate wins, but that Christ will be revealed in glory.
- Holiness is not mainly purity. A perfectly clean sheep is still common until it is set apart for God. To be holy is to belong to him and carry his presence.

- It is hard to grow in patience, mercy or unconditional love when nothing tests them. Trials can be where Christ is formed in us.
- Hard days do not give us license to treat people badly. Peter tells suffering people to love one another earnestly from a pure heart.
- We are living stones built into God's house, and whoever trusts the cornerstone will never be put to shame.

▶ 1:04:53

During worship, Matt said, he had a sense of God wanting to give joy in the middle of suffering – not necessarily changing anyone's circumstances, though sometimes that is right too, but lifting the heaviness of the burden while they are still walking through it. It was, he admitted, related to his sermon. He thanked the children's ministry for making Sunday school feel normal in the strangest possible ways, "leaning heavy on bubbles and chalk," and told a dad joke about calling an Englishman a unit of power.

There have always been times like these

▶ 1:07:44

It had been a hard year for many reasons. But there have always been pressing issues facing the body of Christ, real events that threaten people's joy and faith – and the real presence of God through it all. Peter wrote to churches suffering "various trials." The movement had turned a corner: no longer persecuted only by synagogues and families, it was drawing the active hostility of Rome. The trials might be slander, name-calling, theft, violence, demands to burn their scriptures, or death.

▶ 1:09:26

Matt read the greeting to the elect exiles of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, and passed its blessing on: "May the blessing and peace of God himself, Father, Son and Spirit, be multiplied to you and to your families."

1. A living hope that God keeps

▶ 1:09:58

> "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, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
>
> 1 PETER 1:3–5 ↗

▶ 1:10:40

Notice God's agency, Matt said. Peter is not telling them to look on the bright side, because things do not always turn around. "Your hope is in God himself, not in your situation getting better." He caused us to be born again. "It's not like you said a prayer and for whatever reason Christ twists the arm of the Father into loving you. He was already there, active in pursuing his sheep." He keeps the inheritance, by his own power. Peter is shifting their focus from the trials that shake them to the things that are unshakable.

▶ 1:12:25

> "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 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. 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, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."
>
> 1 PETER 1:6–9 ↗

▶ 1:13:00

What we are going through is not necessarily against God's will. He may let us stay in a trial to show the genuineness of our faith. Peter does not say that if you pray hard enough or apply kingdom principles, "you'll be the CEO of your neighborhood in two weeks or whatever – call now." He says: look to the one who is in glory now and will be revealed. "Personally, when I need comfort, I prefer the truth, even if it's a little weird or difficult to hear."

2. No promise of an easy road

▶ 1:14:22

Jesus himself had nowhere to lay his head. People said he had a demon, called him a drunk and a glutton, smeared him with innuendo as a friend of sinners, accused him of blasphemy and of casting out demons by the prince of demons. And he said a student is not above his master (Matthew 10:24). If anyone promised you that enough faith keeps bad things from happening, "let's just be honest, you should revoke that." Ask Paul – full of faith, shipwrecked, stoned and left for dead, hungry, abandoned.

▶ 1:16:39

Matt raised it because so many were going through emotional trials amid national turmoil. "It's an election year – I don't know if you noticed that it's an election year." Many were "corona cranky," on edge without realizing how on edge. "But our comfort isn't in, oh, my guy's gonna get in. My comfort isn't in, we'll never see a disease again. My comfort is that Christ will be revealed with praise, glory and honor," and that what he is building us to be will be revealed too.

3. Suffering and glory together

▶ 1:17:40

The prophets searched carefully into the grace to come, the Spirit of Christ in them predicting "the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories" (1 Peter 1:10–12). Christ was not glorified in spite of his sufferings; they were part of his glory, a theme John's Gospel shares when the Son is "lifted up." Peter pairs that with ours: you are suffering too, but wait – there will be glory, "and this life is but a breath anyway." Even angels long to look into the inheritance God is preparing. "Can you imagine the kinds of things angels have seen, and yet they're curious about this?"

4. Called to be holy – and what that means

▶ 1:19:49

Then Peter says: set your hope fully on the grace to come, do not be conformed to your former passions, but "as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (1 Peter 1:13–16). Our natural response to suffering, Matt said, is to escape it – never call that person again, quit the job, blame a group and leave. But Peter gives no hint that God will remove their trials. Instead he adds something that is not filler: you are called to be holy.

▶ 1:21:20

Modern American evangelicalism tends to use "holy" to mean pure. Scripture implies purity often, but holiness is about God's presence, being set apart for him. Israel was holy because it was separated to God (Leviticus 20:26), a special people because it was chosen (Deuteronomy 7:6); "there is none holy like the Lord… there is none besides you" (1 Samuel 2:2).

▶ 1:22:21

Imagine a perfect sheep, Matt said – healthy, flawless, "the fluffiest sheep you've ever seen," wool spotless. That sheep is not holy. It is common. It becomes holy only when it is set apart and offered to God. The tabernacle's tongs were not holy because they were the best tongs anyone had seen; they were holy because you would never take that furniture home and prop your feet on it. It was God's, the place of his presence.

▶ 1:23:26

So when Peter says "be holy" to people in trial, he is not only saying "you're pure." "What he's saying is, even in these trials you are precious, you are chosen, you belong to him, and he's with you." That is a totally different kind of comfort. He may let us stay in trial, and it is in trial that faith proves genuine. "It's hard to demonstrate long-suffering or patience when there's nothing irritating happening. It's hard to grow in mercy and forgiveness when no one's offending you. It's hard to grow in unconditional love when everyone around you is meeting all your conditions all the time." Christ is being formed in you.

5. Exiles, ransomed

▶ 1:25:13

Conduct yourselves with fear "throughout the time of your exile," knowing you were ransomed not with silver or gold "but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Peter 1:17–21) – and the Lamb is God the Son himself. This life is our exile. We may admire Rome, the dynasties of China, or America, but "the kingdoms of this earth are not the same thing as the coming kingdom of God." So our faith and hope are in God – not in the number or size of churches, not in Christians in Congress, not "getting our person in office," not comfort or luxury. "Our faith and our hope are rock solid because they're in him."

6. Love one another – yes, even now

▶ 1:26:57

"Love one another earnestly from a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22–25). When things go badly at work or at home, we give ourselves extra license: "I had a bad day, so yeah, I yelled at people and threw things at their head." Peter says to people suffering real persecution: yes, even now. "Even in an election year – doesn't Peter know we put all that on hold during an election year?" Even in trial the Holy Spirit can show his love through you, perhaps especially then. You may think God should deliver you from the person bothering you; perhaps he is forming Christ in you.

▶ 1:29:20

“All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” What is unfading is the kingdom and the inheritance kept by God’s power, beyond the reach of rust or theft. Trading that future glory for extra envy and selfishness now “is a raw deal.” Keep your eyes on the risen Lord at the Father’s right hand. “He is coming, and you will see that glory… It’s going to mess with your mind, and it will be worth it.”

7. Living stones

▶ 1:31:23

So put away malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander, and long for pure spiritual milk, “if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Peter 2:1–3). The Lord is still good in trial. His rod and staff correct and form Christ in us, “not a spear and a dagger. He’s not malicious.” He can turn what was meant for harm into good, “grace after grace after grace,” mercies new every morning.

▶ 1:32:52

Coming to him, the living stone, we are being built up as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God (1 Peter 2:4–5). What could we offer God? “I carved a stick. The Lord’s gonna say, I have a lot of sticks, actually.” We picture an unpleasable machine of raw power, but he is a Father, and so humble that we can actually please him. And what he is building is not a heaven of “silk pajamas and gold nose rings” or roast pheasant, but his people.

▶ 1:35:22

“Whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” Matt paused there. Many people live with shame, or social exclusion for being faithful to Christ, or embarrassment over what they have done. “Placing your trust in him, you will never be put to shame for that – not by him, not in that kingdom.” If you feel you have no place to belong, in his house you have one. “The honor is for you who believe. Isn’t that amazing?”

▶ 1:37:07

For unbelievers the rejected stone becomes a stone of stumbling; do not build on another foundation. But then:

> “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”
>
> 1 PETER 2:9–10 ↗

▶ 1:38:24

Not that we proclaim "his harsh tyranny over you, that he's a despot," but his excellencies. When you see the honor he has given those who believe, "it'll be all you could do to just barely hold it together." Who Christ is now, and who he will be revealed to be, is the center of our faith and hope.

A prayer, and a call

▶ 1:39:44

Matt's prayer for the church was not necessarily that what they were walking through would get easier, but that God's joy and light would shine in it, "that the heavy emotional burden will become the yoke of Christ," because what he is forming in us is more precious than gold refined by fire.

▶ 1:40:48

Then Binyam Gebrehanna closed the service. In the temple, he said, a great curtain separated the people from the Most Holy Place, where only the priest could enter with sacrifices. When Jesus – fully God and fully human, who lived a perfect life, was crucified and rose – died, the curtain was torn (Matthew 27:51). Now we can come into God's very presence. If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him, we will be saved (Romans 10:9), by grace through faith, a free gift (Ephesians 2:8–9). He led a prayer of repentance and faith and invited anyone who prayed it to tell a friend, or Geno or Matt.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- 1 Peter 1:3–5
- 1 Peter 1:6–9
- Matthew 10:24
- 1 Peter 1:10–12
- 1 Peter 1:13–16
- Leviticus 20:26
- Deuteronomy 7:6
- 1 Samuel 2:2
- 1 Peter 1:17–21
- 1 Peter 1:22–25
- 1 Peter 2:1–3
- 1 Peter 2:4–5
- 1 Peter 2:9–10
- Matthew 27:51
- Romans 10:9
- Ephesians 2:8–9

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt said Peter's comfort is not that circumstances will improve. Where have you been looking for comfort in a situation getting better rather than in God himself?
2. What would change in how you face your current trials if you believed God might be letting you stay in them to show the genuineness of your faith?
3. How does the picture of the perfectly clean but common sheep reshape what you think "be holy" means?
4. Where are you tempted to give yourself "extra license" on hard days, and what would loving earnestly from a pure heart look like there?
5. Who in your life feels shame or has no place to belong, and how could you share the promise that whoever trusts Christ will not be put to shame this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker introduced himself at this service as Hope Chapel's associate pastor. He preached this first of three Sundays in 1 Peter in October 2020, opening with a sense from worship that God wanted to give joy in the middle of suffering. He offers to pass people's names to a group at Hope who pray for others and give them prophetic words, and he is not above a dad joke.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9yEi3C_Y_0&t=3824s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.