

GROUNDING IN HOPE

Pastor Chris Brooks, Revive '21

TEXT: 1 PETER 1:1-12 (ESV)

There are two things to know if you're asking the question, "Is hope dead?"

1. God is big enough for the question.

Asking God is the right thing to do because only He has the answer.

2. The Bible predicted the question.

We're not the first generation to ask.

When we answer deep and profound questions too quickly, we give shallow answers.

In every state in America, teen suicide, anxiety, and depression are on the rise. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation study found half of Americans have seen a mental health professional over the past year. It also reported 48% described "feeling down, depressed, and hopeless" within the last twelve months.

It seems like despair is the ethos of the day. Hopelessness can result from a single event or from a slow encroachment upon the heart.

Progressive secularism states that we should look within for answers, but this only creates more confusion and anxiety. The gospel tells us to look up not within.

The intimate letter of 1 Peter was written to friends who were hurting deeply. The apostle Peter is a mixed bag of phenomenal moments of faith and low moments of doubt, just as we do. If you find yourself on the mountaintop of faith one day and down in the depths of despair another, welcome to the world of Peter, where God proves over and over He knows how to write straight lines with crooked sticks.

Peter wrote to the "**elect exiles**" (v. 1) which are two paradoxical words.

Exiles are homeless nomads without a voice or power. Christians are exiles who aren't fully at home in this world. We should not be surprised when pain comes into our lives, which causes us to feel displaced, powerless and voiceless.

To be **elect** means to be chosen and favored by God—distinct from all other people in the world.

You were chosen "according to the foreknowledge of God" (v. 2). Foreknowledge means that He knows all things, from the end to the beginning. Not only does He know everything about you, He knows *you*. He sees you. And He chose you to be an exile in a fallen world:

- To be special but displaced.
- To be favored but a stranger.
- To be fully hopeful in this world yet weeping.
- To be dying yet fully alive.
- To be broken yet beautiful.

In God's providential wisdom, He created us with the capacity to feel dual emotions at the same time. You are not mono-emotional. You can experience weeping and hope at the same time because you are God's wonderful, magnificent art in creation. You can be dying on the outside and alive on the inside—elect and an exile.

As an exile in a fallen world of pain, Jesus Christ set you apart so that you can be obedient to Him and show the power of His blood to a watching world.

You were chosen to suffer like the elect with a goal, "God, I want to be at my best when things are at their worst." We do not mourn like people without hope because we are people of hope (1 Thess. 4:13).

Instead of lamenting our suffering as elect exiles, Peter praises God:

- **Heaven is secure.**

We have been born again, rescued from despair, and birthed into a hope that isn't grounded in shallow optimism or pep talk (v. 3). Our hope is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hope is alive because hope is a person who is alive. Because Jesus has conquered death, we have hope.

God wouldn't risk your salvation being stolen, so He kept it in heaven (v. 4). He put a security guard (Himself) in front of your inheritance that even Satan could not get through (v. 5).

When pain encroaches we remind ourselves of the Word of God, that we've been born again to a living hope. In the deepest pain I have ever known—it was the Word of God that revived my heart.

- **Suffering reveals our faith.**

Peter does not sugarcoat trials (v. 6). It's all right to admit grief and to cry out, "How long, O Lord?" It's all right to be honest with Jesus.

The trials you are experiencing in this world are not designed to expose your lack of faith but to reveal the genuineness of your faith (v. 7).

Genuine love and trust in Jesus are proven when you're able to lift holy hands while tears are streaming from your eyes. Christians possess a supernatural grace which gives the ability to rise above pain to give God the praise He is due. A genuine faith is more precious than gold.

When Christ returns, there will be praise offered to Him by all the world (see Rev. 7:9). Some people will be praising God because they saw you trusting Him in the midst of the trial, and because that drew them to faith in Jesus.

- **Jesus wins.**

Satan thought he won when he put Christ on the cross. But he didn't know that the cross was the death of death.

Satan also thought he won when he sent the devastating trial into your life. **But the trial was given so that the world might see that your faith is not shallow or surface deep: it is rooted in the hope of the revelation and resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

We praise Him because we know how the story ends—He wins! I died with Him, and I rose again with Him. And because He lives, I live. And because He is victorious, I am victorious—not because I am strong, because I am not. But when I am weak, His strength is made perfect.

To understand the focus of your faith, examine what you look to in moments of suffering. We're wired for faith, but some put their hope in philosophies, people, or politics that overpromise and under deliver.

People will fail you. But **there is One who is faithful from beginning to end—the only One who is worthy of our trust.** That is why Peter says we are to “set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (v.13). Not partially. Not faith in Jesus *and* . . . But faith in Christ *alone*.

- Faith in Christ alone is what saves us.
- Faith in Christ alone is what sustains us.
- Faith in Christ alone is what revives us.
- Faith in Christ alone is what keeps us.
- Faith in Christ alone is what gives us the hope that we need to point the world to Jesus.

Your God loves you so much that He mobilized prophets to look into Scripture, searching for the promise of the Christ who was to come, His sufferings and subsequent glories. They found this grace (vv. 10–12).

So that means I'm not waiting for a promise. I have a promise. The promise is that He is keeping me. The promise is that what the enemy meant for evil, God will use for my good and His glory. Even though I'm weeping on the outside because my son passed away, I am full of hope on the inside. Don't let the enemy steal your hope. God is faithful.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discuss the statistics from the research on depression and anxiety in America. Were you surprised? Why or why not?

If despair is the ethos of the day, what are things that are causing people to feel hopeless? Where do we tend to wrongly place our hope?

Who have you observed displaying dual emotions while walking through a trial? How did their life of faith inspire you?

Pastor Brooks described Peter as a “mixed bag of phenomenal moments of faith and low moments of doubt like us.” How do you relate to Peter?

Share a time in your life when you questioned, “Is hope dead?” How did God revive your faith?

Describe how you are presently living as an “elect exile.” How does knowing the truth that you are set apart for obedience to God influence your decisions and choices?

Consider the goal, “God, I want to be at my best when things are at their worst.” What are specific ways we can be prepared for the next trial?

From 1 Peter 1: 1–12, what truth will grow your faith in the upcoming weeks and months?

