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MINISTRIES

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Bible Study: Life in Exile - Born Again to a Living Hope (1 Peter 1:3-12)

Welcome back to our verse-by-verse study through 1 Peter. We are going to continue diving in and learn about how we’ve been “born again” into God’s family through the resurrection of the Messiah. As members of God’s family, we have a living hope of a new world to come when Yeshua returns to set up his kingdom.

Before we get started, here’s a quick summary of what we discussed last time.

1. We talked about the authorship of 1 Peter and some of the reasons we can be confident that Peter wrote this letter. We went through the primary historical witnesses to 1 Peter’s authenticity, and the similarities in content to other teachings in the Bible attributed to Peter. These confirm the letter’s claim that Peter was the author. We also addressed the two main objections to Peter’s authorship offered by liberal scholars and demonstrated some weaknesses in their arguments.
2. We discussed the identity of Peter’s readers and how they were predominantly Gentile believers. Nevertheless, Peter applies Old Testament descriptions of Israel to his audience as a strategic way to identify them with Israel. Peter wants his readers to see that they are part of Abraham’s family through the Messiah, and they have the same mission and hope for the future.
3. We learned that exile is a prominent theme throughout the letter and how Peter intends for his audience to see themselves as exiles. They are sojourners in a land not their own, surrounded by a culture that is hostile toward their beliefs and lifestyle. They are waiting to be brought to their true home—the Messiah’s future kingdom. In the meantime, they have a mission to fulfill while they await the arrival of that kingdom.

As we will continue to see, Peter gives us guidance on how we are to live while we’re in this type of “exile,” waiting for the return of the Messiah. Let’s get started.

1 Peter 1:3-5

[Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ \[Messiah Yeshua\]! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus](#)

Christ [Messiah Yeshua] 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.

So Peter begins the body of his letter with a blessing: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Messiah Yeshua.” According to scholars, Peter is using the opening of a common Jewish liturgical prayer here. Here’s what Craig Keener writes. He says:

Peter adopts the form of a *berakhah*, the Jewish form of blessing that regularly began “Blessed be God who . . .”

-Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2014), p. 687

A *berakhah* simply means “blessing,” and it’s intended as an expression of thanks toward God. In Judaism, it became customary to recite *berakhot*—the plural of *berakhah*, “blessings”—for any kind of occasion. There is even a *berekhah* traditionally recited upon hearing bad news. Many of the common *berakhot* you might hear today, such as those said over bread and wine on the Sabbath, begin the same way: *Barukh Attah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam...* (“Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe...”)

These liturgical prayers have their roots in the synagogue services of Peter’s day. For instance, the *Shemonei Esreh*, or “Eighteen Benedictions,” includes a similar structure. This series of *berakhot* is an ancient communal prayer recited in the synagogue regularly. While it did not reach its final form until sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the underlying foundation of the prayer is undoubtedly much older.

(For more on the historical development of the *Shemonei Esreh*, see Emil Schürer’s work, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973-1987], Vol. 2, pp. 455-463).

So, Peter’s audience certainly would have recognized Peter’s words here as a *berakhah*, not unlike the types of blessings they might have heard if they attended synagogue services. Remarkably, Peter incorporates Yeshua into his *berakhah*: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Messiah Yeshua.” Peter adopts this customary Jewish manner of blessing God and immediately acknowledges the Father’s relationship with “our Lord Messiah Yeshua.” Then, he centers the blessing upon the theme of Messiah’s work. For Peter, the Father and the Son cannot be disassociated from each other. Acknowledging the Father requires acknowledging the Son also. It’s a package deal. As John puts it:

1 John 2:22-25

Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus [Yeshua] is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

It’s important to be reminded of the Messiah’s prominent place in the apostles’ theology. Too often, believers today relegate the Messiah to the background of their theology. It’s not always on purpose, but it’s easy to focus so much on other aspects of theology and doctrine that we take the spotlight away from

the Messiah. For the apostles, the Messiah was front and center to everything they believed and taught. As we pointed out earlier, Peter doesn't hesitate to bring up the Messiah and focus on his work. Peter goes on to say God has [“caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Messiah Yeshua from the dead”](#) (1:4). It's through the Messianic work of the Son that we can be born again into God's family. The only way to the Father is through the Son (John 14:6).

Now, what does Peter mean when he says God has caused us to be “born again”? Throughout his letter, Peter uses the metaphor of family. We relate to God “as obedient children” (1:14). We “call on him as Father” (1:17). We are “like newborn infants,” growing up into salvation (2:2). The idea Peter wishes to convey is that we've experienced a type of new birth when we received the Messiah. Our status before God has changed—we became his children. This is the result of Messiah's resurrection, which has inaugurated a new creation that will reach its climax at the end of the age (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21-22). The new birth we receive through Messiah is part of God's ultimate plan to bring about a new heavens and new earth.

So, through Yeshua's resurrection, we've been born again “to a living hope.” That is to say, the Messiah's resurrection from the dead assures us that there will be a future resurrection of all God's people (1 Corinthians 15:22-23). Thus, we have hope in God for the future because we've seen that God's promise of resurrection is trustworthy.

Our new birth includes [“an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,”](#) Peter says. Our inheritance as believers is God's kingdom (Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:50) and eternal life (Matthew 19:29; Titus 3:7). This inheritance is imperishable—it does not die. It is undefiled—it cannot be corrupted or spoiled by the world. It is unfading—it will not lose its worth. Finally, it's kept in heaven—that is, God himself keeps it safe, and no one can take it away from us. As Duane Watson writes:

The passive participle of the verb “kept” (tēreō) refers to God as the one preserving and guarding the inheritance; keeping is another aspect of God's mercy (1:3).

-Duane F. Watson & Terrance Callan, *First and Second Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2012), p. 25

Peter goes on to describe believers as [“who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”](#)

Just as God keeps the inheritance, God keeps believers—God's power protects us. Thus, we are encouraged to have faith in God during trials (1:7), persecution (3:13-4:19), and spiritual attacks from the devil (5:8-9). Once again, our faith is in God, who raised Messiah from the dead (1:21). God's protection is for “a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Because of the Messiah's work, we will be saved at the end of the age. What a glorious hope we've been born into through the Messiah Yeshua!

Let's continue reading:

1 Peter 1:6-9

[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 [Messiah Yeshua]. 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.

Peter says, “[in this you rejoice.](#)” We rejoice in what? Everything Peter just talked about: God’s mercy that has caused us to be born again to a living hope—the assurance of eternal life we’ve inherited through the Messiah’s resurrection.

We rejoice even though we “[have been grieved by various trials.](#)” That is to say, in spite of current circumstances that point to fear and gloom, followers of Yeshua respond properly by rejoicing. Even though the present situation might seem bleak, we know how the story is going to end. The living hope we’ve been born into through Yeshua’s resurrection prompts us to rejoice.

Additionally, and paradoxically, the trials we endure are for our good. They test the sincerity of our faith so that we may be unhindered in our praise when Yeshua returns. To demonstrate how trials test our faith, Peter gives the analogy of refining gold with fire. Precious metals, such as gold, were melted with fire to remove the impurities. Peter’s point is that God uses trials for our sanctification—to make our faith like a pure metal. Trials refine the character of our faith. As the Psalmist proclaims, “[Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word](#)” (Psalm 119:67).

So, Peter mentions that gold eventually perishes. According to the scholar Paul Achtemeier, Peter implies an argument from the lesser to the greater here. Achtemeier writes this:

The comparison in this verse, with its emphasis on the perishable nature of gold, implies an argument from the lesser to the greater: if perishable, and hence less valuable, gold must be so tested, how much more must faith, which is imperishable and hence of greater value.

-Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), p. 102

According to Peter, genuine faith is “precious” to God. Trials purify our faith, transforming us into who God created us to be for his glory. Similar to James (James 1:2-4), Peter views suffering as a tool that God uses for our spiritual growth.

Peter then describes his audience as loving and believing in the Messiah despite not seeing him. In fact, even though they don’t see him, they “[rejoice with joy that is inexpressible.](#)” Peter says his readers are already obtaining the salvation to be fully revealed at the end of the age. Their joy is not based on what they see—the present difficult circumstances of life. Believers can have an enduring joy—regardless of suffering—because of the living hope we’ve been born into.

Let’s keep going here:

1 Peter 1:10-12

[Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.](#)

Here, Peter says that the prophets looked forward to the salvation that Peter's readers possess. The prophets predicted the suffering of Messiah and the benefits now enjoyed by believers. This message that the prophets predicted is what was announced to Peter's audience through those who preached the Gospel to them by the Holy Spirit. The realities of the Gospel, now revealed to Peter's readers, were the very things even the angels are curious about. Peter's point is that his readers are in a position of privilege above even the prophets and angels! The message of hope and glory revealed to them—and to us, by the way—is the culmination of the entire story of God's plan of redemption.

What a glorious truth! What a wonderful hope we have as those born into God's family through the Messiah's resurrection!

So, let's now talk about another theme in Peter's letter, which is

Hope in the midst of Trials

We've been talking about the hope we have as believers. And according to Peter, it's a hope that empowers us with an inexpressible joy—a transcendent joy that isn't dependent on our earthly circumstances. It's a joy that, really, only believers can genuinely experience. If there is no God, the suffering we endure in this life is meaningless. There is no greater purpose to it. There is no ultimate resolution. But since we know God, and we know the glorious truth of the Gospel and how the story ends, we can rejoice in spite of suffering and persecution.

As Ecclesiastes says, one day God will bring every deed into judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). God will bring about real justice in the world to come—and it's this hope that fuels how we live before God today. We see everything in light of the world to come.

This is a relevant message for us today. How often do we get discouraged over the state of our current world? For instance, it's easy to give in to despair when we see the utter corruption of our political leadership; when we see them enacting all kinds of immoral and destructive policies. It's easy to get discouraged when we see the increasing wickedness in the culture and the growing hostility toward believers.

Nevertheless, we can rejoice! Why? Because our hope isn't found in political leaders or things of this world. Despite what's going on in the world today, we have hope because there is a greater kingdom to come. Evil will not prevail. God will set all things right in the end.

On a more personal level, when we experience loss of some kind, or when we face trials in our relationships—when those whom we love betray us or abandon us—it's so easy to allow the despair of the present situation to consume us. It's so easy to focus only on what we can see in the here and now. But as believers, we live in light of the world to come. We recognize that there is a hope for a glorious future.

In the meantime, paradoxically, the trials we now face are for our good. They are a tool that God uses to refine our faith. God is more concerned about our character than our comfort. So, as we face trials today, we can ask God, "What are you teaching me through this? Lord, reveal to me anything in my life that hinders me from being all you created me to be!"

And we can pray that prayer with joy and hope that God, who started that good work in us, will bring it to completion. May you all be encouraged—you've been born again to a living hope, born again into a

living hope through the Messiah's resurrection. This life is not all there is. The trials you face right now will soon be eclipsed by the glory of the world to come, which you've inherited through the Messiah's resurrection. God is preparing you for that future day. So, rejoice and stand firm on the truth of the Gospel.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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