1 Peter

True Hope in a Troubled World   Lesson Four

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Outline

Introduction

In Christ every Christian has hope. Our hope lives because Jesus lives. Our hope is active as it produces sanctified living and submission to others. A Christian's life is characterized by hope. However, don't be fooled. Our citizenship in Christ's kingdom doesn't promise a life of happiness on this earth. Rather, Christ promises his disciples a cross—suffering for the sake of Jesus. This reminder is not meant to bring a Christian to despair; it is meant to refocus our hope in Christ. As Christ suffered, so must his followers. As Christ entered into eternal glory, so will his followers.

Don't be afraid. Be ready: 3:13-3:22

Peter's line of thought
1. Christians can face suffering with confidence (verses 13-17).
2. The basis for that confidence is Christ's victory (verses 18-20).
3. Baptism connects us to Christ and his victory (verses 21-22).

What harm could there be in suffering for Christ?

Peter encourages Christians to be prepared to give a reason, or better yet, an *account of* the hope that we have (verse 15). How are Christians to prepare to give an account of our hope?

When have you had to give an account for the hope you have in Christ? What advice does Peter give us as we answer questions or attacks against our faith?

The account Peter gives for Christian hope is echoed in the Apostles' Creed: "Jesus Christ was crucified, **died**, and was buried. He **descended into hell**. The third day he **rose** again from the dead." How have you understood Jesus's descent into hell? How does Peter explain it?

What confidence does baptism give a suffering Christian?

*Peter teaches another truth we confess in the creeds: "He is seated at the right hand of the Father" (verse 22).

Be Christ-like: 4:1-11

What does Peter mean when he says, "He who has suffered in his body is done with sin?" (See Romans 6:4)

Peter brings up the recurring theme of *strangers in the world* in verse 4 when he says, "They think it's strange that you do not go along with the same flood of reckless [behavior]." In what similar ways are you considered to be *strange* by an unbelieving world?

*Yet another truth echoed by the creeds: "He will come to judge the living and the dead." (Verse 5, 6).

In verses 7-11, Peter speaks of the judgment suggested by verses 5-6 and it's effect on the Christian's life. What exactly does it mean that the end is near? How does this affect the way a Christian lives in the last days?

Someone who doesn't know Christ and his message of forgiveness could easily misunderstand these verses and think that Christians must earn their way into heaven. Has anyone ever misinterpreted your good works in such a way? How have you responded?

Don't be surprised: 4:12-19

In what ways did Christians in the Roman Empire suffer?
In what ways do Christians in America suffer?
In what ways do Christians in the rest of the world suffer?

How do you react when you hear reports about Christian persecution on the news?

Peter tells us not to be surprised when Christians suffer. Instead he says, "rejoice" (verse 13)." He says, "Praise God" (verse 16). How can a Christian possibly rejoice in suffering and praise God?

What is the natural human response when a person is suffering injustice and persecution?
What is the Christian's response when he or she suffers trials and persecution? (Verse 19).

Finally, what is a Christian's hope in the midst of suffering?

For study at home

Read **Romans 6:1-15**. What does it mean that we are connected to Christ through baptism? How does this help me in the midst of suffering?

Read **Hebrews 12:1-13**. Christians are encouraged to endure suffering and hardship as discipline.

Next time
Lesson 5 – Shepherds Lead with *Hope* and Humility (5:1-14)