

Born Again to a Living Hope

January 18, 2026

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

1 Peter 1:3-12

Session Outline

1. A Living Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
2. Trials of Faith (1 Peter 1:6-9)
3. The Good News (1 Peter 1:10-12)

Theological Theme

In His great mercy, God gives us the gift of salvation, and with it, a hope that is alive and well. Unlike earthly possessions, this hope can never be taken away from us.

Call to Action

Believers are called to rejoice and persevere through trials because their living hope in Christ provides an unshakable foundation for their faith and guarantee of eternal inheritance.



Leader Guide

Born Again to a Living Hope

Introduction

The year was 1936. Louis Zamperini qualified for the Summer Olympics to be held in Berlin. At age 19, he was the youngest American to ever do so (a record he held even after his death). Though he didn't take home a medal, he did later set a collegiate record at the University of Southern California.

But in 1941, Zamperini shifted gears and enlisted in the Army Air Corps. His military career took him to Hawaii, where, in 1943, his aircraft had mechanical issues and crashed in the ocean some 850 miles south of Oahu, Hawaii. Zamperini was one of only three survivors.

Zamperini and two other soldiers survived for weeks on inflated life rafts, drinking rain water, and eating birds and fish. Zamperini survived a curious shark, a Japanese bomber, the death of one of his fellow soldiers, and a storm. After 47 days adrift, he and the pilot he crashed with landed their raft on an island and were taken prisoner by the Japanese sailors stationed there.

As a prisoner of war in a notoriously vicious POW camp (Naoetsu POW camp in northern Japan), he not only held onto hope, he shared hope with his fellow POWs, describing Italian family recipes to take their minds off their dire situation. Zamperini survived unimaginable horrors and, after the war, when he was deeply struggling with PTSD and alcohol abuse, he attended a Billy Graham rally and found a new kind of hope—the hope of knowing Christ.

You might recognize Zamperini's story from the book "Unbroken" by Laura Hillenbrand, or the movie of the same name. Whether or not you recognize his story, though, you may recognize the hope he had. Today we're going to explore this type of hope that comes from the Lord. It is hope that lasts even in the darkest moments.

- ❓ How would you describe hope to another person?
- ❓ How do Christians define hope differently than the world?

Session Summary

Though trials are an inevitable part of the Christian life, even in suffering we can rejoice because our salvation and eternal future with the Lord are secure. God works through these hardships to strengthen our faith, and a faith proven through testing is “more valuable than gold” (v. 7), brings Him honor now, and ultimately results in praise, glory, and honor at Christ’s return.

This hope of salvation is so great a blessing that the Old Testament prophets yearned for it, and “angels long to catch a glimpse” (v. 12) of how God is working.

1. A Living Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)



How did Peter describe salvation in these verses?



What do you think it means for a Christian to have a “living hope” (v.3)?

The passage we’re reading today is all one sentence in the Greek. This kind of run-on sentence would dock us points on English papers today, but in the ancient Greek, being able to compose a thought like this was considered a skill! Our English translations add punctuation, and we’ve broken it up into three parts for our study today.

Peter opened this passage in praise: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 3). God is worthy of all our praise and here Peter offered praise for the thing we should be most thankful for, our salvation in Christ. This gift is given in God’s great mercy. God shows us mercy by not condemning us for our sin (though it is within His power and right to do so) but rather offering us the gift of eternal life with Him thanks to the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus:

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!” -Ephesians 2:4-5

In the CSB, Peter’s words are translated to describe salvation as a “new birth into a living hope” (v. 3). This “born again” language is used elsewhere in the New Testament, too:

“Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”” -John 3:3

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” -2 Corinthians 5:17

Before we knew Jesus, we were spiritually dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1-5; Colossians 2:13-14), but when we place our trust in Him, we experience a “new birth.” We are now new creations. The “old” us, who was a slave to sin, “has passed away” (2 Corinthians 5:17), and now we have a “living hope” (v.3) that is alive and well, just like Jesus.

As believers, we have this hope because we know that, after our earthly body passes away, we are promised a glorious eternity of living with God. There is no greater hope than that found in Jesus.

The inheritance we receive in Christ can never be taken away (Peter described it as “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,” v. 4). Peter’s original audience may have been displaced (v. 1) or experienced losses, but this eternal future was completely secure.



How does God protect us by His power (v. 5)? How have you experienced this protection?

2. Trials of Faith (1 Peter 1:6-9)



What reason do Christians have to rejoice, even in the middle of grief and trials?



What did Peter mean when he wrote, “so that the proven character of your faith . . . may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (v. 7)?

Rejoicing in unfavorable circumstances is a biblical theme that surely makes no sense to the nonbeliever:

“Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” -1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

“Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.” -James 1:2-4

Peter’s writing suggests that suffering isn’t an if scenario but a when scenario. Our suffering today looks quite different from Peter’s original audience, but we do suffer. Trials are simply a part of the Christian life.

Jesus spoke to this reality in John 15:

“Remember the word I spoke to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you . . .”

-John 15:20a

Paul, who knew a thing or two about persecution, also wrote of this truth:

“In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” -2 Timothy 3:12

Here, Peter suggested that we should rejoice even in the midst of grief and suffering, “so that the proven character of your faith . . . may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (v. 7) We can rejoice because, as believers, we know heaven is waiting for us! Our eternal life is secure, even if our life today isn’t.

And God doesn’t waste the trials we walk through on earth. Our faith benefits as we face trials. Charles Spurgeon once said, “We must expect trial because trial is the element of faith. Faith without trial is like a diamond uncut, the brilliance of which has never been seen. A fish without water or a bird without air is faith without trial.”

As James wrote, trials produce endurance in our faith (James 1:2-4), and Peter wrote a faith that has been tested and remained true is “more valuable than gold” (v. 7). In this, too, we should rejoice and “consider it a great joy” (James 1:2).

We can have this counter-cultural reaction because we are rooted in Christ, and when we rely on Him, God shows up during the trials of our lives. God does some of His very best work in the valley. When we are desperate and think there is no way out, He can work in miraculous ways that are bigger and better than any rescue we could’ve dreamed up ourselves.

Our perseverance of faith will “result in praise, glory, and honor” (v. 7) at Jesus’s second coming.



What can we learn about joy and rejoicing from this passage?

Like us, Peter’s original audience loved and believed in Jesus without having seen Him (John 20:29). Like them, we have “inexpressible and glorious joy” (v. 8) because of our salvation.

3. The Good News (1 Peter 1:10-12)



What did Peter say the prophets searched for? Why?



What does this passage tell us about the blessings of salvation in Christ?

Seeking the Messiah

In 1:10–12 Peter indicated that the prophets had reported the grace and glory of salvation. Peter stated that the prophets understood that Messiah must suffer, but they tried to learn the time and circumstances when this would occur.

Peter said the salvation God offers us is such an incredible gift that the Old Testament prophets who proclaimed the coming grace in the Messiah longed to know more. Though God revealed some about the Messiah to them, they did not fully comprehend what was coming. The Old Testament prophets' careful investigation revealed that proclamations were for the future.

Peter's letter told the believers that the time that the Old Testament prophets sought after and looked forward to had arrived. So great is the blessing of salvation that "angels long to catch a glimpse of these things" (v. 12).

This great blessing was brought about through the work of the Holy Spirit in everyday people working as a part of God's great design for our lives. Are you open to letting the Holy Spirit use you to bring the great blessing of salvation to those He has put in your life?



How do these verses impact your thinking about the importance of the gospel message?

The gospel has been revealed to us. Today. Living in America in 2026, thousands of years after Peter penned this epistle. This unimaginable, undeserved blessing calls for praise:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." -1 Peter 1:3

Conclusion




Peter continued his letter by praising God who, in His mercy, sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins so we could be born again. Having received "new birth" (v. 3), believers experience "a living hope" (v.3) in the promise that we will spend eternity with the Lord.

Though the things of this earth, our possessions and everything we have earned by human standards, can be taken away, this future with the Lord is an inheritance from God "that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (v. 4).

Peter reminds us that trials and suffering aren't optional, but part of the Christian life. Even in light of trials and suffering, we can have hope and rejoice because of our salvation and eternal destination. Our lives on earth are temporary, but eternity with the Lord awaits all believers.

We also rejoice knowing that, even in the hard times, God is working and helping strengthen our faith. Peter wrote that a faith that has been tested and remained true is “more valuable than gold” (v. 7). This honors God today, and will “result in praise, glory, and honor” (v. 7) at Jesus's second coming.

This great gift deserves thanks, praise, and faithful obedience to live like Christ and share Him with others in our lives.

-  Consider the truth of salvation that Peter conveyed in his letter. How would you summarize this for someone who doesn't yet know Jesus?
-  How does the fact that our inheritance in Christ cannot be taken away give you hope for the future?
-  What are some ways you could share your faith with others this week?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for the gift of salvation and the living hope we have in Jesus. Thank Him that our eternal inheritance is secure and nothing can take it away. Ask Him for help as you face trials, trusting that He will strengthen your faith through them. Ask Him to show you how you can share your faith with others this week.

Memory Verse

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . . —1 Peter 1:3

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in 1 Peter* by Daniel Akin
- *1 Peter* by Wayne Grudem
- *Be Hopeful* by Warren Wiersbe

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Historical Context of 1 Peter

Purpose

Peter wrote to encourage suffering believers in Asia Minor to stand firm for Christ in the midst of persecution. He urged them to do so by focusing on their spiritual privileges and, more specifically, the place where their rights and privileges lay: the next life. Believers in Jesus are “temporary residents” (1 Pet 1:1; 2:11) and “strangers” (1 Pet 2:11) in this world, a land of sojourn where they have no real rights or privileges. Inheritance rights, privileges, and justice for Christians really belong to another realm to which God has delivered believers—heaven, their ultimate home.

Author

The author of 1 Peter identified himself as “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:1). He viewed himself as a divinely ordained, directly commissioned, authoritative representative of the Lord Jesus Himself. Several statements in the letter indicate that the Peter who plays a prominent role in the Gospels is the author. For example, he called himself an “elder and witness” to Christ’s sufferings (1 Pet 5:1). Further, he described Christ’s crucifixion with an intimate knowledge that only a disciple would have of that event (1 Pet 2:21-24).

Date Written

1 Peter was probably written sometime between a.d. 62-64. While Paul was under house arrest from a.d. 60-62, he did not refer to Peter in Rome. Peter likewise did not mention Paul as being in Rome; only Silvanus and Mark were his companions (1 Pet 5:12-13). These facts suggest that Peter wrote 1 Peter some time after a.d. 62 and before the writing of 2 Peter.

Key Themes

The theme of suffering appears throughout 1 Peter. The recipients of the letter are the sufferers in four of its five chapters. Given a composition date of about a.d. 62-64, 1 Peter was written during the persecution of Christians under Nero’s reign. The persecution arose in Rome and was spreading into Asia Minor.

Special Features

1 Peter is considered one of the General Epistles. This epistle provided encouragement to suffering believers living in northern Asia Minor who faced intense persecution. The letter encourages faithfulness while under oppression. Specifically, God’s holy people should lead distinctive lifestyles as temporary residents in a foreign land. Although they will suffer for Christ while in this non-Christian world, they should remember that heaven is their future homeland.

Excerpted and paraphrased from the Holman Christian Standard Study Bible, Holman Bible Publishers, 2010.

Extended Commentary

1 Peter 1:3-12

1:3–12 This section begins with praise to God for the privileges he has bestowed on believers. Peter encouraged his readers by reminding them that through the resurrection of Christ, God had caused them to be born again. The result of this new birth is that they have acquired an eternal inheritance reserved in heaven. Believers will be delivered to heaven, their eternal home, through their faith in the gospel.

1:3–5 Peter informed his readers that God had given them new birth into an inheritance that will never perish, be defiled, or fade—indeed a sure salvation. That salvation is to be revealed in the last time reminds us of the future aspect of salvation (Rm 13:11; Php 3:20–21; Heb 9:28).

1:6–9 Peter further encouraged his readers with the fact that Christians can rejoice in this imperishable inheritance and sure salvation, though they are tested by persecution and suffering while in this world.

1:10–12 The OT people of God did not specifically know Christ or the gospel, but they did believe the promises of God that pointed to Christ (Heb 11:13). The good news of salvation that the prophets sought and looked forward to had now been revealed. Salvation in Christ is so great and the blessings so tremendous that angels long to catch a glimpse of these things. The gospel excites their interest so much that they want to study it intently.

References

¹ <https://www.war.gov/News/Feature-Stories/story/Article/2304075/sports-heroes-who-served-olympic-runner-louis-zamperini>/https://www.the-independent.com/news/obituaries/louis-zamperini-olympic-athlete-who-went-to-war-and-spent-47-days-on-a-life-raft-then-two-years-in-a-japanese-prison-camp-9585335.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

² John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), 1 Pe 1:3–12.

³ Spurgeon, *The Spurgeon Study Bible: Notes* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1668.

⁴ John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), 1 Pe 1:10–12.