

LIVING HOPE

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Today, as we observe both global events and global trends, it seems evident that the rapid decline of morality, the wars and rumors of wars, the natural disasters, and the array of false teachings all point to the birth-pains mentioned in Matthew 24.

Last October 2020, our theme for Missions Month was *The Cross and The Crown* based on 1Peter 1. At such a time as this, with the amount of suffering we are witnessing from all over the globe, I believe the message of 1 Peter 1 is relevant now, more than ever.

Following is an excerpt I wrote as I reflected on the words of C.S. Lewis in the context of 1Peter 1:

"If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this." - C.S. Lewis

Peter's letter to the "elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia", known as 1Peter, is a biblical foundation for this statement of C.S. Lewis. Although suffering is mentioned in practically every chapter (1:6, 2:18-21, 3:14-17, 4:12-14, 19, 5:9-10), the way Peter begins his letter is noteworthy.

"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," (1:3)*

In verse 3, Peter says that out of God's mercy, we have been born again to a living hope, a hope that is anchored in the resurrection of Christ. In the following verse, he explains further,

*"**to an inheritance** that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, **kept in heaven for you"** (1:4).*

This living hope, Peter says, is a future inheritance kept in heaven for us. Peter is moving the attention of his readers - including us today - toward a future glory. He goes on to say,

*"who by God's power are being guarded through faith **for a salvation** ready **to be revealed in the last time"** (1:5).*

In other words, this imperishable, undefiled, and unfading inheritance is the culmination of our salvation, which will be revealed at the coming of our Lord Jesus. And, according to Peter, this is our living hope!

Prior to addressing the prevailing day concern of the believers, Peter established our salvation in Christ as a **forward-looking gospel!** Here we witness not just an emphasis on the cross (1:3), **but also on the crown** (1:4-5,7). In contrast to this

blessed hope, the trials that we face - or sufferings as mentioned in the coming chapters - are but a "little while" (1:6) which serves to prepare us for the coming glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:7).

Without a doubt, this pandemic has caused turmoil beyond measure. One thing that unites us, at this present time, is the reality of suffering, whether it be from cancelled events, to financial instability, or even from the death of a loved one.

In times like these, we need to rekindle the proclamation of this forward-looking gospel, **the gospel that points both to the Cross of Christ and the Crown of Christ!** We need to embrace the truth that the trials we currently face are but a *little while* compared to the future glory that awaits us!

As disciples of Jesus, may we proclaim this with boldness and confidence! Now, more than ever, opportunities for the gospel are far and wide!

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