

Born into a Living Hope

Thomas Robinson, *Born to a Living Hope* 2, April 10, 2016

1 Peter 1:1-13

¹ **Peter**, an apostle of Jesus Messiah, To **chosen ones, resident aliens** of a dispersion across Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² chosen according to **God the Father's** foreknowledge, by the **Spirit's** work of sanctification, for obedience and for sprinkling with the **blood of Jesus Messiah**: May **grace** and **peace** be lavishly given to you.

³ Blessed is the **God** and Father of our **Lord Jesus Messiah**, who in keeping with his great mercy, has caused us to be **born again into a living hope** through **Jesus Messiah's resurrection from the dead**, ⁴ to an **inheritance** that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, **kept safe** in heaven for you, ⁵ who by **God's power** are being **guarded** through **faith** for a **deliverance prepared** to be revealed in a final moment.

⁶ This is why **you celebrate!** Even though now for a little while you have been **distressed by all kinds of trials**, if they have been forced on you. ⁷ It's so that the **tested genuineness of your faith** – more precious than gold, which perishes even though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the **revealing of Jesus Messiah**.

⁸ Though **you have not seen him, you love him**. Though you do **not now see him, you believe in him** and **celebrate** with **joy inexpressible** and filled with **glory**, ⁹ as you are receiving the **goal of your faith, deliverance of your lives/souls**.

¹⁰ Concerning this deliverance, the **prophets** searched and inquired carefully, those who prophesied about the grace that was to be given to you. ¹¹ They inquired toward whom or toward what what sort of time the **Messiah's Spirit** in them was pointing, as he testified to the **sufferings aimed at the Messiah** and the **glories** that would follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, pointing to the very things that have now been announced to you through those who preached **good news** to you by a **Holy Spirit** sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

¹³ Therefore, **preparing your minds for action**, and being sober-minded, **set your hope fully on the grace** that is being brought to you in the **revealing of Jesus Messiah**.

1 Peter 4:12-13

¹² Beloved, do not be astonished at the trial by fire that is occurring among you, as if something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice in that you are sharing in the sufferings of the Messiah in order that you also may rejoice and celebrate when his glory is revealed.

1 John 3:1-2

¹ See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Matthew 16:24-26

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let them deny themselves and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save/deliver their life/soul (*psyché*) will lose it, but whoever loses their life/soul (*psyché*) for my sake will find it."

Philippians 3:20-21

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, Lord Jesus Messiah, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him to subject all things to himself.

John 1:11-13

¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Identity Papers for Resident Aliens

1 Peter takes us into the life of 1st century Christians under intense stress. Peter writes “through Silvanus” (5:12) from Rome to Gentile & Jewish believers scattered across northern Asia Minor (Turkey). Tradition says Peter was executed in Nero’s persecution in a.d. 64 after fire in Rome.

The experience of dislocation by joining new communities of faith and then suffering persecution stamps the intensity of the letter. Who am I? Why is this happening? Where’s my life going? Should I stay?

Peter starts from that dislocation: They are “resident aliens” in their own home towns, people with new citizenship. They see familiar political allegiances, temples, synagogues, family ties with new eyes. Likewise others see them now as outsiders. Old career plans, amusements, connections change.

But Peter reminds them of their experience of new identity: Chosen by God, the experience of God’s Spirit, listening to a new vision of life, intimately tied to Jesus, Messiah of Israel, dying for Gentiles. The identity of a new citizenship of grace and peace open to everyone – no outsiders, no enemies.

Birth Certificate of Resurrection Life

The new identity is more than a new passport, it’s a new birth by God’s mercy. They had lived in a world bounded and enforced by death (conquest, war, fear). But in Jesus, God had opened a living hope by Jesus’ resurrection – the real conquest of death in all its destructive powers. The entire vision of life expands as death shrivels from the ultimate No! to life, to a painful interlude.

This new birth is as God’s own child, sharing the very life of Jesus by his Spirit. We learn to see our life on a vast new scale. Our inheritance as God’s children is not accumulated stuff, even great stuff. It is a new resurrection world including a new resurrection us! Its reality has only broken into our little world in Jesus’ resurrection. The God who raised Jesus guards both that future and the present us.

Thus the paradox! Celebration in the midst of distress. All kinds of trials were being forced on them.

(Tacitus, Annals 15:44 on Nero’s persecution in Rome. See www.opendoorusa.org for present day persecution.)

It made all the difference that they identified with Jesus. His teaching, suffering, death, and resurrection, his whole vision of life, changed their vision of love, service, life, hope, death, all!

Love beyond Vision, Joy beyond Words

They were faced every day with the Thomas challenge (Jn 20:24-29). They had never seen Jesus.

He was a story too good to be true, but too strange not to be true. No one could have invented this!

They had fallen in love with him. Their faith/trust in him endangered their lives but more importantly changed their lives, their identity, to the core. They knew this grace, this joy, this hope was true.

It was a grace that, even threatened with death, could only love and pray for the persecutor. It had no dark side of violence and surrender to the power of death. Even in dying, it conquered death.

In spite of their distress it broke forth in celebrations of joy beyond words, a vision of its indestructible glory. Yes it was emphatically a hope for the future, but the reality was that here and now they were experiencing the deliverance/salvation of their lives. They had lost their lives and gained them!

A Long Journey into Life

Peter says that when you look back into scripture, this strange, wonderful reality of grace and life through the suffering Messiah has been there, often hidden, but all along. Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, pointed to future generations when promises would be realized.

The scattered believers then and now experience that realization breaking in. They/we need to prepare to live fully in hope/grace of this age opened by Jesus resurrection, an age of love, faith, joy, and suffering, experiencing his revealing now and awaiting the consummation of that living hope.