

Our Living Hope

Week 46: November 12-18 — *Hebrews 12, 13; 1 Peter 1-3*

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Helpful Resources

Who Is the Author of *Hebrews*? (p.63)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

When we read the New Testament letters, it is remarkable to see the repetition of several themes. We encountered four of those themes this week in *Hebrews* and *1 Peter*. First, followers of Christ are to live in such a way that stands out from the world. Second, since we are different from the world, Christians should expect persecution and suffering. Third, despite the suffering we might endure for following Christ, we trust that God will use it for our good and His glory. Fourth, keeping our eyes focused on our future home helps us to endure whatever it is we may experience in this life. In this review, let's reconsider these four themes and discover how they are both an encouragement and challenge for us today.

- A Peculiar People

Followers of Christ are to live in such a way that stands out from the world.

1. **Leaving the Old** (*1 Pet. 1:14; 2:1, 11, 12*): Because of Christ, we are new creatures. Our old sinful nature has been replaced with the Holy Spirit, whose influence changes our thoughts, our motives, our decisions, our words, and our actions. Our former manner of life has passed away. If we are in Christ, we will no longer live a worldly lifestyle.
2. **Living the New** (*Heb. 13:1-5, 9, 13-17; 1 Pet. 1:15; 2:9, 13-20; 3:1-9*): We have been chosen and called out by God (*ekklesia*, Church) to be a peculiar people, "a people for His own possession," set apart to "proclaim Christ's excellencies." We are now tasked with bearing His light in our dark world.

- Promised Persecution

Since Christians are different from the world, we should expect persecution and suffering.

1. **A Stone Which Has Been Rejected** (*1 Pet. 2:4-8, 21*): Christ was rejected and reviled. He was delivered up by sinful men to be executed. He endured all this suffering for us, to bear the penalty for our sin, not His, to redeem us with His sinless life at the cross.
2. **Bear His Reproach** (*Heb. 13:11-13; 1 Pet. 1:6; 2:12, 20, 21*): Because Christ suffered at the hands of sinful men, we will too. "We were called for this purpose..." But, because of what Christ has done to suffer on our behalf, we will gladly suffer for His sake.
3. **In His Steps** (*1 Pet. 2:21-23*): While we suffer, Christ left us an example for how to suffer. Although Jesus was reviled, "He did not revile them in return. While suffering, He uttered no threats but trusted Himself to Him who judges righteously."

- Blessed Suffering

Despite the suffering we might endure, God will use it for our good and His glory.

1. **Godly Discipline** (*Heb. 12:4-17*): God “deals with us as sons.” A father disciplines his sons because he loves them. So does the Lord discipline us because He loves us; and “He disciplines us for our good, so that we might share in His holiness. Discipline, at the moment, may not be joyful, but afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”
2. **Blessed for Suffering** (*1 Pet. 3:13-17*): “Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed.” We should consider it an honor to suffer for Christ’s sake, to be associated with Him (His mission and message), and to follow His example. While we may be “beaten up” for our faith on earth, we will be blessed for it in heaven.

- Our Living Hope

Keeping our eyes on our future home helps us to endure whatever we may experience.

1. **An Unshakeable Kingdom** (*Heb. 12:22-29; 13:14*): We should not put our hope and trust in anything on earth, as it is temporary. It will be destroyed. Rather we should put our hope in the life to come. Our heavenly, eternal home is unshakeable and waiting for us as an inheritance of our salvation and as a reward for our faithfulness.
2. **Our Living Hope** (*1 Pet. 1:3-9, 13, 23*): Our hope is in more than eternal life in heaven. Our hope is a Person, the One who gave His life that we might live. One day, our hope is to be with Him forever. Since He has defeated death and now lives in heaven, He will return someday to gather those who are His and invite us to a great celebration.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to *a living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you...” *1 Peter 1:3, 4*

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, *fix your hope* completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” *1 Peter 1:13*

“Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks of you to give an account *for the hope* that is in you...” *1 Peter 3:15*

The Bottom Line

Because of Christ, we are peculiar and persecuted, but He is our living hope, in this life and the next.

Questions to Consider

1. Evaluate your life compared to the world. Do you stand out as peculiar? Why or why not?
2. In what ways have you suffered for Christ? How did you view it?
3. Christian persecution is coming to America. Are you ready to suffer for Christ’s sake?
4. Have you ever made a defense for the hope that is in you? How did it go?
5. What frightens us most about defending what we believe to the unsaved world?
6. What does it mean to defend our faith “with gentleness and reverence”?
7. How does knowing Christ — our living hope — encourage you from day to day?