

“HOPE TO HELP YOU COPE” P. 1, 1 PETER 1:1-7

INTRO. TODAY WE START A NEW SERIES WITH A NEW EMPHASIS ON “DISCIPLESHIP” OR “RECIPILESHIP” – BECOMING MORE LIKE CHRIST IN OUR CHARACTER THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS, LIKE THE EARLY CHURCH. WE ARE GOING TO STUDY THE BOOK OF 1 PETER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT BECAUSE IT GIVES SOME GREAT PRINCIPLES IN THIS AREA AND BECAUSE IT IS A MESSAGE OF HOPE THAT WE NEED IN OUR CULTURE.

Hope to help you cope.

- **A CIRCULAR LETTER TO GENTILE CHRISTIANS WHO WERE DISPERSED THROUGH THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF ASIA MINOR (MODERN DAY TURKEY) BECAUSE OF PERSECUTION THAT STARTED IN THE BOOK OF ACTS WITH THE STONING OF STEPHEN. (SEE ACTS 8 – CAN READ ALONG W. THIS DURING THE WEEK)**
- **THEME = BRING HOPE TO CHRISTIANS BEING PERSECUTED FOR THEIR FAITH.**

BACKGROUND: BECAUSE JESUS AND HIS EARLY FOLLOWERS WERE JEWISH, EARLY CHRISTIANS SEEN AS A JEWISH SECT OR OFFSHOOT INITIALLY PROTECTED BY ROMAN LAW.

****ALL CHANGED ON JULY 19, AD 64. THAT NIGHT ROME CAUGHT FIRE. FOR 3 DAYS AND 3 NIGHTS BLAZED OUT OF CONTROL. ANCIENT TEMPLES, HISTORICAL LANDMARKS = DESTROYED – LIKE THE CAPITOL, WHITEHOUSE, LINCOLN OR JEFFERSON MEMORIAL IN D.C. FOR US.**

- MANY PRIVATE HOMES ALSO LOST. 10 OUT OF 14 WARDS IN THE CITY = REDUCED TO A PILE OF RUBBLE.**
- CITIZENS WERE DISTRAUGHT, HOMELESS, AND ANGRY. IT WAS WIDELY FELT THAT EMPEROR NERO HIMSELF WAS RESPONSIBLE. HE WANTED TO TEAR DOWN THE ENTIRE EMPIRE AND REBUILD IT IN HIS OWN IMAGE BECAUSE OF HIS INCREDIBLE EGO.**
- THERE WAS HARD EVIDENCE THAT HE STARTED IT OR DID NOTHING TO CONTAIN IT AT FIRST.**

***ROMAN HISTORIAN SUETONIUS – SOME PEOPLE EVEN CAUGHT HIS UNDERLINGS RED HANDED WITH FIREBRANDS SETTING THEIR ESTATES ABLAZE!**

****IN DESPERATION TO GET THE NEGATIVE ATTENTION OFF OF HIMSELF, NERO NEEDED A SCAPEGOAT TO BLAME. CHOSE THE CHRISTIANS WHO WERE ALREADY SEEN AS STRANGE DUE TO RUMORS THAT THEY PRACTICED CANNIBALISM (COMMUNION) AND ORGIES (AGAPE/LOVE FEASTS – POTLUCKS WHERE THEY WORSHIPPED TOGETHER AND ENCOURAGED ONE ANOTHER AND SHARED ALL THINGS IN COMMON.)**

- **ANOTHER ROMAN HISTORIAN, TACITUS WRITES ABOUT THE HUMAN TORCHES NERO MADE OF THEM AND CHRISTIANS WATCHING THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS DRESSED IN ANIMAL SKINS AND TORN APART BY WILD DOGS AS A SPECTACLE FOR ENTERTAINMENT IN THE COLOSSEUM. OTHERS WERE CRUCIFIED LIKE ISIS IS DOING TODAY.**

***WE HAVE MORE CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IN MODERN DAY IN THE WORLD THAN ANY OTHER TIME IN HISTORY MOSTLY IN COUNTRIES LIKE NORTH KOREA AND THEN THE MIDDLE EAST – SYRIA, IRAQ, IRAN, ETC. FROM RADICAL ISLAM.**

ISIS bombed churches as Christians worshiped on Palm Sunday in Egypt. Syria's Christians - 66% decimated. Iraq's Christians - 82% destroyed or displaced.

****QUESTION LAST SUNDAY: “WHY WOULD A LOVING GOD ALLOW HORRIBLE THINGS TO HAPPEN TO HIS FAITHFUL PEOPLE?” WILL TRY AND ANSWER THROUGHOUT THIS SERIES THAT FOCUSES ON HOPE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING.**

- **MAYBE SOME OF THAT ANSWER = FOUND IN WHAT HAPPENED HISTORICALLY IN ROME. ALL OF THE PERSECUTION OF BELIEVERS BEGAN TO BACKFIRE ON NERO. IT HAD THE OPPOSITE EFFECT ON PEOPLE. BECAUSE OF THE BELIEVER’S CHRISTLIKE RESPONSE TO PERSECUTION, PEOPLE BEGAN TO PITY THE CHRISTIANS. THEN LATER BEGAN TO LISTEN TO THEIR MESSAGE OF A RISEN SAVIOR AND RECEIVE SALVATION THROUGH THE GOOD NEWS THEY SHARED AND THE HOPE AND CHARITY THEY LIVED OUT. BECAME A HUGE INFLUENCE ON ROME VS A TINY MISUNDERSTOOD FRINGE GROUP!**

****ISN'T THAT ONE REASON THE WORLD LOOKS TO JESUS AS MORE THAN A CARPENTER? HE REACTED TO SUFFERING AND CRUCIFIXION BY PRAYING, "FATHER FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY ARE DOING"! SHOWED LOVE IN RETURN TO PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T DESERVE IT. WHEN CHRISTIANS RESPOND TO PERSECUTION LIKE THIS, IT SPEAKS A LOUD AND CLEAR MESSAGE OF GRACE THAT PEOPLE NEED TO TURN THEIR LIVES AROUND. (WILL TALK ABOUT HOW TO DEAL W. DIFFICULT PEOPLE OR EGR PEOPLE AS PART OF THIS SERIES.)**

***SO PETER IS WRITING TO THOSE CHRISTIANS CONSIDERED OUTLAWS THROUGHOUT THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF ASIA MINOR WITH **1 PETER 4:12-13** AS THE FOCUS OF HIS MESSAGE. 12 "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."**

****"REJOICE" = A STRANGE THING TO ASK, BUT THEY COULD BECAUSE OF THE HOPE THEY HAD FOR ETERNAL LIFE AS CHRISTIANS.**

AUTHORSHIP – PETER, THE DISCIPLE WHO KNEW JESUS. HE ALLUDES IN THIS LETTER TO THINGS HE WITNESSED IN THE GOSPELS.

****SOME CRITICS SAY GREEK USED = TOO REFINED FOR A SIMPLE FISHERMAN – BUT ANSWER = GIVEN IN 1 PETER 5:12. With the help of Silas,[a] whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. (CRITICS AND ATHEISTS DON'T OFTEN DO THEIR HOMEWORK ON WHAT WE BELIEVE). 2 PETER MORE LIKE HIS OWN STYLE WOULD BE.**

DATE WRITTEN: LETTER WAS SPARKED BY NERO'S PERSECUTION IN A.D. 64. PETER DIED IN AD 68 BEING CRUCIFIED UPSIDE DOWN ACCORDING TO TRADITION – SO WRITTEN SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN.

- I. **1 PETER 1:1-2 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the**

Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

- A. AN APOSTLE = “ONE WHO IS SENT”. SPECIAL TASK OF FOUNDING AND GUIDING NEW CHURCHES. COMMISSIONED BY JESUS BEFORE HIS ASCENSION TO CARRY ON HIS WORK.**

- B. HAD TO BE EYEWITNESSES TO RESURRECTION OF JESUS (AS IN CASE OF MATTHIUS WHO REPLACED JUDAS IN ACTS 1)**

- C. BY THE WAY, THE “EPISTLES” WERE NOT THE WIVES OF THE APOSTLES. EPISTLE = LETTER LIKE THIS ONE. GENERAL.**

- D. “ELECT” – ONCE RESERVED FOR JEWISH PEOPLE. AFTER CHRIST ROSE USED OF CHRISTIANS AND THE CHURCH.**

E. "STRANGERS" IN THE WORLD. (GK. "SOJOURNERS") = THOSE FAR FROM HOME. METAPHORICALLY = CHRISTIANS WHOSE TRUE HOME = IN HEAVEN. (AFTER STONING OF STEPHEN IN BOOK OF ACTS GOD USED PERSECUTION TO SCATTER BELIEVERS WHO WERE CLUSTERED IN HOLY HUDDLES. THIS IS TESTIMONY TO GREAT MISSIONARY MOVEMENT AMONG THE GENTILES THAT SPRANG UP IN ROMAN PROVINCES.)

****WHAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE SOJOURNERS IN THIS WORLD. IN THE WORLD , BUT NOT OF IT. MISSIONARIES TO OUR CULTURE!**

***ILLUS. CHRISTIAN COLLEGES VS SECULAR. EITHER WAY OUR MAIN GOAL AS CHRISTIAN PARENTS = TO PREPARE OUR KIDS TO BE IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF IT. IF SENDING TO SECULAR UNIVERSITY MAKE CRU or INTERVARSITY OR FCA A MUST. SHARE THIS IS PART OF THEIR EDUCATION ON LIFE TO KEEP BALANCED. YOUR EXAMPLE ALL THE WHILE =**

KEY TO MOTIVATING THEM. FAITH IS MORE CAUGHT THEN TAUGHT. DO THEY SEE THAT BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE? SMALL GROUPS, CHURCH, MONTHLY GATHERINGS IN YOUR SCHEDULE AND LIFESTYLE TEACHES THEM HOW TO DO THE SAME.

***GOAL = BUILD UP AND SEND OUT – AIRCRAFT CARRIER METAPHOR. OR NASCAR “PIT STOP” IF YOU RELATE BETTER TO THAT.**

F. “CHOSEN ACCORDING TO FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD THE FATHER”

- SOMEONE ASKED ABOUT “CALVINISM” – INTERP. OF JOHN CALVIN, GOOD CHRISTIAN. DO VERSES LIKE THIS TEACH “ELECTION OF THE SAINTS” OR “IRRESISTIBLE GRACE” – GOD CHOOSES AHEAD OF TIME WHO WILL BE SAVED? CONVERSE MUST BE TRUE – CHOOSES WHO WON’T BE OR WHO WILL BE LOST?**

***NO NEED TO GET INTO THAT HERE. REFERS TO GOD PICKING/CHOOSING ISRAEL TO BE HIS PEOPLE (DEUTERONOMY 7:6. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has *chosen* you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.) FOR HIS OWN REASONS. CONTEXT HERE = THE CHURCH AND THESE EARLY CHRISTIANS = NOW CHOSEN BY GOD TO WORK THROUGH IN THE WORLD LIKE HE CHOSE ISRAEL. SPIRITUAL VERSION OF HIS PEOPLE – 1 PETER 2:9. But you are a *chosen* people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**

****IF YOU WONDER IF YOU ARE ONE OF THE “CHOSEN”, CHOOSE CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR AND YOU WILL BE. THROUGH HIS WORK ON THE CROSS YOU THEN BECOME HIS CHOSEN SON OR DAUGHTER BY FAITH.**

***PETER IS REMINDING PERSECUTED BELIEVERS OF THEIR IDENTITY AS GOD’S CHOSEN CHILDREN TO GIVE THEM HOPE IN THE WORLD. CHOSEN FOR WHAT?**

G. “SANCTIFICATION” AS WELL AS SALVATION.
DIFFERENCE = BY GRACE WE ARE SAVED
THROUGH FAITH. (**EPHESIANS 2:8-9. For it is by
grace you have been saved, through faith—and
this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—
9 not by works, so that no one can boast.**). NOT
SAVED *BY* GOOD WORKS, BUT *FOR* GOOD
WORKS (**EPH. 2:10. For we are God’s handiwork,
created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which
God prepared in advance for us to do.**)

“SANCTIFICATION” = PUTTING INTO PRACTICE
GOOD WORKS AS GOD REFINES OUR CHARACTER;
LIKE GOLD REFINED BY FIRE THROUGH TRIALS SO
WE REFLECT HIS IMAGE TO PEOPLE.

SOME DON’T LIKE THIS IDEA. WOULD RATHER GIVE
INTO TEMPTATION AND END UP A PILE OF ASHES
THAN BE REFINED LIKE GOLD BY FIRE.

MY ADVICE: DON’T BE AN “ASH”! INSTEAD SUBMIT
TO GOD’S *REFINING FIRE* OF SANCTIFICATION AND
BECOME LIKE JESUS TO OTHERS INSTEAD! OUR
WORLD NEEDS THIS SO DESPERATELY!

H.IT SAYS HERE WHEN YOU SUBMIT TO GOD'S PROCESS OF "SANCTIFICATION" (REFINING) THE WHOLE TRINITY IS INVOLVED HERE. FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT.**

***ILLUS. AS I GET OLDER AND LOOK IN THE MIRROR I SEE MY FATHER MORE AND MORE. NATURAL PART OF MATURING – TRUE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE**

TRINITY – WE ARE DRAWN TO CHRIST BY CHOICE OF GOD *THE FATHER* THROUGH DBR OF *JESUS THE SON* ("SPRINKLED BY HIS BLOOD"), AND THAT BRINGS US INTO GOD'S SANCTIFYING CHARACTER WORK OF THE *HOLY SPIRIT* WHO REFINES US LIKE GOLD BY:

- 1. Awakening in us a longing for God**
- 2. Convicting us of our sin**
- 3. Opening us up to the saving power of Jesus' forgiveness.**

***NOW IF PEOPLE STOP AT #2 AND DON'T OPEN UP TO #3 WHEN THEY HEAR THE WORD OF GOD, THAT IS WHY SOME PEOPLE AVOID CHURCH - BECAUSE**

THEY THINK IT IS THERE TO MAKE THEM FEEL GUILTY.

IF INSTEAD YOU *DO* OPEN YOURSELF UP TO JESUS, BY THE SAME HOLY SPIRIT YOU WILL EXPERIENCE:

- 1. The power to overcome sin**
- 2. Assurance of sins forgiven (Romans 8:1)**
- 3. New ways of living and feeling (fruit of the Spirit)**

**** SO WE DON'T STOP AT CONVICTION IF WE WANT TO EXPERIENCE THE FORGIVING AND SANCTIFYING (REFINING) WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT HELPS US BECOME LIKE CHRIST.**

****THROUGH THIS SERIES A 4 PART PROCESS ANY BELIEVER CAN WALK THROUGH TO EXPERIENCE THIS.**

II. NOW THE NEXT PART WE WILL SAVE MOSTLY FOR NEXT WEEK, BUT WANT YOU TO SEE THE HOPE THESE PEOPLE NEEDED AND WERE GIVEN BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY WERE UP AGAINST. . .

1 PETER 1:3-7. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

A. THIS WAS A GREAT REMINDER TO PEOPLE WHOSE HOMES WERE BEING TAKEN AWAY BY THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THEY WERE CHRISTIANS. PROPERTY THAT HAD BEEN PASSED DOWN IN THEIR FAMILY FOR YEARS SEIZED BECAUSE OF CONSIDERED AN "OUTLAW FAITH".

- BECAUSE JESUS WAS RESURRECTED THEY COULD HAVE VICTORY OVER DEATH IF THEY WERE KILLED.

- **GUARANTEED AN INHERITANCE BY GOD THAT WOULD NEVER PERISH KEPT IN HEAVEN – OUT OF REACH OF EVIL GOVT. WHO WOULD TAKE AWAY AND SHIELDED BY GOD’S POWER UNTIL JESUS COMES AGAIN AND THEY RECEIVE THE FULNESS OF THEIR SALVATION; OF ALL THEY HAVE HOPED FOR.**

****REMEMBER FRANCIS CHAN ROPE ILLUS.?**

CONCLUSION:

THEY/WE CAN *REJOICE* IN THIS THOUGH MAY SUFFER FOR “A LITTLE WHILE” (RED SECTION OF ROPE) TEMPORARY. WILL ONE DAY ENJOY REAL LIFE AS GOD INTENDED. (ALL THIS!)

****REMEMBER THIS IS SHARED BY PETER WHO WAS EYEWITNESS TO THE RESURRECTED CHRIST.**

THERE IS HOPE IN THE MIDST OF WHAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH TODAY

LYRICS – “WON’T LET YOU GO” BY SWITCHFOOT.

HOPE FOR PARENTS OF COLUMBINE AND TRAGEDIES LIKE IT. HOPE FOR YOU AND I. HOPE FOR PERSECUTED BELIEVERS THROUGHOUT TIME.

YOU WANT TO BE CHOSEN? CHOOSE CHRIST. DON'T STOP AT THE CONVICTION STAGE OR YOU WILL MISS OUT ON THE REST OF THE STORY! IT IS A STORY OF "HOPE TO HELP YOU COPE". TRUST IN HIM AND HE WON'T LET YOU GO! (LIKE THE SONG)

PRAY

CHANCE TO JOIN A GROUP. GO THROUGH THIS BOOK WITH US ON SUNDAYS AND THE 4 STEP PROCESS OF DISCIPLESHIP WE WILL UNWRAP IN THE COMING WEEKS. AS SUMMER APPROACHES, BE WITH US ALL THE MORE. THIS IS NOT SCHOOL. THIS IS TO PREPARE YOU FOR THE LIFE THAT IS REALLY LIFE. TO BUILD YOU UP, BEFORE SENDING YOU OUT!