

STANLEY D. GALE



GOT HOPE?

A Devotional Journey through 1 Peter

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Stanley D. Gale

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For Nathan and Kate and their firstborn, Juniper Joy

*“The LORD bless you out of Zion,
and may you see the good of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.
Yes, may you see your children’s children.”
(Psalm 128:5–6)*

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To the Reader

Imagine you are visiting your physician, and hear the familiar words, “The Doctor will see you now.” You walk into his office. A voice says, “And how are you today?” and after a moment’s surprise you realize that you are in the presence of the apostle Peter! The result of his brief spiritual consultation is that he wants one of his skilled staff—a doctor he has trained—to see you briefly on a daily basis over the next couple of months. What a privilege!

We experience something like that in these pages. First Peter is medicine for our times. It is the prescription we need to live for Christ in the early twenty-first century. And Peter’s clinical assistant, Dr. Stanley Gale, is ideally equipped to help us grow to healthy spiritual maturity. He knows how to interpret and apply Peter’s principles, and he has extensive experience as a pastor and physician of the soul. His *Got Hope?* can therefore safely be prescribed for every age and stage in the Christian life. So, take the prescription regularly and finish the course of treatment; it will do you good!

SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON

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*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who according to His abundant mercy
has begotten us again to a living hope
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”
(1 Peter 1:3–4)*

Introduction

LIVING HOPE

What is the relationship between hope and home? It is that connection that the apostle Peter explains in his first epistle and it makes all the difference for us as Christians as we navigate the challenging terrain of life in this fallen world en route to glory.

Peter addresses his letter to pilgrims (1 Peter 1:1). Pilgrims are travelers in a land that is not their home, not as vacationers but as sojourners. Paradoxically, we were once at home in this world but now we are like fish out of water, strangers in a familiar land (Heb. 11:13). Our Lord Jesus describes us as being *in* the world (John 17:11) but not *of* it (John 17:14).

So when Peter writes to pilgrims, we want to lean in to hear what he has to say because we are cut from the same cloth and carry the same call as the first recipients of his letter. Peter helps us to understand who we are, what we wrestle with, and how we are to conduct ourselves as ones who bear the name of Jesus.

As pilgrims we are not meanderers, biding our time and leisurely wandering. Rather, we are on mission—kingdom mission. Like the Old Testament figure Daniel was an influence for the living and true God in a land that was not his own, so we are to be influencers for Christ in this world. By our words and deeds, we are to let our light so shine that others might take note and give glory to our Father in heaven. Peter writes to explain how we go about that.

Peter speaks in terms of giving a defense for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). Often we think of hope as merely a yearning or as an expression of wishful thinking. We hope it doesn't rain, or we hope our car doesn't break down. But the hope Peter speaks of is quite different. The Bible's hope is a confident expectation,

a vibrant certainty, an assured conviction. It is sure and steadfast, something definite not iffy.

The reason why the Bible's hope is unshakeable is that it rests on the purpose of an unchanging God and the finished work of Jesus Christ. When Paul writes about hope to the church at Thessalonica, he says of us as Christians that we do not grieve as do the rest who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). Those whose home is this world are described as without God and without hope in this world (Eph. 2:12). That hope differentiates us as believers from non-believers and distinguishes us as belonging to God.

What exactly is the surety of our hope? Paul explains, "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9). The writer of Hebrews paints this picture for us: "We might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever" (Heb. 6:18–20).

Just as Paul and the writer of Hebrews exalt Christ as the basis of our hope, so does Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). Our hope has life because Jesus lives in resurrection victory and power for us. Peter will keep this hope before us as we press on as travelers. It's so easy to lose our bearings, to grow weary and lose heart. But Peter lifts our eyes to Jesus. He is with us to the very end of the age, that is, through the entirety of our pilgrimage in this world until He takes us to the place He has prepared for us in glory.

Here we see the connection between hope and home. Immediately after writing of the wonder of God's saving work in our lives through the hope of the gospel, Peter highlights the heavenly home that awaits us at the close of our earthly sojourning and that fills us now with eager anticipation. He describes our home as "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God

through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:4–5). Do you see the certainty? Our inheritance is kept intact for us and we are kept in place for it.

This description echoes the words of Jesus that Peter heard in the upper room on the eve of Christ’s betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). Being with Jesus! No wonder Peter will stress that our struggles now are infused with joy (1 Peter 1:6) in the certainty of seeing our Savior (1 Peter 1:8).

Ours is a living hope, bound up in the living Lord. Moreover, it is a hope for living. Just as we live by faith, so we live from hope. Throughout his epistle, Peter will explain how this hope works itself out in obedience, confidence, courage, and eagerness to honor the Lord Jesus. It affects us in our relationship with God, with fellow believers, with the world around us, and reaches to our inner being.

The devotions of this small book develop Peter’s first letter in bite-size pieces. They function as rations for the journey, leading us to partake of the sustenance of God’s Word for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. Like foods that pair well together, we will see how Peter builds and blends one portion with another that not only provide us nourishment but also stimulate our spiritual senses to taste and see that the Lord is good. Prayer can act as the digestive juices of faith that help us assimilate that truth to strengthen us for the journey.

Each meditation contains a heading that captures the gist of the reading, a portion of the particular text from 1 Peter within view, observations and applications from that passage, and a principle for reflection and application. The devotional format is intended to both inform and inspire. The content of each portion can be partaken in individual communion with God or, by its brevity, can be read and reflected upon with others without prior preparation.

We all know what it’s like to be away from home. Home reflects safety, security, and stability. Home is a welcome thought during even the most exhilarating of vacations. How much more welcome is home when, like those who have headed off to war, we return

from the adversity, upheaval, and constant danger of the battlefield to the embrace of love, the familiarity of family, and surroundings of peace? Such is the tone of Peter's letter when he alerts us to temporal danger and hardship now but eternal glory to come for all who are known by Jesus Christ. Because He lives, our hope is alive and is to be lived out each passing day.

Chapter 1

Peter the Pastor

*“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. . .”
(1 Peter 1:1)*

Pastors are shepherds. One of the jobs of a shepherd is to walk with his sheep, particularly in those difficult times of life, times when they feel alone or helpless or scared.

The pastor’s personal presence is a great tool for ministry. To sit by someone about to undergo surgery and pray with him, helping him cast his anxieties on God, carries great meaning. Rushing to the side of a couple who have just received devastating news about their child and enfolding them in embrace communicates something mere words could not.

But a pastor brings more than his personal presence. He brings Jesus. He is glad for the warm welcome extended to him when he shows up in times of distress. He knows, though, that he eventually wants to direct their attention to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all they can ask or imagine. Amidst their anguish, he wants to lift their eyes to Jesus.

In the final chapter of his first letter, Peter will include himself among those who shepherd the flock, calling himself a “fellow elder” (5:1). That is not, however, how he introduces himself in his salutation. There, after giving his name, he says he is “an apostle of Jesus Christ.”

Not only does that mean he was included among the twelve our Lord chose to walk with Him in His earthly ministry, being an apostle speaks to the authority of our Lord Jesus Himself. Peter is an elder, engaging himself in the shared ministry to the flock that is Christ’s church, but he also holds a position that no pastor today holds. As an apostle, Peter writes with the authority of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20–21). His letters are included in

the canon of Holy Scripture and are to be received as the Word of God they are.

It is on the note of authority that Peter begins his letter. He is bringing to us the very Word of God. He speaks for Jesus to His sheep. In writing his letter, Peter communicates with apostolic authority and reflects a pastoral heart to those who are hurting.

Those Peter is writing to are scattered and suffering. Peter could not rush to their side to be with them, but he could put pen to paper to convey the comfort of Christ, who most certainly was with them. He could speak the Word of God into their lives to help them find their way and open their eyes to the bigger picture of redemptive reality that enveloped them.

So we pick up Peter's letter and we regard it as the Word of God that it is. Ultimately, we hear the pastoral heart of the Chief Shepherd for His sheep in our distress, confusion, and fear.

PRINCIPLE

*Jesus said that His sheep hear His voice.
In what way does He speak to us through Peter?*

Chapter 2

Foreknowledge of the Father

“ . . . elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. . . ”
(1 Peter 1:2)

Many public places will have a lost-and-found bin, a collection point for items discarded or disregarded. Someone will lose her sunglasses and go to the front desk where she will be directed to a motley collection of things found. She will make her way to the bin and begin to rummage through strata of articles lost over weeks and months. She spots her sunglasses but upon closer look realizes hers are a slightly different style. So she digs deeper.

As pilgrims in this world, we can seem like those lost items among a population of lost items, resembling others that make up the human race. While Peter's letter is considered a general epistle in that it is not written to a specific local church, such as the church in Rome, it is not general in that it is written to the entire populace. Rather, Peter writes to a particular people, a peculiar people who stand out as ones claimed by God, as he will later say: “His own special people” (2:9).

Peter describes us as “elect.” We are pilgrims in this world as the elect of God. We have been chosen by the Father. He set His love on us from before the foundation of the world and sent His Son to redeem us for His own possession. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit, a seal of ownership to God and inclusion in His family along with others.

It might seem that we are indistinguishable from others in the mass of humanity around us. But God knows those who are His. He will not lose us. He will not lose track of us. He will never discard us or disregard us. We are safe in His arms.

Our status as elect relates to the foreknowledge of God. That says a lot more than we might think. God did not look down the

halls of human history to see those who would turn to Him and then set a seal of ownership upon them to make sure they would all be accounted for in the last day. That puts the cart before the theological horse. God did not foresee us; He foreknew us. There is a difference. God foreknew us by setting His love on us before the foundation of the world. He took us as His very own not because of anything attractive or worthy about us but solely because of His divine purpose.

So when Peter writes to “pilgrims . . . elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1:1), he is addressing us as the objects of God’s redeeming love. He is speaking to us amidst the mass of humanity to remind us that we are not alone, not abandoned. Our God is for us and with us, and even now through His Word is speaking to minister to us in the struggles of our pilgrimage.

To the sojourner unsettled in this world and undergoing distress and even persecution, those words are balm to the soul and ballast in the storm. We are known by God. He is our Father. The love He set upon us for His own glory will not waver or weaken, but will hold us fast.

PRINCIPLE

*Throughout your days, you belong to your Father in heaven.
What comfort can you gain from that truth?*

Chapter 3

Sanctification of the Spirit

“ . . . in sanctification of the Spirit. . . ”
(1 Peter 1:2)

We can endure suffering much better when we know there is purpose behind it. For example, I will actually schedule an appointment with my dentist knowing full well that pain, assault, and mouthal manhandling await me in dealing with a cavity discovered on the previous routine checkup. I endure that suffering because I know that it is the road to resolution of a problem.

Peter is writing to those undergoing all sorts of suffering. He assures them and us that the hardships of our lives are not arbitrary but meaningful. They carry the purpose of God. My dental procedure carried the purpose of the clinician to make me whole. He had discovered decay that needed to be excised and replaced with a filling that would allow me to chew properly and avoid greater problems were it left unattended. In similar fashion, our all-wise God works through the trials of our lives for our holiness.

Holiness lies at the heart of sanctification. Holiness is akin to wholeness in that the image of God disfigured by the fall is restored in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. In Christ, we are holy and called to be holy. As theologians might put it, our sanctification is definitive in that we stand holy in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30) and it is developmental in that we grow in holiness (1 Cor. 1:2). We are distinct from the world that walks to the beat of its own drum and we are called by God to live in a manner that reflects that distinction of belonging to Him.

Our holiness, however, is not a self-help project, not mere reformation shaped by our self-appointed resolutions. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is He who unites us to Christ, He who brings us from spiritual death to spiritual life, He who enables us to die more

and more to sin and live increasingly to righteousness. The Spirit is the One who forms Christ in us.

We are God's workmanship, and the suffering we experience contributes to His craftsmanship. The Spirit empowers us and gives us the grace and wisdom necessary for the conduct of our lives in keeping with the Word of God. The efforts we make show results by God's handiwork.

Peter reminds us that whatever adversity we are experiencing, whatever hardship we are enduring, whatever suffering we undergo, God has not lost sight of the plot. It's all part of His plan, just as it was for His Son in His mission as Messiah.

In his sermon to the throngs gathered for Pentecost, Peter framed the suffering of Jesus in terms of being delivered to death "by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). The suffering of our lives also carries the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God for us to the accomplishment of His goals—in this case, our sanctification, carried out by the Spirit who indwells us.

PRINCIPLE

*In Christ we are holy and called to be holy.
What does it mean to be holy?*

Obedience and Sprinkling of the Blood

“. . .for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. . .”
(1 Peter 1:2)

When our house is on fire, there's no sense cleaning the kitchen. That's one extreme. The other is to wonder why we should make our bed when we are just going to sleep in it again. These extremes each contain a common theme, which is that there are situations that absolve us of guilt or relieve us of our responsibilities.

That can be our thinking when we are being persecuted for our faith or find ourselves in the deep end of suffering. Surely, we can let things slide a bit given the circumstances. We certainly don't want to call attention to ourselves and become subject to scrutiny and greater suffering. Do we?

The Old Testament figure Daniel models the answer. Daniel had been among the captives taken from Israel and settled in the foreign land of Babylon. His intention was not to call attention to himself, but that attention was inevitable as he distinguished himself by walking with and serving a God contrary to the gods of the Babylonians. Daniel became known for his allegiance to the Lord. He found himself in a circumstance of suffering as an exile and he opened himself to greater suffering by his overt fidelity to the living God and his refusal to compromise.

Peter is writing to believers in similar circumstances, many of them scattered and suffering, undergoing persecution for their faith. Yet in his salutation, even before he gets to the body of his letter, Peter urges his readers to obedience. Chosen “for obedience” (1 Peter 1:2), he says.

That's because his readers were Christians, those set apart by

God and sanctified by the Spirit. They were sojourners, citizens of another kingdom, heirs of a heavenly home. If they had received Christ as Lord, they were to follow Christ as Lord, in private and in public.

Throughout his letter, Peter will address this no-excuses, no-exceptions approach to life for us as believers in a world that is no friend of Christ. Obedience is one of the ways we glorify God and distinguish ourselves as belonging to Him. It is a means by which we demonstrate the lordship of Christ to an unbelieving world and provoke their demand for an explanation of why we live as we do.

We are the redeemed of the Lord. We are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave His life for us. Our obedience does not earn us any favor with God. It is by Christ's obedience and shed blood that we are saved, which Peter will later remind us: "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness" (1 Peter 2:24). Yet, as sojourners, we are to live lives consecrated to our God and conspicuous of His grace (see Titus 2:11–14).

PRINCIPLE

Obedience means conformity to the will of the God we love.

How is obedience a symptom of our salvation?

Grace and Peace

*“Grace to you and peace be multiplied.”
(1 Peter 1:2)*

“Good morning!” is a typical way to greet one another when we rise to face another day. It conveys attentive warmth. Underlying the expression is more of a sentiment than a declaration, more “I wish you a good morning” than “It is a good morning.”

Ordinarily, we don’t give much thought to such casual greetings. They are just a way of welcome, ice breakers to an encounter. Such can be the case when we read the epistles of the New Testament. Grace and peace are common greetings in the epistles of Paul. Peter extends them in both his letters. They are so familiar we can be tempted to gloss over them. Yet this tandem, grace and peace, are rich in meaning to believers. They belong to the DNA of our salvation and set the tone for our relationship with God and one another.

Grace speaks to the underserved, unexpected, unmerited favor of God. It is the sole reason we stand as we do in a reconciled relationship with Him. It points us to what has been bestowed upon us as a gift. We are debtors to grace. While mercy spares us the penalty of sin we deserve, grace lavishes upon us the riches of salvation we do not deserve. Like a condemned prisoner on death row, we languish as the day of our execution draws near, with no ground or expectation of reprieve. There is absolutely nothing we can do to make up for sins past or to measure up to righteousness required. Against the backdrop of our guilt, God speaks to us grace.

Coupled with grace is peace. If grace is the outpouring, then peace is the outcome. Because of God’s grace, we who were at enmity with Him, alienated from Him in our sin, enjoy peace with God through His reconciling work in Christ on our behalf. We

have peace with God and know the peace of God. Peter speaks to us as ones who possess a redemptive and resounding peace, even in the midst of our suffering as sojourners.

Just as “Good morning” can be understood as shorthand for “I wish you a good morning,” so “grace and peace” can be seen as shorthand for bestowal of blessing. In a sense Peter is opening on a note of benediction pronounced over the years by the old covenant priesthood: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Num. 6:24–26). That grace and peace is lavished upon us through Christ, which Peter spells out in his second letter: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Peter 1:2; cf. 1 Peter 5:14).

Peter not only extends grace and peace to us in Christ; he expresses that it be multiplied. He wants us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus. Situations of adversity do not stifle grace and peace for us. Rather, they open the nozzle wide for us to know more fully what is ours in Christ.

PRINCIPLE

*Grace and peace are not mere sentiments.
In what way are they core values to our standing before God?*

Blessed be the God and Father

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . .”
(1 Peter 1:3)*

Imagine you are destitute, have no money to buy food, and have not eaten for some time. What would your reaction be to someone who took notice of you and spread before you a feast? Your heart would be filled with gratitude, and you would likely be prompted to bless the person. As does Paul in opening the body of his letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 1:3), so Peter begins on the high note of blessing Him from whom all blessings flow. Blessing is the reflex of the beneficiary.

Blessing God is an expression of worship. We ascribe to God the glory due His name. We bless Him for who He is as Creator, and for what He has done as Redeemer. Like taking as deep a breath as possible to exert the loudest and longest note of praise, the psalmist reaches to the depths of his being: “Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” (Ps. 103:1). Although David would later in the psalm describe the character of God to provoke praise, he begins by speaking of what God had done as Redeemer. “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Ps. 103:2). He goes on to inventory those benefits.

In the same way, Peter rouses us to bless God for what He has done. Not surprisingly, since he is writing to pilgrims, Peter celebrates God’s wondrous mercy in giving us a home in heaven. Before he details that heavenly hope, however, Peter focuses our attention on God. It is easy for us to lose sight of God when we are beset by troubles. Peter learned this lesson personally. When he was in a boat rocked by a storm-tossed sea and he saw Jesus walking toward him on the water, he asked Jesus to allow him to walk on the water to Him (Matt. 14:22–33). At his Lord’s bidding, Peter stepped

out of the boat but when he took his eyes off Jesus and turned his attention to the tumultuous sea, he began to sink. Jesus graciously responded to Peter's cry for help. We can take our eyes off Jesus, both in adversity and in abundance.

Now writing to people who are engulfed in the storm of suffering, Peter directs their eyes and ours to God. Peter identifies Him as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Peter particularly wants us to see God in His eternal, transcendent glory. He directs our attention to God who has sent His Son for us and our salvation. Peter may well have had in mind the voice of God the Father from the cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matt. 17:5; see 2 Peter 1:16–18). Look at Jesus. Listen to Him.

The starting point for navigating the trials of our lives is taking hold of the hand of our God and Father. From that we know certainty, find solace, and gain strength.

PRINCIPLE

*Bearings in suffering begin with focus on our God and Father.
What does it mean for us to bless God?*

You've reached the end of this sample. Thank you for reading!
The full devotional is available from [Amazon](#).

GOT HOPE?

The Christian's hope is not an expression of wishful thinking like, "I hope it doesn't rain." Nor is it unfounded yearning for what might be. Rather, the hope of the Christian is a confident expectation, an assured conviction, a vibrant certainty that rests on the God who cannot lie and who does not change. In his first epistle, Peter tells us we are born again to a living hope and have the charge of giving a defense for that hope. In this devotional, Stan Gale leads us through the epistle of 1 Peter to explore the depths of our hope in Christ and the impact of that hope on our daily lives.

First Peter is medicine for our times. It is the prescription we need to live for Christ in the early twenty-first century. And Peter's clinical assistant, Dr Stanley Gale, is ideally equipped to help us grow to healthy spiritual maturity. He knows how to interpret and apply Peter's principles, and he has extensive experience as a pastor and physician of the soul. His *Got Hope?* can therefore safely be prescribed for every age and stage in the Christian life.

Sinclair Ferguson, Chancellor's Professor of Systematic Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary, Teaching Fellow, Ligonier Ministries

I know that when I pick up something Stan Gale has written, I'm picking up something biblically solid that I can trust.

Leslie Montgomery, Author of *Redemptive Suffering*

In these meditations on 1 Peter, Stan Gale writes as a shepherd, interpreting the words of a shepherd to guide us to holy living in the true and good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. He shows Peter's first epistle to be a calling to kingdom living for pilgrims who are journeying toward our eternal home in Christ. These meditations have all the depth, truth, practicality, and warmth which are the benchmarks of Stan Gale's many books.

T. M. Moore, Principal of The Fellowship of Ailbe



Dr. Stanley D. Gale has served for over 30 years as an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America. He has written more than a dozen books on Christian living. He is the husband of Linda, father of four, and grandfather of ten. He lives in West Chester, Pennsylvania, where he enjoys playing tennis and delighting others with his puns.

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