

Series Title: Hope in Jesus  
Sermon title: Peter

- Welcome to our Wednesday night Bible study.
- I have a few housekeeping things to share with you.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has brought challenges in certain restrictions, but those challenges have also opened many doors for the gospel. Here are a few ways that Heritage is taking advantage of this platform.
- Heritage will livestream our Sunday service again this weekend. A good number of folks gathered around their tv's and computers for corporate worship last week.
- Our elders are posting daily devotions on the Heritage FB page. This allows the elders to share their hearts in an available but non-invasive way.
- Our deacons are checking in on our seniors. Thank you.
- Many CG leaders are hosting weekly gatherings and prayer meetings. Otherwise, our CG leaders are checking on their members. Bravo!

- People are still maintaining the chronological reading of the Bible.
- We maintain our relationship with FEMA but have had no new calls. Thanks to those of you who have called Debbie and made yourselves available to serve.
- Some of our members are making masks for medical personnel. Contact Janel Burkner to get involved.
- Angela is reading to the children on the Heritage FB Live, Wednesdays and Sundays at 4pm. Her first reading has reached 834 people. Her husband's first devotion has reached 182. (HmMMM).
- David Stewart will once again host our weekly prayer gathering on FB Live this Friday at 8:30pm. You can go ahead
- People are using the self-isolation cards to reach out to friends, neighbors & co-workers. They are available in the Manor, front-door mailbox.
- We are staying in touch with our missionaries. Sunday night, Carla Gibson told the Burkner CG that moving their services online has increased their 'attendance' ten-fold.

- Giving. Wow. Your financial faithfulness is amazing. Some of our members are even giving extra and that is incredible. Thank you. Thank you. Don't let Covid-19 change your Christian identity. Be the Christian you are, dependent on Jesus and independent of external pressures. When you get squeezed, let Jesus come out.
- You are the church. You are being the church. People are saying that church services are postponed or cancelled. This isn't true. Heritage is proving that church services are ongoing, in fact, multiplied in the innumerable ways we are serving each other and the world.
- During this crisis, churches will reap what they have sown.
  - In 1 Samuel, Israel devalued the blacksmith profession (13:19) and didn't have any spears or swords when the Philistines attacked them in ch. 13.
  - But in Genesis, 7-years of famine proved Joseph's the prudence of his ministry model.
  - The wisdom and quality of Heritage's mission is proving that we are indeed making disciples here and around the world.

- These are some of the reasons why our elders “*have this confidence in the Lord about you*” (2 Thess 3:4).

Just before we step into the pages of Scripture, let’s pray David’s prayer for ourselves –

*“Deal bountifully with your servants, that we may live and keep your word. Open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of your law. We are sojourners on the earth; hide not your commandments from us! Our souls are consumed with longing for your rules at all times”* (Psalm 119:17-20).

And now, this is our text for the evening. Read with me in 1 Peter 1.

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

That’s it. Why? Because we want to know why God chose Peter to write this epistle and when we do, we will be better able to appreciate it, understand it and apply it.

Fast facts:

- His name, ‘Petros,’ means, ‘stone’ or ‘rock.’ So, too, does the name ‘Cephas,’ which is an Aramaic word for “rock,” as used by Jesus in John 1:42.
- Peter was a fisherman
- He was Andrew’s brother

- He became one of Jesus's 12 disciples
- He was also one of Jesus's closest companions along with James & John (Mk 5:37)
- He walked on water (Mt 14:31)
- He often put his foot in his mouth
- He confessed Jesus as the Christ (Mark 8:29)
- It is on that confession that Jesus promised to build his church (Mt 16:18).
- He saw Jesus glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17)
- He disowned Jesus 3 times (Luke 22:54-62)
- Mark may be his gospel
- He cut off the ear off Malchus's ear, the servant of the high priest (Jn 18:10)
- Jesus's last words to him were "*Feed my sheep*" (3 x in Jn 21) and "*Follow me.*"
- After the resurrection, he became a pillar of the Jewish church in Jerusalem (Acts 9:36-43; Gal 2:9)
- He addressed the Pentecost crowd (Acts 2:14-41)
- He received a vision/call to the Gentiles (Acts 10)
- He wrote two epistles
- Early Christian tradition records that he died, crucified upside down under Nero c. 64 AD

Before and immediately after his conversion, Peter was a stereotypical fisherman; independent, strong, hot tempered with vulgar language. As soon as you hear his name, certain things come to mind. He experienced the

highs and lows of life; the highest being his confession of Jesus and his lowest, the triad of denials about Jesus.

Betsie ten Boom, the sister of Corrie ten Boom, "*There is no pit so deep but that He is not deeper still*" and Peter's life is a prime example of that.

In Luke 22:31-32, Jesus told Peter, "*Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, <sup>32</sup> but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*"

What hope for Peter. But, as we all know, Peter forgot the Lord's encouraging words. After his denial and Jesus's death, Peter went back to fishing.

This is why, at the Garden Tomb, after his resurrection, the angel said, "*Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you*" (Mark 16:6-7).

It's easy, as I mentioned Sunday, for the foreground of our lives to eliminate our view of the background, who is God; always present and always working for our good.

And it is this hope that makes Peter the perfect person to write this epistle. Listen to how he opens it

*“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, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1:3-5).*

We'll talk about it later, but look what words came out of Peter's personal experience.

- *According to his great mercy*
- *A living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*
- *An inheritance*
  - *Imperishable* – not even his denial could threaten it
  - *Undefiled* – even his sin couldn't stain it
  - *Unfading* – even his faithlessness couldn't erase it
- *Kept in heaven for you* – Jesus kept Peter. Peter didn't keep himself.
- *Who by God's power are being guarded...* (Jesus warned him that Satan desired to sift him but he, Jesus, had prayed for him)
- *Ready to be revealed at the last time* (Thank God, he doesn't 'call' our lives at halftime.

## Our application:

Do you see how this makes Peter the perfect person to write this letter? His faith was stretched, even broken. And yet, he signed this letter as “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.*”

He made it. Peter made it. His denials disrupted his pilgrimage, but it didn't derail him. He is, after the resurrection, doing exactly what Jesus told him to do. He is

- Following Jesus
- Feeding Jesus's sheep

Jesus kept his word to Peter and kept him secure just as he keeps his word to you and keeps you. Salvation is not you, holding onto God. God holds you. Thankfully, our names are written on Christ's hands and “*no one is able to snatch [us] out of [his] hand*” (Jn 10:28).

Equally as important, Peter's readers were Christians whom persecution had scattered and *isolated* throughout the Roman empire. Worse, many of them weren't only isolated, they were homeless, separated from their native homeland, language, culture, traditions, family, etc. He calls them ‘*exiles*’ (1:1).



These believers were enduring escalating persecution (1:6; 2:12,19–21; 3:9,13–18; 4:1,12–16,19) and Peter wrote to inspire hope in the midst of their crumbling world.

Our bodies need oxygen to survive and our souls need hope to thrive. Peter writes to give us that spiritual oxygen of hope.

Have Covid-19 waves obstructed your view of Jesus? Has the pressure of the moment caused you to doubt, even deny Jesus? It isn't anything you've said. You would never actually say, "I don't know him." It's how you're acting. Your thinking and your emotions are having a field-day with your life.

It is true that Covid-19 has temporarily isolated us and we may feel like exiles but I can assure you the depth of our circumstance is not close to that Peter's readers.

Did I tell you the circumstance of Betsie ten Boom's statement, "*There is no pit so deep but that He is not deeper still*"? No, I didn't. She said it while incarcerated in Ravensbrück, the German concentration camp where she and her sister were held. Betsie died at age 59 in 1944, after only six months of German imprisonment.

ILL – Five hundred years earlier, Martin Luther could have used that advice. He was subject to extended depressions, once locking himself away from everyone,

His wife, Katerina, faithfully brought him meals. On one occasion, she was dressed in all black.

Martin Luther asked, "*Who died?*"

Katerina replied, "*God.*"

Martin Luther exclaimed, "*That's impossible.*"

Katerina retorted, "*Then stop acting like it.*"

Jesus has given us a living, imperishable, undefiled and unfading hope by his resurrection.

In a Covid-19 world: Think wisely. Act boldly. Trust Jesus.

**Gospel:** By the way, just like Jesus asked Peter a question, Jesus has a question for you -

At the height of his ministry in Israel, Jesus led the disciples to Caesarea Philippi, the northernmost part of his ministry in the Promised Land. Many of you have stood in the exact spot where Jesus took his disciples.

The surroundings are impressive. The mountain is a pantheon to the Greek gods, particularly Pan. A sign declaring Caesar Augustus as the "Son of God is there. The cave known as the 'gates of hell' is there too. An orthodox Jew did not go there. But Jesus took his disciples there to ask them a single question and, in the midst of all those false deities: "*But who do you say that I am?*" (Mk 8:29).

That's the question. Who is Jesus, to you?

There are times Peter has suffered from foot and mouth disease. But not on this occasion. He promptly and dramatically responds to Jesus's question; according to Mark's truncated version, "*You are the Christ*" (Mk 8:30) and Matthew's longer version, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Mt 16:16).

There is no greater question. There is no more appropriate answer. Jesus is "*the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"

Who do you say that he is?

## **Prayer**

Paul's prayer for the Romans is my prayer for you -

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."* (Eph 3:16-19).

Blessings to each of you as you continue to be the church in your world. See you Sunday on the livestream.