

I hope the Oklahoma City Thunder win again. I hope that we don't get any hail or tornadoes that cause damage. I hope that all of our students stay safe through the summer and come back again next year for school. Hoping for these things isn't that different from hoping to win the lottery. I can hope all I want for any of them, but I can't do all that much to affect the outcome of most of them.

How are any of those different from the hope people have of finding their way into heaven someday? They know that's where they want to be; so they must find ways of getting in. Some might hope they'll be able to buy their way in. Others hope they're let in simply because they're a good person. Others just hope there's a heaven to get into. Each of these people hopes for heaven, but each has a different level of certainty they're getting in.

Peter's first letter was written to Christians scattered in faraway places from Jerusalem like Pontus and Galatia. These Christians were suffering. Peter's purpose was to give them hope in the face of suffering. Not some "hope I win the lottery kind of hope". Their hope was different. The message is the same for us as we take a closer look at the second lesson...

Our hope is different
Why Christians are different
What it means to be different

On a trip to the grocery store you pile up the cart with all the essentials: milk, pizza, pudding, whatever. The cashier runs things across to total what you owe. Instead of reaching for your wallet or purse you turn to a wagon you've been pulling through the store filled with a big pile of wheat. "It's home grown and worth enough to pay for these groceries." You might agree on an amount the wheat is worth. But the grocery store would never take it for payment. What would they do with it? And eventually that wheat will go bad. You'll have your groceries and they'll have nothing. Perishable things don't make good currency; especially not for paying a ransom price.

Give this a thought; to God even your best works look like you're trying to pay for the choicest groceries or steak dinner with a pile of wheat, or worse. You're trying to pay for an empty way of life handed down to you from your parents. In reality it's anything but empty. It's a life filled with all sorts of sinful pleasures, security blankets of money, and more works trying to make God not so mad with us than we could count. The godlessness, lusts, and general sinfulness of our actions caused God to have to take a hard line against us. Instead of paying our own ransom, we went deeper into judgment. So we have reason to fear.

All the treasure and money of Bill Gates still wouldn't be enough to ransom one single corrupt sinner. The blood of a million lambs would never be enough. You can't use corrupt perishable items to ransom a corrupt life. **"You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."** Peter says Christians are different because they've been brought to see something wonderful. It wasn't money, fame, or status that made the payment to buy us back to God. It was something far more precious. To be redeemed God had to offer himself. Nothing less was sufficient. The blood of only one, the Lamb of God, Jesus is sufficient. His payment set the whole world free.

But the blood of Jesus didn't just buy Christians back from their sins. Jesus' blood was enough for the sins of the entire world. **"He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."** Christians, we would be no different if we didn't have the revelation of Christ Jesus. God revealed the plan, he shared what he did, and he gave us his Word. We're different from the world because we know Christ Jesus by faith. We know that precious blood paid for our sins. We know that Jesus lived and died for us. Our hope is different because we've been purchased with better blood, the blood of Christ.

Every good cause and effect relationship first has the cause. It describes what changed and often why. We might say because Osama bin Laden planned and carried out attacks on the United States he is dead. We see an action and we find out why that action took place. Because Christ bought us with his own precious blood we are saved. This tells us the action and it also tells us why, why we are different. But there's often more. Because we're saved by the precious blood of Christ what will it mean for us as we live our lives? What does it mean to be different?

If our hope is different it stands to reason we'll act differently. We have good reason when our true hope only comes from God. We have reasons to live Godly. **"Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear."** Reverent fear knows God called us to be holy, so we ought to be holy. Fear knows our Father is also our judge. That strikes fear into our sinful nature and holy fear into our spiritual nature. Our sinful natures are brought to know we'll be judged so we better stay in line. Our spiritual natures also know we'll be judged. The spiritual nature, our new person in Christ, responds not out of fear but out of holy respect and honor for God. God deserves it and my spiritual nature wants to give it.

But all around us feels like we've got reasons for genuine fear. Now that bin Laden has been killed how can we possibly stop all the retaliation attacks that we'll experience? Some radical person with an agenda to simply kill people could stand in the mall or a

restaurant and start shooting. And then we've got the runaway train that is the government. How can that be controlled? If it can't and it goes under what will happen? Our thoughts might also swing the other way completely as we try and calm ourselves. We say that God doesn't really hold me accountable for my sins. He's more like a grandfather in the sky. He laughs and looks the other way when I make foolish mistakes. He knows I've tried and that's all he cares about.

Dear Christian, you're different. Scripture gets your thinking straight again. Christ has been revealed as being your redemption payment. Now you can take action. **"Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."** Christ Jesus is the one raised from the dead and glorified. That forms the basis for the gospel message. God loved you and me so much that way back before the beginning he thought of a way he could make good for all my sins and yours at a great price to himself. He claimed you and me as his own. His blood was shed, his body was raised, and we were saved.

So the biggest thing you can do is live differently. Remember that our existence here is only in tents as strangers. Our true mansion awaits us in heaven. So we live focused on going home. Every good work we do is merely verifying that we are who God has made us to be. It's a work that gives evidence of the change in our hearts. Our hope and our faith are in God. What we do and work for here are all for the glory of him who was raised from the dead and glorified by God, Christ Jesus.

I really hope graduation goes smoothly some might say. I really hope I graduate others might say. Some things we hope for we can control and others we can't. I hope I go to heaven. Everyone here hopes for that. But our hope is different. Christ Jesus alone can grant us that gift of heaven and by his precious blood he has. Knowing this by faith our hope changes how we live. Our hope is different as we ponder the ransom price in Christ's blood paid to set us free.