

TITLE: THE FINISH LINE...A LIVING HOPE
TEXT: 1 PETER 1:3-12

THESIS: The purpose of this sermon is to encourage one another to remain faithful in this life by keeping our eyes on the finish line.

INTRO: When I was in college, Dad and I ran 10k's together. One of them Dad trained for but I didn't, and he beat me (he was quite proud of this)! However, I was better prepared for the next one, & I beat him. Not only did those races require proper preparation, they also required proper motivation *during* the race. When I was hurting in a race, it always helped to keep my thoughts on crossing the finish line and receiving a reward (either a medal, ribbon, or just the satisfaction of finishing the race). **It's the same in daily life for a Christian**, & God knows this. That's why he inspired Peter to encourage us in this race. **Verses 3-12** are the encouragement to stay focused, because of the race being run in the rest of the book.

I. PERMANENT PRIZE (v. 3-5):

(v. 3) Blessed (praised) be God, because he has begotten us again (He begat us originally (He created mankind), and now he has begotten us again). How? – through the word of truth (**Jam 1:18** – “*of his own will begat he us with the word of truth*”).

Why? For what result? (v. 3b-4) born again unto a living hope. How? What did God have to do? It's by Christ's resurrection from the dead (so, he also had to die first). New birth into a living hope (a real, true, continuous hope) based on real history – the resurrection of Jesus Christ – not based on myths of men. Because of Christ's resurrection, we have real hope. This separates Christianity from every other religion.

What hope did we have before this...before we became Christians? What hope does a non-Christian have? NONE!

(v. 4) The finish line – our heavenly inheritance. Any inheritance you may have coming can be corrupted (material possessions; e.g., a classic car) or can fade away (bank account). But nothing about Heaven is corruptible, changeable, can be defiled, or will ever fade away! This isn't social security! It's reserved for you, waiting for you. (**5:4** – “*a crown of glory that fadeth not away*”)

(v. 5) The inheritance is reserved in heaven for you who are kept... how? As is *always* the case, it takes *both* parties to do their part:

1. By God's power – It was God's power that raised Christ from the dead, and it's God's power that will raise us (**Rom 6:4**).
2. By your faith – We won't be kept or guarded if we don't remain faithful.

II. TEMPORARY TRIALS (v. 6-9):

A. Purpose of trials (v. 6-7)

(v. 6) You greatly rejoice in this hope of the *permanent* reward, though now *temporarily* you are afflicted. Here Peter is saying that their current sufferings, even if resulting in death, are *temporary*. But the future reward is *permanent!* (**Rom 8:18** – “*these present sufferings aren't worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed*”)

*Why must we be afflicted?

(v. 7) So that; in order that (purpose clause) the trying of your faith (and subsequent success) will result in praise, honor, & glory.

- Your faith is more valuable than gold. Even the purest gold (purified with fire, having its impurities removed), will perish.

- “Shaped down here so we'll fit up there.” If we want to share in his glory, we must share in his sufferings (**Phil 3:10**). These two verses are why he's reminding them of v. 3-5 (they're going through trials on earth and need to be reminded that this is temporary, compared with the permanence of Heaven)...keep your eyes on the finish line!

B. Rejoicing in spite of trials (v. 8-9)

(v. 8) They hadn't seen Jesus, but they loved him, believed in him, and rejoiced! **John 20:28-29** – *blessed are those who have not seen Jesus, but believe*. Even though they had not seen him, they had faith so strong (in *his* resurrection & in *their* resurrection) that they rejoice with joy unspeakable (words are inadequate) and glorious! **Do we rejoice like this?** This is something we ought to think about day to day...rise above the details of the day and remember the prize at the end of life!

(v. 9) Because the end of your faith (the result, end, purpose, goal of your faith) is salvation (from sin; final salvation).

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGE – Seeing what the prophets & angels longed to see (v. 10-12):

(v. 10) The prophets searched diligently (explore) to know about this salvation. They prophesied of this grace that is meant for you.

(v. 11) Searching (for the 'when' & the 'how'; they knew the 'what') – the Spirit of Christ was in them (**2 Pet 1:20-21** - inspiration). The Holy Spirit told them what would happen (sufferings of Christ - **Isa 53; Psa 22** - and subsequent glory – of Christ and His saints). But He didn't tell them when. So naturally the prophets desperately wanted to know. But it wasn't revealed to them.

(v. 12) But what's interesting to us, is that it *was* revealed to them that what they were doing was for *our* benefit! Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us... they knew that these things would take place later, in our lifetimes, not in theirs.

- They longed to know more...to see the promised Messiah, to witness the HS being sent down from Heaven in full measure on the apostles (what Jesus promised in Jn 14:25-26 and 16:12-13), to see salvation granted to those who obeyed. We're getting to reap the benefits of their labors!

- The angels desire to look into these things. This is an encouragement to these brethren who are facing trials. The prophets and the angels wanted to know about the things you are now experiencing.

CONCLUSION: Hopefully this lesson from the apostle Peter has been encouraging to us. Peter intended this to be a great encouragement to us. But why? Why did Peter need to remind us of what's waiting for us at the finish line? Because of what we must do between here and that finish line. This race he's encouraging us to finish here in v. 3-12 is the topic of the remainder of his letter. He needs to start his letter on a positive note...a reminder that whatever trial we face on Earth will certainly be worth the reward in Heaven.