

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 I Peter 1:3 NIV

Hope is not any easy thing to come by or hold on to. When things pile on against us(things never seem to come in a constant fashion... it's either all or none.) it's really hard to get through it all and not give up.

When Peter was writing this letter, he was writing to a group of Christians who were more than likely experiencing persecution from the Roman government. Bad enough as that might be consider what else they might be dealing with.

Most of the early Christians were from the lower stratus of society I have been told by one historian that they might have also been those who were kicked off their family farms by wealthy land owners seeking to enlarge their profits. They then had to migrate to the cities to find a living. So they had to misfortune of being uprooted from their homes and culture, a tough pill to swallow, since that perhaps it was all they knew for years.

Life in the cities was difficult as well. Because most cities were protected by walls, their space was very, limited. I may be off on this estimate but there was about 200 people per acre! To remedy those situations large flimsy structures were built to accommodate them. Up to 5 story structures, crowded with people were the norm. It would not be unusual for these buildings to collapse on a daily basis.

So the fellowship they would have received in gatherings of Christians might have been their only bright spot in a very difficult life.

But even that was threatened by the Roman Government. Since the Christian confessed Jesus as the son of God, that ran into complete conflict with the Roman Government who declared that the Emperor was the "son of god" . There were even whispers of accusation against the Christians of something strange going on because they called each other brother and sisters.

So Peter, in writing to folks going through such a never ending struggle, tells them that their hope, that which gets them through the day is not rooted in themselves or in their circumstances, but in Jesus Christ, who through his resurrection from the dead. Resurrection means that we are never hopeless, because Jesus has defeated the most hopeless enemy, death itself.

These words were penned by a disciple of Jesus who himself died in martyrdom.

So where is our ultimate hope to get us through life, the "good, the bad, and the ugly"? Let us hold on to our living hope, our savior Jesus Christ who is raised from the dead. As one person has put "Others believe in hopeless end, but the Christian believes in an endless hope!"

Pr. John Van Haneghan