

# AP

REFORMED  
THOUGHT  
FOR  
CHRISTIAN  
LIVING

## Today's Quick Word 1 Peter 1:3-4, 8-9

By Bruce Christian

**1 PETER 1:3-4, 8-9** - *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, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you, ... . Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

What wonderful encouragement we have today in these words written by the Apostle Peter to Christians who were faced with many discouragements in their world, 2,000 years ago. We can truly identify with them as we find ourselves surrounded by pressures and circumstances that are doing their best to rob us of our HOPE.

Peter reminds us that, regardless of how we might FEEL, when we put our trust in Jesus we actually become the recipients of a LIVING HOPE. It is a LIVING hope because Jesus conquered death by his Resurrection, and it therefore assures us of a future INHERITANCE that 'can NEVER perish, spoil or fade'.

More than that, we can be SURE of it because we don't have to

worry about whether we have really EARNED it (we can't), or we might not really DESERVE it (we don't!) - it is ours because, in his GREAT MERCY, God has caused us to be BORN AGAIN into it! It's a FREE GIFT which FILLS us with 'an inexpressible and glorious joy' that we can't explain, we just HAVE it.

And as Peter writes, I can imagine his mind going back to that momentous time in the Upper Room when he heard Jesus say to his friend Thomas: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have NOT SEEN and yet HAVE BELIEVED." (John 20:29). That's us. The miracle of New Birth produces inexplicable BLESSEDNESS in us.

So why should I, MUST I, NOT be discouraged by the current circumstances throughout our weary world? Because THIS WORLD is NOT what life is all about. It is only preparing us for the REAL THING beyond the grave! Through bearing ALL my sin and shame and dying on the Cross in my place, Jesus HAS SAVED my soul ('It is finished', he cried out from the Cross - he had already ACHIEVED everything he came to Earth to do!). No, I should NEVER be discouraged - it can't get any better, or more HOPE-FULL, than this.



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## Today's Quick Word Jonah 4:10-11

*By Bruce Christian*

**JONAH 4:10-11** - *But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"*

Sadly, Jonah is a 'good' example of how our sinful hearts keep us from sharing the same passionate concern that our gracious Heavenly Father has for the salvation of those who persist in rebelling against his will and purpose in his world. We can too easily forget that "mercy triumphed over Judgement" at the Cross (cf James 2:13).

I find it helpful to read through the book of Jonah when I find myself getting agitated (oops, I notice that Jonah uses the word 'angry'!) by the militant forces of evil influencing our world today, especially when it seems to me that they are getting the upper hand and succeeding - and when the media look for every opportunity to fuel this misperception! Jonah reminds me that, contrary to my sinful, fallen (ie wrong) emotional feelings, God

is STILL sovereign over the world HE made, and the destiny of this world is STILL on course to fulfil HIS purposes, which include 'loving his enemies' (Romans 5:8-10), and being 'compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love/mercy' (Psalm 103:8).

I need to keep the story of Jonah in the back of my mind when I identify in my heart too much of a 'self-righteous' attitude, especially when I read other Scriptures like: "Indignation grips me because of the wicked, who have forsaken your law.," "Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed." and "I look on the faithless with loathing, for they do not obey your word." (Psalm 119:53, 136, 158). After all, apart from God's sovereign grace breaking into my stubborn, rebellious heart, I too would still be among the people the Psalmist 'looks on with loathing' and who cause him to weep and to be 'gripped with indignation.' Jonah's 'knee-jerk' response to Nineveh's repentance, and God's consequent mercy, remind me that I am 'only a sinner-saved-by-grace', and nothing more!

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## Today's Quick Word Luke 10:2-3

*By Bruce Christian*

**LUKE 10:2-3** - *He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.*

By combining two different metaphors here Jesus is challenging us with an important truth.

Firstly, it is easy for us to be discouraged by the seeming lack of impact we are having on our present society with the Good News about Jesus. It grips US, and impacts our whole lives, but the world around us seems not the slightest bit interested! When we look out with our human eyes we don't see a vast harvest that is there for the reaping; we see hearts and minds and lives that are so distracted by worldly interests and pleasures that they don't want to even stop and listen to God's voice calling them to repentance and faith.

Added to that, we DO feel like 'lambs among wolves' unable to match the opposition of the secular media to clear Gospel truth. We hear God's Name and God's Word being blasphemed and misinterpreted in every place, at every level.

But, secondly, what is Jesus also telling us? The 'harvest' is NOT OURS, it BELONGS TO the Sovereign Lord, and HE says

it is PLENTIFUL. Conditions today are no more conducive to evangelism than they were in Jesus' day, and he has his CHOSEN people out there ready to respond to the gospel now as he did then!

I am reminded of what he said to the Apostle Paul in the face of the discouraging prospects of the hostile, non-receptive city of Corinth - very similar to ours: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no-one is going to attack and harm you, BECAUSE I HAVE MANY PEOPLE IN THIS CITY." (Acts 18:9-10).

The Lord just wants us to plead with him for reapers to gather them in. And he knows it is going to be tough - he knows all about the lamb-wolf imbalance - and he still says, "GO!". Are we taking him at his word, and being bold enough to both 'ASK' and 'GO'? If so, are we truly EXPECTING significant results? A pastor once complained to Charles Spurgeon that there seemed to be no response to his zealous preaching. The great Preacher replied, "You don't expect someone to be converted EVERY time you preach, do you?" Comforted, the pastor replied, "No, I don't suppose so." - to which Spurgeon responded, "Well that's what your problem is!"