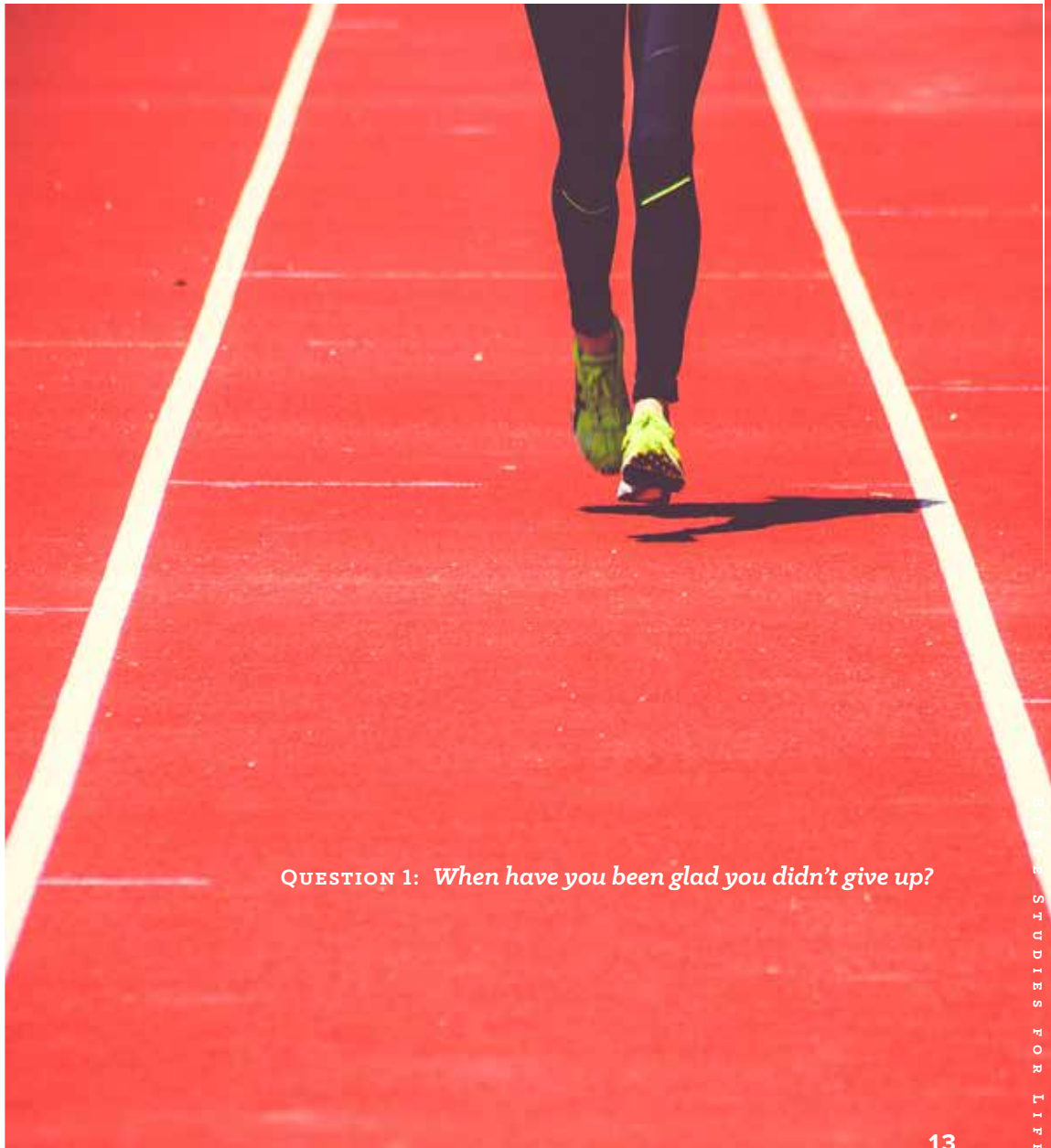


Session 1: The Basis for Our Hope



QUESTION 1: *When have you been glad you didn't give up?*

THE POINT

Only hope in Christ is sure
and certain.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Florence Chadwick was a champion long-distance swimmer. She swam the twenty-one miles across the English Channel in 1950, and she did it faster than any other woman in history.

In 1952, she set her sights on a loftier goal: the twenty-six-mile route between Catalina Island and the California mainland. Through an oil leak, nausea, and extreme fatigue, she swam for over fifteen hours. A heavy fog set in on the coastline, temperatures began to change, and Florence's breathing became labored. Since she couldn't see the shore, she feared she was swimming in circles and lost hope. The skilled athlete did something she had never done before: Florence gave up and asked to be pulled from the water.

She learned she had stopped half a mile short of her goal.

Like Florence, we too can lose hope. But the apostle Peter pointed to the sure hope we have in Christ. We may become weary and discouraged, but victory is much closer than we realize. It's all because of our hope in Christ.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 PETER 1:1-3

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ: To those chosen, living as exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient and to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

Peter had become one of the main leaders of the church after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. He was one of Jesus' twelve apostles, which meant He was sent with full authority to carry the gospel and spread the message of the kingdom of God.

Peter's letter reflects his care for God's people. Peter loved these Christ-followers and wrote to encourage them not to give up, lose hope, or grow weary. He reiterated this purpose when he closed his letter: "Through Silvanus, a faithful brother (as I consider him), I have written to you briefly in order to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!" (1 Peter 5:12).

So why did these people need hope? These opening verses tell us. They were living as exiles, scattered all throughout the Roman Empire in northern Asia Minor (which is modern-day Turkey).

As we read through 1 Peter, it becomes clear these believers were facing opposition. Life was not all sunshine and rainbows for those who followed Christ. Peter recognized that opposition would continue to intensify (see 1 Peter 4:12), and he wanted these men and women to be ready, holding fast to their hope in Christ.

Peter reminded the believers of their identity: God had chosen them. Nothing about their salvation and life in Christ was based on their own initiative. They had been chosen by the Father and had experienced "the sanctifying work of the Spirit." God doesn't just call us to salvation, but He also gives us His Holy Spirit.

This new identity points to a purpose: our obedience. Whether circumstances are easy or incredibly challenging, our selection by God and sanctification by the Spirit are to result in our obedience to Christ.

Peter then turned his attention to one of the main themes of his writing in this letter: hope.

QUESTION 2:

What kinds of things do people place their hope in today?

We have a living hope because we place our hope in God. This "living hope" has been secured by Christ's finished work on the cross. Living hope is ours because we've been chosen by God, saved by the death and resurrection of His Son, and set apart by His Spirit.

1 PETER 1:4-5

⁴ and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. ⁵ You are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

After reminding his readers of their identity and purpose, Peter elevated their viewpoint and lifted their eyes to see that this living hope is kept in heaven. Our hope is secure for eternity.

QUESTION 3:

How should we understand our "inheritance" as children of God?

Peter described this inheritance using three adjectives rich in meaning.

1. **Imperishable.** Our inheritance in Christ cannot be corrupted from within or without. It can't be stolen and won't succumb to decay. *Imperishable* describes a territory so secure that no invading force can destroy it. Israel had been overrun as a nation numerous times, but Peter assured these believers that would never happen to their salvation and inheritance.
2. **Undefiled.** This word relates to the purity of our inheritance. Our inheritance is thoroughly fire-resistant and in every respect unstained by the world. It is completely and wholly pure.
3. **Unfading.** Our inheritance will never lose its glory. Other treasures may diminish in their appearance or value over time, but our inheritance in Christ will never grow dull, never become dim, never be destroyed, never fade.

QUESTION 4:

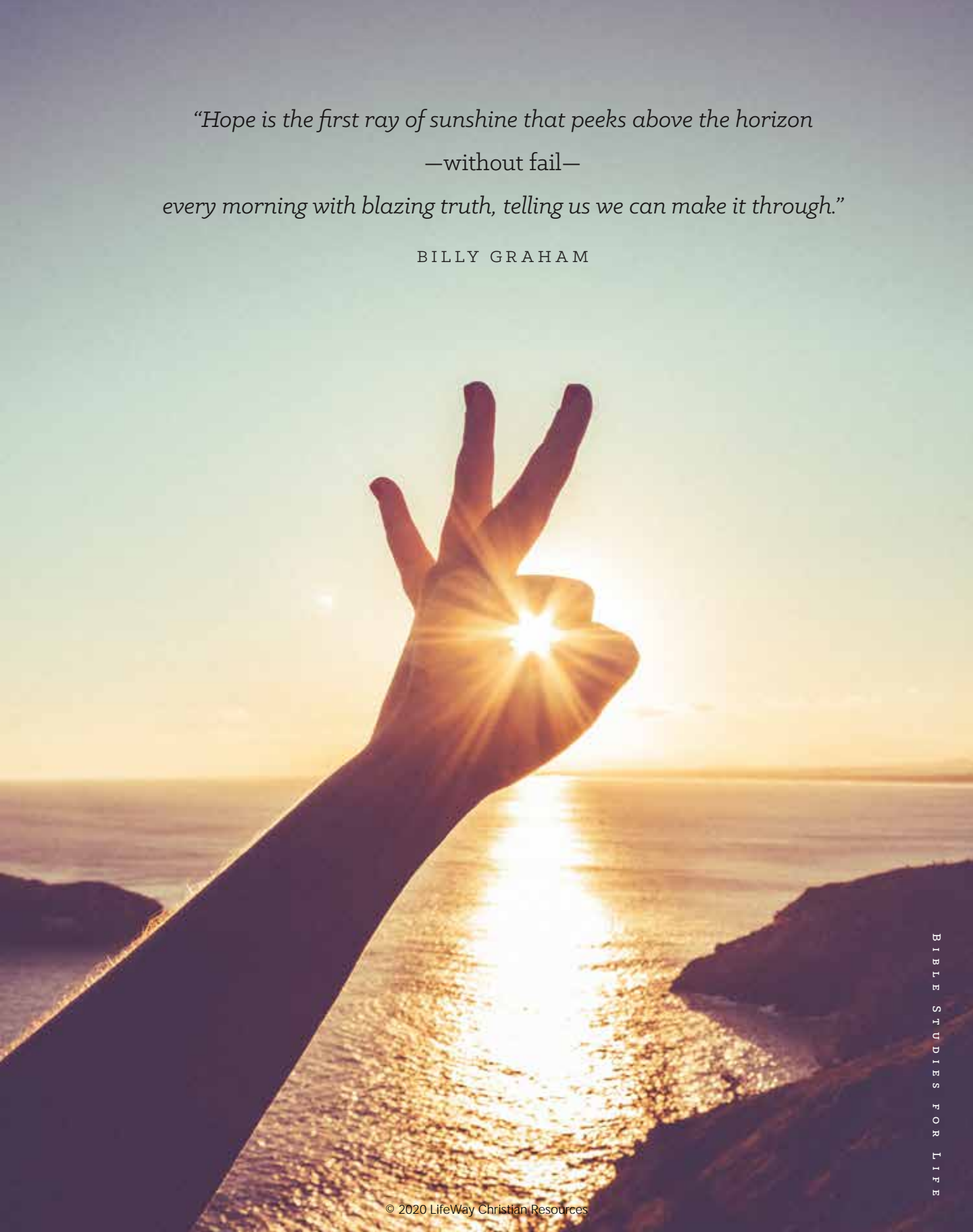
What can we know for certain about our "inheritance" from these verses?

Our hope is tied to the resurrection, and our security is tied to the power of God. Peter reminded believers that we are "guarded by God's power through faith." This paints the picture of a fortress that has been built beyond any and all danger, constantly shielded and garrisoned by God. This same power protected the three young men in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace (see Daniel 3:16-30) and guarded Daniel in the den of lions (see 6:10-23). God's power would keep the recipients of Peter's letter during oppression and persecution—and it will keep us no matter what we face. We can stand firmly on the hope of Christ even when circumstances may tempt us to believe otherwise.

Without good theology rooted in the truth of God's Word, we are subject to the whims of culture, our own feelings, and the downward pull of negative people. We must continually apply the truth to our lives. Then as a body of believers, we encourage and exhort one another, spurring on our brothers and sisters to love and good deeds (see Hebrews 10:23-25).

*“Hope is the first ray of sunshine that peeks above the horizon
—without fail—
every morning with blazing truth, telling us we can make it through.”*

BILLY GRAHAM



1 PETER 1:6-9

⁶ You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials ⁷ so that the proven character of your faith — more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire — may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Our hope in Christ is displayed in our faith. Faith and hope are intertwined.

QUESTION 5:

What's the connection between our faith and our hope?

For the believers Peter was addressing, their present faith helped them endure the suffering they currently were facing; and their faith in the future, that is, their hope, kept their hearts fixed on where Christ is seated in heaven with an everlasting inheritance for His saints.

At least fifteen times in this letter, Peter referred to godly people and their suffering. However, based on God's power and our inheritance, the righteous can rejoice even in the midst of whatever trials or suffering we are facing.

In these verses, we see five characteristics of trials.

1. **Trials vary in nature** (“various trials”). Trials come in all shapes and sizes.
2. **Trials are temporary** (“even though now for a short time”). God allows us to go through the furnace, but as the refiner He controls the thermostat. Our trials are limited in the face of eternity.

3. **Trials are difficult** (“you suffer grief”). This phrase carries the idea of heaviness. Trials are taxing, and they can drain us physically, emotionally, mentally, and relationally. Let's face it, trials are tough!

4. **Trials have a purpose** (“the proven character of your faith”). A Christian is refined by God to be a reflection of His glory. God's refining process is intended to remove those things that keep us from being like Jesus, and this often occurs through the fires of suffering. If our faith can't be tested, then it can't be trusted; and trials forge in us a stronger faith.

5. **Trials should result in rejoicing** (“may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ”). The consummate glorious reality of our trials is the revelation of Jesus. We may not see Him in our trials, or we may think He is distant, but He is there. It will be worth it all when we see Him. Paul reminded the Corinthian believers, “Our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17). And the same is true for us today!

A FIRM HOPE

*Consider the following things on which people sometimes base their hope for the future.
Choose one and write a sentence explaining why it is inadequate.
Then write how Jesus provides a firm foundation for our hope.*

Money:

Power:

Friends:

Position:

Personal Abilities:

How Jesus provides a firm foundation for our hope:

LIVE IT OUT

When you are tempted to despair and give up in defeat, remember that you have a living hope secured by Christ.

- ▶ **Recognize shortcomings.** Admit to God the areas where you're losing hope. Confess any sin, and ask Him to open your eyes to the reality of living hope in Christ.
- ▶ **Remember the Word.** Read back through 1 Peter 1:1-9 and make a list of how Peter described those who follow and trust in Christ. Place this list in a prominent place to remind you of who you are in Christ.
- ▶ **Restore someone else's hope.** Is there someone the Lord has brought to your mind who is losing hope? Take time to meet or call this person this week and share the truths the Lord has shown you in this study.

When we become weary and discouraged, the apostle Peter reminds us that victory is much closer than we realize. **He points us to the sure hope we have in Christ.**