



# SUNDAY SCHOOL April 12, 2026

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## New Testament: 1 Peter 1:3-9

***Context: Peter opens his letter by reminding early Christians that even in hardship, their hope is not fragile—it is rooted in something living, tested, and ultimately unbreakable.***

### A LIVING HOPE

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Although you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

### OVERVIEW

1 Peter 1:3–9 is a proclamation of *living hope* grounded in the resurrection of Jesus. Peter speaks to believers experiencing suffering, affirming that their trials are not meaningless—they refine faith like fire refines gold. **The passage emphasizes:**

- A new birth into hope
- An imperishable inheritance
- The refining purpose of suffering
- A deep, unseen love and trust in Christ
- The ultimate outcome: salvation of the soul

***This is both encouragement and recalibration: faith is not about comfort—it is about endurance with purpose.***

### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

#### **Immediately Before (1 Peter 1:1–2)**

Peter addresses “exiles scattered” across regions of Asia Minor. This sets the tone: believers are *outsiders*, both geographically and spiritually. Their identity is already one of displacement.

#### **Immediately After (1 Peter 1:10–12)**

Peter transitions into how the prophets longed to understand this salvation. It places current suffering into a much larger, unfolding divine story—what they are experiencing is part of something ancient and cosmic.

#### **Broader Book Context**

**The entire letter of 1 Peter is about:**



- Living faithfully in a hostile or indifferent culture
- Enduring suffering without losing identity
- Reflecting Christ through conduct

Themes include:

- Suffering as participation in Christ
- Holiness in daily life
- Submission, humility, and witness

This passage (1:3–9) acts as the *theological foundation*—it answers the question: “**Why keep going?**”

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

This letter was likely written to Christians in Roman provinces in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). These were not necessarily facing empire-wide persecution yet, but they were:

- Socially marginalized
- Viewed as strange or subversive (not worshipping Roman gods)
- Excluded from economic and civic life

The Roman world valued honor, status, and visible success. Christianity flipped that:

- Honor came through suffering
- Strength came through humility
- Hope came through something unseen

Politically, this was a quiet but radical shift—it challenged the cultural fabric without overt rebellion.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- Written approximately **AD 60–65**
- Traditionally attributed to Peter the Apostle
- Likely written during the reign of Nero
- Possibly near the early stages of increased hostility toward Christians

This places it just before or around the time when persecution becomes more formalized.

BIBLE TRANSLATION UNDERSTANDING

### Original Language

- Written in **Greek**

### Key Terms with Layered Meaning

- “**Living hope**”  
Not wishful thinking—this is *active, breathing, ongoing hope*
- “**New birth**”  
Literally “born again” or “born from above”—not self-achieved, but given
- “**Inheritance**”  
A legal, familial term—something guaranteed, not earned
- “**Perishable vs. imperishable**”  
Strong contrast language—everything in their current world fades; this does not



- **“Tested” faith**

Used for refining metals—faith is *proven genuine* through pressure

### Translation Development

- Early Greek manuscripts → Latin Vulgate → Middle English (e.g., Wycliffe) → Early Modern English (e.g., KJV) → Modern translations (NIV, NRSV, ESV)

### A key interpretive nuance:

- “Trials” are not just hardships—they are *refining processes*

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Think of this passage as describing **faith as a furnace process.**

Not punishment. Not randomness. Refinement.

### *Peter is essentially saying:*

- *Your life isn’t falling apart—it’s being tested for authenticity*
- *What looks like loss may actually be purification*

### Modern-Day Connection

In today’s world:

- We often equate blessing with comfort
- We interpret hardship as failure or abandonment

*Peter flips that: Hardship may be where faith becomes real*

### Grant County Context

In a place like Grant County:

- Economic uncertainty
- Health struggles (like the story you shared recently in class)
- Shifting community dynamics
- It’s easy to ask: “Where is God in this?”

Peter’s answer: God is not absent in the fire—**God is working through it.**

*This is especially relevant in a culture where: Faith can sometimes be seen as transactional (“Do good → get blessed”)*

### **Peter dismantles that: Faith is not proven by outcomes—it is proven by endurance**

HOW SHOULD WE ACT AND REACT TO THIS SCRIPTURE TODAY?

1. Reframe suffering
  - a. Not “Why is this happening to me?”
  - b. But “What is being formed in me?”
2. Detach faith from immediate outcomes
  - a. Faith is not validated by comfort or success



3. Practice unseen trust
  - a. Loving Christ “though you have not seen him”
4. Encourage others in hardship
  - a. Especially those walking through illness, grief, or uncertainty
5. Resist transactional thinking
  - a. Faith is not a deal—it’s a relationship

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *What does “living hope” mean to you personally?*
2. *How do you typically respond to trials—avoidance, frustration, reflection?*
3. *Do you think suffering strengthens faith, weakens it, or depends on the person?*
4. *How is “tested faith” different from simply “strong belief”?*
5. *Where do you see transactional thinking show up in faith today?*
6. *How can we support someone whose “faith is in the fire” right now?*



## Gospel: John 20:19-31

*Context: After the resurrection, Jesus appears to His fearful disciples, brings them peace, breathes new life into them, and meets Thomas in his doubt—showing that faith is not the absence of questions, but the willingness to trust even when certainty feels out of reach.*

### JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

### JESUS AND THOMAS

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So, the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.”

Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

### THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

### OVERVIEW

Gospel of John 20:19–31 captures two post-resurrection appearances of Jesus:

- **First Appearance (vv. 19–23):** Jesus enters a locked room, greets the disciples with “Peace be with you,” shows His wounds, and commissions them. He breathes on them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”
- **Second Appearance (vv. 24–29):** Thomas, who was absent before, doubts the resurrection. Jesus later appears again and invites Thomas to touch His wounds. Thomas responds, “My Lord and my God!”



- **Purpose Statement (vv. 30–31):** The author explains that these signs are written so that readers may believe and have life.

This passage moves from fear → peace → mission → doubt → belief → purpose.

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

##### **Immediately Before (John 20:1–18)**

- Mary Magdalene discovers the empty tomb.
- Jesus appears to her personally.
- The resurrection is first experienced individually, not corporately.

Movement: *Personal encounter* → *communal encounter*

##### **Immediately After (John 21)**

- Jesus appears by the Sea of Galilee.
- Peter is restored (“Do you love me?”).
- Focus shifts to leadership and ongoing mission.

Movement: *Belief* → *responsibility*

##### **Broader Context of John**

- Written to inspire belief: “that you may believe... and have life.”
- Emphasizes **signs, light vs. darkness, and spiritual understanding over literalism.**
- Doubt and misunderstanding are common (Nicodemus, Samaritan woman, disciples themselves).

**Thomas is not an outlier—he represents a pattern in John: people struggle to understand, then come to deeper faith.**

#### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

- Likely written late 1st century (c. 90–100 AD).
- Early Christians were:
  - Facing persecution (Roman suspicion)
  - Experiencing expulsion from synagogues
  - Wrestling with internal doubt and division

The detail about locked doors “for fear of the Jews” reflects:

- Real fear of religious authorities
- A community under pressure and uncertainty

***This is not a triumphant victory lap—it’s a fearful, fragile movement trying to make sense of resurrection.***

#### HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **30 AD:** Crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus
- **Same week:** Events of John 20:19–31 (evening of resurrection + one week later)
  - **90–100 AD:** Gospel of John written



- **Audience:** Second-generation Christians who had **not seen Jesus physically**

***Verse 29 (“Blessed are those who have not seen...”)* speaks directly to us ... in our class today.**

#### BIBLE TRANSLATION UNDERSTANDING

##### Original Language

- Written in **Greek**

##### Key Terms & Layers

1. **“Peace”**
  - a. More than calm feeling
  - b. Echoes Hebrew *shalom* → wholeness, restoration, right relationship
2. **“Breathed on them”**
  - a. Same verb used in **Genesis 2:7** (God breathing life into Adam)
  - b. Suggests **new creation**, not just encouragement
3. **“Believe”**
  - a. Not just intellectual agreement
  - b. Means **trust, reliance, commitment**
4. **“Doubt”**
  - a. Not outright rejection—more like *refusal to accept secondhand faith*

##### Translation Stages

- Early manuscripts → Latin Vulgate → Middle English → **King James Version (1611)** → modern translations (NIV, NRSV, ESV)
- Modern translations emphasize relational faith over rigid belief

**Important nuance: “Believe” ≠ “agree with facts”—it’s closer to “entrust yourself to.”**

#### SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

This passage is less about proving resurrection and more about **how faith actually works in real life.**

##### 1. **Locked Rooms = Emotional & Spiritual Isolation**

The disciples are physically locked in—but metaphorically:

- Fear
- Grief
- Confusion

**In Grant County terms:**

- People sitting in church but carrying private fears (health, finances, family struggles)
- A community that looks stable outwardly but has inward uncertainty



## 2. “Peace Be With You” = Presence Before Explanation

Jesus doesn't:

- Lecture them
- Explain theology first

He enters the room and offers peace

*Modern parallel: When someone asks, “How do I pray?”*

- *The answer isn't technique first*
- *It's presence*

## 3. Thomas = Honest Faith, Not Weak Faith

Thomas refuses secondhand belief.

He's saying: “I need this to be real for me.”

And Jesus meets him there—not with rebuke, but invitation.

From our discussions before: The “Bible says so” mindset vs. lived experience

Thomas represents those who need **authentic, personal faith—not inherited certainty**

## 4. Breathing = New Life, New Purpose

This is a **re-creation moment**:

- From fear → mission
- From hiding → sent

Grant County application:

- Churches moving from preservation → engagement
- Faith expressed through **action, not just belief**

HOW SHOULD WE ACT AND REACT TO THIS SCRIPTURE TODAY?

1. Bring your real self to faith
  - a. Doubt is not disqualifying
  - b. Honest questions deepen belief
2. Offer peace before answers
  - a. Especially in suffering situations (your cancer/hospice example)
  - b. Presence > explanation
3. Don't rely on secondhand faith
  - a. Encourage personal engagement with God
  - b. Move beyond “because the Bible says so”
4. Move from comfort to calling
  - a. Faith is not private reassurance—it's public participation
5. Create space for others' journeys
  - a. Not everyone believes the same way, at the same pace



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Why do you think the disciples were still afraid after hearing about the resurrection?*
2. *What does “peace be with you” mean beyond just calming fear?*
3. *Is Thomas wrong to doubt, or is he asking something important?*
4. *Have you ever needed to experience something personally before believing it?*
5. *What does it mean to “believe” in today’s world—agreement or trust?*
6. *Where do we see “locked rooms” in our own lives or community?*
7. *How can we be people who bring peace rather than arguments?*

