

**HE'S
STILL
ON THE
THRONE**

FINDING HOPE IN A
WORLD OF TROUBLE

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He's Still on the Throne

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INTRODUCTION

Bearded, bedraggled men bearing signs proclaiming, “The end is near” have long been the subject of cartoonists. The vultures, often perched on top of the signs, might add an ominous melancholy and foreboding to these scenes but the messenger and message only invite ridicule and derision. People laugh and scoff. They dismiss the warning, and go on their way. But nowadays, while many of the scoffers may not accept “the end” in a biblical sense, they are certainly uneasy about trends and less than confident about the future.

A majority of people polled in the United States think the nation is on the wrong track. I have also sensed feelings of disaffection in other parts of the world, particularly in many countries in Europe. Economists tell young people that they will be the first generation that will have to settle for a lower standard of living than enjoyed by their parents. Social mores are in a tail spin. Politicians preside over deadlock, their supporters vilifying their opponents with vitriol. The Middle East is on fire. Russia is flexing her muscles. Iran and North Korea are pursuing nuclear weaponry. Violence rules in the inner cities. Drug addiction is reaching epic proportions. Migrant populations are on the march. Many followers of Jesus are experiencing the same sense of unease

or dread as the general population. Some are in danger of giving way to despair and fear and many are looking for a clear statement of encouragement and assurance as they face uncertain times.

Peter wrote his first epistle about his own difficult and dangerous days. Days he rightly suspected would get more difficult and no less perilous. His intent in writing to the small churches scattered throughout the inhospitable regions of Asia Minor was to warn the believers of their impending difficulties, to affirm them in their spiritual position and to encourage them practically to live like Christians in invidious circumstances.

Sulpicius Severus, the Roman historian, tells us that Peter was crucified during the reign of Nero, after a fire that destroyed half the city of Rome. The emperor, whose unpopularity had been well earned, was widely suspected of arson but managed to divert suspicion to the Christians who were easy prey for his malicious slander. They were horribly persecuted even to the extent that “new kinds of death were invented” as they were “devoured by dogs” and some were “set apart . . . that when the day came to a close, they should be consumed to serve for light.” Eventually, it was decreed by Rome that it was “unlawful to be a Christian.” (“Excerpts from Sulpicius Severus,” Bk. II Chapter XXIX <PreteristCentral.com>) How much of this persecution was foreseen by Peter before he was consumed by it? We have no way of knowing; but it would appear that he was well aware that life in Rome was hard for disciples of Jesus and would probably become equally challenging for believers scattered throughout the provinces.

Peter addressed this catalogue of dire circumstances that was confronting his contemporaries in a surprisingly forthright manner. He writes, “Dear friends do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you” (1 Pet. 4:12). Peter acknowledges that their lot is painful but does not regard it as unusual as he links their earthly sufferings to those of Christ. He characterizes these trials as something that can lead to rejoicing and ultimately to being overjoyed. There is no doubt that this kind of thinking and talking challenges the mind-set of modern followers of Jesus. We may be tempted to take a detour around Peter’s writings. But this would be as sad as it would be unwise. For Peter, who knew suffering firsthand, who had battled through his own periods of uncertainty and doubt, who had known paralyzing fear and abject failure, wrote (under the promptings of the Holy Spirit) not only from personal experience but also from a keen grasp of the teachings of Jesus—teaching he heard firsthand and meditated upon and taught for approximately thirty years. There is maturity and reality in his words.

While many believers have been mercifully spared the pain and suffering of their brothers and sisters in other parts of the world, scripture does not hesitate to teach that suffering is an integral part of Christian stewardship and discipleship. Because of this, we need to be well versed on the subject, not only for our own wellbeing but also in order to rightly relate to what is happening in the church worldwide.

But even if some of us have been spared much of the physical pain that other brothers and sisters bear on a daily basis and we have never been subjected to the harsh treatment

meted out to Jesus' followers living in widely different cultural situations from ours, there is much pain—emotional, psychological, relational—that is all too familiar and Peter's words speak to this just as clearly. No one is guaranteed immunity from worries about trends and many individuals experience forebodings of the future and suffer from uncertainty concerning the purposes of God. Peter has much to say on all these topics and does so not only in a blunt and forthright manner but with the encouraging heart of a shepherd of God's flock and the resolution of a convinced disciple of the risen Lord.

His words are not giddily triumphalist nor are they morbidly defeatist. Perhaps one could say he writes with a consciousness that God is still on the throne but his people are still on the earth. That the God of all grace is working from the throne toward the eternal glory of the "called" is certainly reassuring but the fact that He has intentionally left His people on the earth where His Son experienced its hostility is puzzling for some and discouraging for many who are feeling the pain. But Peter does not duck the issues of suffering neither does he offer simplistic answers to its mysteries. He says enough to strengthen the weak, encourage the timid, support the fainting, challenge the defeated and "nerve the faint endeavors" of God's people. The closing benediction of the epistle speaks volumes: "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." And then he adds, "I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. STAND FAST IN IT" (1 Pet. 5:10, 12).

1

HARD TIMES

1 Peter 1:1–2

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood:
Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

1 Peter 1:1, 2

The positive tone of Peter's letter is evident in the opening words of customary introduction. Identifying himself, he promptly reminded his readers of the remarkable fact that Jesus had taken an unstable Galilean fisherman, made him into a rock and sent him into the world on a mission—to be an integral part of the church Jesus was going to build. To claim the title of apostle was to claim a special relationship with Christ. The word *apostle* is simply an Anglicization of the Greek word *apostolos* which means “a person sent with full authority.” Peter was not at all bashful in this claim and it is apparent that the primitive church had no difficulty in accepting that he did indeed

speak with authority in the name of Christ. The writer of the letter is immediately worth listening to because (1) his changed life gives him credibility, (2) his conviction concerning Jesus being Christ exudes authenticity and (3) his apostolic office brings a touch of authority to all he had to say.

We use the name “Jesus Christ” almost as if Jesus was our Lord’s Christian name and Christ, His family name. However, we must remember that Jesus means “Savior,” and “Christ” was the title that only God’s chosen and anointed servant could rightly use. False messiahs have come and gone but for Peter, Jesus of Nazareth was the One whom God had sent as His anointed Redeemer.

The recipients of the letter lived in a far flung region of the Roman Empire covering the area now part of modern Turkey. How the churches in these regions were established we do not know for certain except that Paul and his companions certainly traveled in the area preaching and teaching. Also, people from these provinces were among the crowds on the Day of Pentecost. They heard Peter preach and, presumably, some of them believed and returned home with the message of Christ.

There is no doubt that life was not easy in those days, particularly for Christians living under Roman domination. But Peter spoke of his readers in glowing terms; as if to take their minds off their troubles and place them firmly on their privileges. “God’s elect, strangers in the world,” he called them. In the Old Testament Jehovah chose a people for Himself through whom He would make Himself and His purposes for mankind known. He called them “my

people, my chosen [ones], the people I formed for myself” (Isa. 43:20–21). Peter applied similar terms to believers in his day with the intention of reminding them that, as the children of Israel were called to be God’s elite corps, so they, in the midst of their problems, were similarly God’s elect. It was through them that God intended to continue His redemptive work.

Years ago, when I was a member of the Royal Marines, I marveled at the way tired and dispirited troops could be raised to new heights of endeavor and involvement by the simple and expedient reminder that we belonged to an elite corps, were part of a remarkable heritage, and there were expectations which rested upon us because we wore the same uniform as those who had gone before.

Peter went on to describe his readers as “strangers in the world.” He was emphasizing something painfully familiar to them: their profession of Christ put them at odds with the surrounding society.

The popular games in Rome had become so violent and cruel that Christians felt compelled to disassociate themselves from such forms of entertainment. They also declined to engage in the worship activities that involved the plethora of Roman gods. The Christian stance in these matters was deeply resented. Being against the national sport back then, as now, was not conducive to popularity. Taking a stand against the national religion was even less accepted. The fact that this religion was bound to concepts of nationalism meant that those who were against the national religion were often regarded as being, in some way, against the state. Pity the people in any society who take unpopular

stands on three of the most volatile issues—sports, politics and religion!

The first Christians were regarded as oddities who would eventually go away. But as time went on, and they persisted, benign neglect turned to virulent opposition and believers, at best, were ostracized and, at worst, liquidated. When Peter called them the “scattered” people he was using a word which contained several nuances of meaning. It referred to the unfortunate circumstances of sheep being scattered or of chaff being blown by the winds. There’s no doubt that the scattered believers of the early church often felt like lost sheep and windblown chaff. But seed is also scattered with very positive, fruitful results. Christians soon learned that the unpleasantness of being scattered could lead to most fruitful results if they looked at their situation as being a strategic planting by the hand of God. Again, the idea of privilege in the affairs of the Most High comes through most clearly.

Human beings have an understandable tendency to see things from an entirely human perspective. While it is understandable, it must be seen as a distorted perspective. Peter, who had done more than his share of looking at things from his own vantage point, and on one particularly painful occasion had been roundly rebuked for it, learned the hard way to see things from a divine angle. This comes through powerfully as he reminds his readers of the work of God in their lives. It is particularly noteworthy that Peter specifically outlined the work of each member of the Trinity—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—in our salvation. Because great emphasis is often and rightly placed on the necessity

for personal decision, it is not uncommon for people to view their salvation as basically dependent on that decision. But given how frail and fickle humans are, if salvation is dependent on human ability, spiritual experience would lack stability and assurance. Scripture insists that our salvation is primarily dependent on the initiative and decision of God, both of which precede any actions of man. Peter emphasized this with the words “chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” God’s foreknowledge or *prognosis* (the Greek word) is the basis of His choice.

Anyone who has had dealings with a physician knows something about diagnosis and prognosis. Once we are made aware of a problem, we usually want to know what the doctor believes will happen. He will probably give his opinion (or prognosis) which will be an educated guess based on experience and statistics. But even he knows how wrong he might be.

That said, the prognosis of God is different. It is not a guess and does not depend on the statistical analysis of what has previously happened. His foreknowledge is based on what He has determined to do, and nothing will stop Him or His plan. He has freely determined to offer salvation to the ungodly; freely determined to make it available through His Son; freely determined that through faith in Him and His work on the cross redemption would be available; and freely decided that those who put their faith in Christ would have eternal life, reigning with Him forever. Not one ounce of pressure was brought to bear on the Father in any of these decisions. They were all His, and He is totally committed to making sure that things work out the

way He decided. These decisions, you will note, do not discount human accountability or cancel human choice. For God has also freely chosen to require human cooperation in His salvation plan as surely as He decided in the first place to make salvation available. The great benefit of this aspect of truth to those for whom the going is tough is the realization that in the final analysis, our salvation is not dependent solely on us but rather is based solidly on the immutable purposes of the Sovereign Lord. Therein lies great security for troubled believers.

The Holy Spirit, as Peter pointed out, also plays a massive role in our salvation particularly in His “sanctifying work.” *Sanctify* is a word used very little today but is related to holy and saint in New Testament usage. It means to set apart. Buildings, people, vessels, animals are all said to be sanctified which means that they have a specific function for which they are suited and to which they are committed. Believers are to understand that when the Holy Spirit enters our lives at regeneration we are immediately “set apart” in that we now possess His special presence and are specially possessed by Him for His purposes. This can be called initial sanctification. However, we must not forget the continual sanctification that Scripture teaches. Once set apart for Him, the believer needs to recognize the necessity of behaving differently. In fact, behaving in a manner that is compatible with the new standing is the result of the continual “sanctifying work” of the Spirit. The end of this ongoing experience comes when finally, in the risen Lord’s presence, we see Him and become like Him. But until then, the sanctifying work goes on.

When I was enlisted in the Royal Marines at the age of eighteen, I was immediately “set apart” as a member of an elite military corps. Yet, it soon became clear that I was not used to the peculiar pressures that such a position entailed. But as time went on, and through vigorous training and discipline by people skilled in such matters, I began to exhibit the poise and command expected of someone wearing the uniform. There were certainly times when I wondered if I would ever make it. Just like the “set apart” Christian, I had to realize that my position was not dependent on my performance. My position was secure. There was no way out for me! This understanding powerfully motivated me to perform appropriately.

The work of the Son is presented as “sprinkling by his blood.” The Old Testament imagery contained in this expression is related to the sacrificial system where the life of the substitutionary victim was forfeited so that sin might be forgiven and judgment averted. It is significant that, at Passover, the blood of the sacrifice was collected and applied to the doorposts or to the extremities of the high priest’s body, because this demonstrated that formal observation of a sacrificial act was not enough. There had to be a personal application of the merits of the sacrifice.

So it is with the believer who must have an intimate experience of forgiveness and a deeply personal knowledge of reconciliation on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice. This knowledge fits the believer for a life of special relationship to the Lord—a life based on loving obedience. Peter’s phrase that we are “chosen . . . for obedience” should not be overlooked, particularly when situations are dire and decisions

are fraught with tension. There may have been times when early Christians living under pressure in Rome found disobedience much less physically painful than obedience, and submission to Rome much more amenable than obedience to Christ. But knowing they were called to obedience right from the outset of their spiritual experience, they likely recognized that their commitment to obedience was all part of their sprinkling through His blood. In those frightening days, they not only needed the soul anchor that only their knowledgeable experience of Christ could give them, but also a practical endowment of the “grace and peace” which the formal traditional introduction to the letter wished them. They would need peace in the midst of political and societal turmoil and grace to handle the overwhelming pressures they would be subjected to in the near future, if Peter’s prediction of a “painful trial” (1 Pet. 4:12) proved correct.

There are many counselors and resources available to those who are experiencing hard times, but in the long run, only the truth of God found in Scripture can equip people for difficult times. Only the eternal Word provides the context in which temporal problems can be understood, and only the eternal Lord can supply the remedies human problems demand.

2

A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

1 Peter 1:3-5

I've never heard of a seminar on the development of bad attitudes, but I've seen many seminars on how to develop good attitudes. Now I wonder why that is. Perhaps it's because we have a natural tendency toward bad attitudes, aided by the circumstances in which we live, the environment in which we have been raised, and the situations that we are required to confront. Therefore, it is necessary for us to develop good attitudes because they don't just happen. Before developing them though, there must be the desire for a good attitude because in some situations, we develop attitudes that are so bad we have no desire to change.

Do you remember the story of the man who was lying by the pool of Bethesda? He had been disabled for thirty-eight years. The Lord Jesus went up to him and asked, "Do you want to get well?" (see John 5:6). The question appears strange because we would assume that his sole objective in lying by the pool was to be healed. It is possible, however, that the Lord Jesus asked the question because He knew that the man had an attitudinal problem. He had probably come to the point of despair, and the Lord recognized that

there was nothing He could do for him if the man really didn't desire to be made whole.

Quite often we give up because of difficult circumstances. We quit because of the complexity of a situation or because of the apparent absence of solutions. We stop trying to rectify anything and just allow all our circumstances to overwhelm us, our situations to take control of us and our natural tendencies to pull us down. But somewhere along the line we need to get around to desiring to be different. How does that come about?

Developing a Positive Attitude

Believers develop positive attitudes by, first, having a solid grasp of divine truth—the revealed Word of God in their hearts. For example, notice how the Apostle Peter, referring to God's work in our lives, says, "In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1:3). The thought of a living hope seems to spring to Peter's mind as soon as he starts writing.

The Scriptures teach that, by nature, we are dead to God. The only thing that is of any help to dead people is new life. God, recognizing our spiritual deadness, made it possible for Christ to die and rise again for us. He promised that this risen Lord Jesus would be made available to us in the person of the Holy Spirit and that He would come into our lives and spark newness of life within us. In fact, it would be just like being "born again"—born from above. This is probably the earliest occasion the expression "born again"

is used in Scripture. The well known reference in John 3 would be written at least thirty years after Peter's epistle. It is unfortunate that many people spend so much time arguing about the born-again experience. They want to know the when and the how without realizing that the reality of being born again is shown not by the careful rehearsing of details surrounding the experience but by the clear evidence of a new life. People don't come to me and question whether I was born on the basis of my recollections of my original birthday. They appear to accept the fact of my birth because of the reality of my life. The important thing about being born again is that we are living anew in the very same way. Just as the important thing about being born is that we are alive! God has moved into our lives in remarkable fashion and He has infused us with newness of life, making us a new creation. We will never be the same again. It is a gift we didn't deserve, we can never earn and can never pay off. It is something that God freely decided to give to human beings who were lost in sin and at enmity with God. Out of His great mercy, He gave us newness of life.

They tell us that "hope springs eternal in the human breast!" I don't know about the "eternal" but I do know that people demonstrate a determined need for something to hope for. Every four years, we elect a new president, pinning all our hopes upon him or her only to be disappointed repeatedly. But we are determined to try again! Believers have a hope that refuses to be dashed. It is a hope that is overwhelmingly confident. It is something that God has built into our lives and is rooted in the fact that, having been given Christ, we can be sure God will give us all things that

we need. Romans 8:32 asks, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” Paul’s question is rhetorical. No answer is necessary because the answer is obvious. If He gave us Christ to die for us and to live within us, and we’re born again through His indwelling presence, how can we possibly imagine that God wouldn’t give us everything we need, along with Christ, for time and eternity!? When we understand this, there is hope. But it’s not hope in humanity; it’s hope in deity.

Peter goes a step further as he reminds us that, “he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1:3). Why do we pin our hopes on God doing something certain and sure for us? The answer is because of “the resurrection.” There is an air of solid certainty about the believer’s hope. I like to look at it this way: I have problems. I look at them, try to understand them, evaluate them and then quickly remind myself that God also had a problem. His problem was that His Son, whom He ordained as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, was, unfortunately, dead. However, God addressed the problem in superlative fashion.

He raised Jesus from the dead. So now, whenever we confront problems, we are able to relate them to God’s simple and dramatic solution of His own problem and say, “God, You are the God of my problems as well as my successes. You are the God of my beginning, my end and everything in between. This means that I can relate this problem to You. Knowing the magnitude of what You do with problems, I am confident You can handle this one.” The believer’s hope

is born of confidence and based on the historical fact that God raised Christ from the dead!

Peter's positive approach to life is also related to his understanding of the gift of our new status. He shares that not only have we been born again into a living hope but we've also been born again into "an inheritance," and that means that we have become "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

It is highly probable that the words Peter heard from the Master's lips in Galilee were echoing in his heart: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matt. 6:19–20). Then our Lord added these pungent words: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (6:21). Perhaps Peter was thinking of the change in his own perspective—from a life absorbed with fishing nets, a leaky old boat, some stinky fish and the salt to pack them in, to a life of bigger and grander and greater things. God had given him the insight into what it meant to be a son of God, an heir of God, an eternal creature. He had given him a vista of heaven and a sense of spiritual values.

Some preachers delight in sermons that have three points—preferably alliterative! In Peter, they find a kindred spirit, for he described the inheritance as follows: *aphthartos* or incorruptible, *amiantos* or undefiled, and *amarantos* or unfading (see 1 Pet. 1:4). He is simply taking what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount about moth, rust and thieves and showing the security and certainty of the

inheritance because it is “kept in heaven.” The strength of the word *kept* is apparent when we remember that *keep* can also mean the part of a castle where people under attack could run for survival. In the keep, they were literally kept!

It’s amazing how good of an attitude believers can have when they understand their status and the unassailable security of the inheritance to which they are entitled. Added to this is the gift of a new security which Peter describes as follows: “Who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (1:5). There are three tenses of salvation. It is possible for a person to say, “I have been saved.” It is equally necessary for a person to say, “I am being saved” and in addition, to predict, “I will be saved.” These statements appear to be contradictory unless we realize we are saved from different things. When we say “I have been saved,” we mean we have been saved from sin’s penalty. We have been forgiven. Our sin has been reckoned to Christ, Christ’s righteousness has been reckoned to us, and we can look the world in the eye and say, “Folks, take a good, long, hard look. There is a saved sinner standing in front of you.”

Many believers have a problem with the power of their sinful nature. Yet God graciously makes it possible for us to overcome that old power of sin within us so that we can, on a daily basis say, “I am being saved progressively.” There are things in my life that don’t exist to the same extent that they may have twelve months ago. That’s growth, that’s maturity, that’s development and that’s progress! All of this can be explained by the fact that we are being saved through the power of the Spirit from our sin and its consequences. In a

healthy spiritual experience, we should be sensing that from the moment we have been saved, we are being saved.

Peter adds that we are, through faith, “shielded by God’s power unto the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (1:5). He is talking about ultimately being saved from sin’s presence. In “the last time” the Lord Jesus will come and take His people to be with Him, and the heavens and earth will dissolve with fervent heat, as Peter states in his second epistle. Then we’ll say, “Praise God you have saved me from sin’s penalty, you did go on saving me from sin’s power and now the whole thing is finished. You have saved me from sin’s presence and I live in a realm where righteousness and justice dwells.”

Now think on this for a minute. If God has already said we have been saved so that, progressively, we might grow more and more like the Lord Jesus, and He knows that this progression will find its completion when Christ comes again and saves us from sin’s presence, isn’t it reasonable to assume that if God started it, He will finish it? If salvation means anything, it means salvation in its entirety from the penalty, power and presence of sin. So if He started it, we can be confident that He will continue it and complete it. Therein lies our security. Now notice we are “shielded by God’s power” (1:5). Having already linked our hope to the resurrection, Peter links our security to the power of God, demonstrated in such undeniable and exhilarating fashion in that same event. Believers, often fearful of our situations when under pressure, need look only to the resurrection for assurance that God’s power is adequate in all cases. However, the power is only operative in our lives “through faith,”

which means you have to believe it to enjoy it. It may be a surprise to realize that the way to produce a good attitude in people is to teach them truth. Teaching, of course, encourages learning, and learning only happens as we continuously study and apply the lessons. If we don't, we will come under the gravitational pull of everything around us and in no time be down again.

It is also vital that we have constant reminders of the truth and continual encouragement to apply the truth we know. When the truth is ever-present, we will have no problem seeing that the church of Jesus Christ must be a community where there is a solid diet of the teaching of the Word of God, a community in which interpersonal relationships are developed so that we can encourage each other and a community in which we have such loving communication with people that they are able to remind us when we're "off the wall." They will be empowered to correct us, turn us around and help us to build the positive attitudes that are so necessary. Our society today is riddled with bad attitudes on every hand—suspicion, distrust, deceit, abuse, selfishness, egocentricity and latent violence are all present. In the church of Jesus Christ, we need to get our theology squared away and encourage each other to apply it so that we can begin to have some good, solid, healthy attitudes, in stark contrast to the world around us.

Demonstrating a Positive Attitude

Peter suspects he may not have long until his head is separated from the rest of him, or he is crucified upside down.

Yet you would never guess it from his buoyant words: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!” (1:3). A positive attitude is often demonstrated by praise. In Peter’s case, his objective in recounting these truths with which his readers are familiar is to get them to join him in that praise. He asserts that we should praise because, in His great mercy, God gave us a new birth, a living hope and an inheritance. We should praise Him because that inheritance doesn’t perish, never spoils, is never corrupted and is reserved in heaven for us. We should also praise Him because He has given us His own power to shield us, and will complete the salvation He started in us. When our enemies have done their worst, which could possibly mean death, it will also mean an early introduction to our eternal inheritance. Praiseworthy indeed!

Unfortunately there is a tendency for believers to become absorbed with our hard circumstances when things get tough. We spend too much time and effort searching for a quick solution instead of relating to our most profound beliefs. It’s in these moments that we must center our hearts and minds on who God is, what He has done, what He is doing, and particularly, on what He is going to do. Praise has to be intelligently rooted in truth rather than floated on our feelings.

It worries me when I hear some well meaning but insensitive person slapping a troubled believer on the back and exhorting them to, “Praise the Lord!” People going through deep waters don’t need back slaps. They need someone to get in the deep water with them and to quietly and gently remind them of the deep truths of the faith—preferably

when they are ready to be encouraged. You'll notice that Peter, despite his difficulties, uses the word *hope*. Believers, in addition to being praising people, should be filled with an expectant hope. He also shows us that Christians should have an exuberant faith because we're "shielded by God's power" through our faith. Praise, hope and faith are the stuff that makes a positive attitude and the means whereby it is exhibited (see 1:5).

Our society may not realize it but the world needs to see a church that is producing people with positive attitudes because, quite frankly, anybody can be negative, anybody can be destructive and anybody can be divisive. It takes very a different kind of people to live positively in a negative environment.

One evening after there had been a lot of negative criticism of a reasonable and well-thought-out ministry proposal at our church board meeting, the chairman said very quietly, "It's a well-established fact that any jackass can kick down a barn but it takes a craftsman to build one." Then he added, "Are there any craftsmen?" The silence was deafening for a few seconds until the room exploded in rueful laughter! Attitudes were checked, apologies offered and accepted and a fresh cooperative spirit moved in. That's how it should be! So in turn, my question to every believer is this: "Are there any craftsmen?" You can tell them by their attitudes.