

brought the reality of hope smack dab into the middle of every situation we might find ourselves. So when persecution comes, don't bite back with anger or hatred. Restrain yourself and instead continue to do good, live well

Saturday – Jesus' Descent Into Hell

Read 1 Peter 3:18-22. A question that comes up regularly is in regard to what we profess together in the Apostles' Creed about Jesus descending into hell. What was He doing there? Why did He do that? What did that mean? And why do we still say that today? This is the one place in the New Testament that really addresses Jesus' descent into hell. We discover some interesting insights as we take in all of these surrounding verses. While I can't give a full and detailed explanation in this short devotion, let me offer these few thoughts. First what Jesus did not do and what these verses do not mean. What Jesus did not do was to go into hell to give people a second chance. When Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished," His work was done – He had paid for the sins of the whole world by His perfect sacrifice of His life. Most credible scholars see Jesus' descent into hell as taking place between His death and resurrection when He went down to declare His victory over death, over Satan, and over all the fallen angels or demons and they could not take Him down! Peter was inspired to write this and make a connection to baptism, which St. Paul also picks up on in Romans 6 when he ties baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus, stating that this is the gift we receive – our old Adam is drown and the new man/person is raised up with Christ. So when Peter writes about how Noah and his family "were saved through water and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you," he wasn't implying that baptism is only symbolic but it connects all the various times the Lord used water as giving life and now it is baptism that truly does save us. How and why? Because it is connected to the saving work of Jesus. I hope that you can take these "mysterious" passages to heart and find the encouragement the Lord desires for us to receive in them, that you remember who you are as a baptized child of God who is saved through water and the Word. To know that Jesus' work on the cross was effective and was for you and as He declared His victory to the demons and all those in hell, that victory is something that continues to give us power and life today.

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*Devotions for
the week of
May 21, 2017*

What Now?

1. If someone asked you, "Why do you believe in Jesus?" or "How do you keep going after all that you have been through?," what would you tell them? How would you express what Jesus means to you? How does the hope you have in Jesus make a difference in your life? Take time today or this week to put your thoughts down in writing. I'd love to hear some of what you're thinking! Jot me a note or email me at gsclecht@ImmanuelLoveland.org.
2. Continue with the "Love Assignment" of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. We're now at week 14 of 16 – "love always hopes." How can that gift of hope play into how you practice love this week?

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Monday — Resurrection Realities

This is week five of our *Resurrection Realities* series and our focus was on readiness and preparation. These were things that went hand in hand with the suffering and persecution that the Christians Peter was writing to were having to deal with. It was a matter of encouragement to not give up doing what we as Christians are called and created to do. To start the week, I'm inviting you to take in the whole section we considered yesterday in worship and spend some time reflecting on it within your own context and life. As you read these verses, think about what God has to say to you and the life you are leading right now. How does the Lord encourage you in these verses? Where are you challenged? What's helpful? What's comforting? What's hard? What insights stand out for you? As always I would love to hear some of those reflections and if you're open to it, please email me at gschlecht@ImmanuelLoveland.org. With that, read and reflect on 1 Peter 3:13-22.

Tuesday — Hope

Read 1 Peter 3:13-15. Hope has been a constant refrain that Peter has been holding out for the Christians to whom he's writing. The suffering, abuse, and persecution they were experiencing can be a real drain on any hope they had. The same can be said for us today. It doesn't take a lot of people's bad-mouthing, mocking, anger, or hatred for us to feel it and to have it take a toll on us. Discouragement and even various levels of depression can set in, especially when the tough stuff just keeps on coming. But... and this "but" is so important... but we are people who have had hope poured into our very being. Hope is our foundation as Christians. It is also what the Lord has put into our hearts, our heads, and our souls. Why? How? Jesus knew how tough life could be in this world and He knew what we needed because of what we would be up against. The "how" is found in His resurrection from the dead. If death could not hold Jesus down, we could be more than confident that we have a powerful, powerful Savior who is here for us to see us through the most difficult of circumstances that we might face. We know where all of this is going to end. We are not alone. We have a God who has gone through hell for us and has come back again to give us life. Let that amazing gift of hope fill your heart today, especially if you're going through some tough times. Remember His promises to you and remember His love for you!

Wednesday — Be Ready!

Read 1 Peter 3:13-15. As resurrection people, people filled with hope in spite of the circumstances surrounding us, our Lord calls us to be ready. Ready for what? Ready to tell others how we do it! "How do you keep such a positive attitude with all that you've been through?" "How can you be so kind to those people/your boss/our co-workers when they continue to be so mean to you?" "How can you keep going after you got news like that?" To be clear, we're not talking about living life with painted-on-smiles. But we can be genuine when it comes to our attitude and the hope Christ has placed inside of us through His love and resurrection. Difficult things happen – and they happen to everyone, and they will

continue to happen as long as we're on this side of heaven and living in this sin-filled and broken world. The reality is, it's not so easy to keep going after a loved one has died, or someone close to you has been diagnosed with cancer, or you're going through some financially tight or even impossible times. We're not called to be jovial or peppy but we also don't have to be completely down-in-the-mouth. Why? Because of Jesus. He is faithful and strong to save. He has accomplished everything for us to give us this life we live and the hope for a future in this world and the next. How can or does your faith help you get up in the morning and continue this journey of faith? Start thinking about that – we're going to revisit that tomorrow.

Thursday — What's Your Reason?

Read 1 Peter 3:15. We're called to always be prepared to give the reason for the hope that we have as resurrection people. Are you prepared? If someone asked you, "Why do you believe in Jesus?" or "How do you keep going after all that you have been through?" what would you tell them? For today's devotion, I'm raising up this week's "What Now?" and encourage you to take some time to think about that and perhaps even write some things down in this regard. What do you say? How would you express what Jesus means to you? How does the hope you have in Jesus make a difference in your life? These are important questions that we truly do need to be ready and prepared to give an answer to. When the questions come, those are opportunities the Lord is providing to us to speak the Good News of Jesus into the lives and hearts of others who may not know Him or who may be skeptical or who may have given up on the Lord. So what's your reason? I'd love to hear some of those reasons! Jot me a note or email me at gschlecht@ImmanuelLoveland.org. I would even encourage you to actually practice sharing what you might say with someone you know – a family member or friend – to take some of the fear or hesitancy away.

Friday — A Response to Persecution

Read 1 Peter 3:13-16. While here in the United States we may not face persecution to the point of death for our faith in Jesus, but there is still persecution that we face. Peter refers to some of that, which seems to have been part of what those believers in his time were having to deal with, too. Did you hear what the Lord was saying through Peter? "Don't fear what they fear." The things in life that can cause us anxiety or pain, while we may go down those paths, we don't need to stay there. We deal with the painful and hurtful things because we know that we're not alone and that our Lord is leading us through anything and everything in this life. We're told to share the reason for our hope and endurance with gentleness and respect – not with bitterness or spite. Why? It's the witness we're giving once again to the hope we have – specifically to Jesus. It's OK to suffer for doing good and, as Peter reminds us, it's better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. We know what Jesus accomplished for us by His own suffering and death. He can sympathize with our weakness and all that we are going through. And by His resurrection, Jesus has