

God Provides Hope

Lesson Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-12
Lesson Aims: To understand the importance of encouragement to believers, to identify the role of hardships in the Christian's life, and to be courageous in the face of adversity and despair.

Background: The year begins with a study of Peter's epistles to "scattered" believers. This writing fulfills Christ's commission to him in Luke 22:31-32. The letter is dated A.D. 64.

He is the apostle of hope and sets forth the doctrines of grace. During this era of persecution, Peter is led to explain the role of suffering in the Christian journey. The persecution begins because Christianity has now become a legal religion (A.D. 65) and the

Emperor Claudius begins this era and Nero (half-mad) increases the intensity by torturing and executing thousands. It is against this backdrop that Peter pens encouragement in the midst of suffering. While this type of persecution isn't an issue in America, each of us faces some pressure in our daily lives. Be it family, friends, jobs, and/or sicknesses and the like, we need to be familiar with the source of hope.

Lesson: The Greeting for chapter 1 is omitted but deserves



Sunday School Lesson

Mildred Peppers

mention. This circular (a letter to be circulated) is addressed to "God's elect." This term refers to those who have experienced salvation through faith in Jesus.

Because of their faith, they are set apart by the Spirit and sanctified because of His blood. Verses 3-5 are praises to a living God for providing everlasting hope. This testimony is evident in

the resurrection, and the protecting power of God. Simply put, this hope doesn't wither or fade away.

In response to suffering, according to Peter, is to also have joy. The suffering here refers to remaining true to God's word. Believers are to rejoice because it lasts for a while (a season) and then there is victory. These trials also burn off the impurities and makes one stronger.

These trials, tribulations, and/or sufferings should be viewed

as the tests to be endured faithfully, thus bringing honor and glory to God. Peter commends them for their faith because they didn't "walk" with Christ, yet they believed. The last verses today (10-12) center on God's salvation. This second major theme in this epistle highlights the prophecies of old and the fulfillment.

The prophets investigated what were obedient in their writings. Peter tells the believers that this joy is richer because they are experiencing what the prophets foretold. Their salvation (deliverance from sin) is complete in Jesus.

Application: Suffering for the sake of Jesus is noble, it is rewarding and yet it is also frustrating. If there is one among you that stands for what is right and just, there are some long days ahead. These days, however, should not be viewed with despair.

In the face of trials, there are two responses, positive and negative. Despair is the negative. So what is positive? Hope is the positive response.

As believers we must be able to visualize the victory. This Christian hope encourages us to remain steadfast even though appearance would lead you to run. At times we need to encourage each other along the way. Hope is also the positive response because it allows us to experience joy in the midst of the struggle.

No, most of us wouldn't ask God for trouble, but believers know that it is just around the corner. Believers also understand that these various tests make us stronger and our faith deeper, therefore in the spiritual sense we

will get the glory (Remember the song "The Battle's Not Yours. It's the Lord's").

Once on the other side of the suffering there is joy, rejoicing at times words are futile to express it. You and other believers as well can share in that knowledge and there is celebration. The hope in the lesson today isn't based on man's skill, intellect, or technology but his faith in a Risen Savior who is Christ the Lord. Let's continue to thank God for his mercy and grace and commit to His will in 1998.

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Local teen to compete in Miss North Carolina pageant



April Astrop

April Astrop, daughter of Kelvin and Sharon Astrop of 2913 Weisner Court, has been selected as an entrant in the 1998 Miss North Carolina Teen All-American Pageant to be staged in the Grand Ballroom of the Adams Mark Hotel on Jan. 10-13.

This event will select North Carolina's representative to the Twentieth Annual Teen All-American Pageant to be held in Miami in August.

Astrop will be competing with young women from all over the state for the title. She attends Parkland High School, where she participates in varsity cheerleading, the Parkland Gospel Choir, Pym Muverz Dance Club, and Ebony Pride.

Her other activities include babysitting, choreography and reading teen magazines.

Minority scholarships at Duke will triple

DURHAM (AP) — While the state's public university system is reviewing the validity of its affirmative action programs, Duke University is tripling the amount of its primary minority scholarship program for 1998.

"We think this is the right thing to do," said Judith Ruderman, vice provost for academic services. "The chips will fall where they may. We're committed to doing this at Duke."

The 21-year-old Reginaldo Howard Scholars program, named for the first black person elected student body president at Duke, offers \$6,000 annual scholarships to about seven incoming black freshmen each year.

Beginning next fall, the annual award will jump to 75 percent of tuition for both freshmen and upperclassmen who receive Howard scholarships. With tuition now topping \$21,000, the scholarship's value would be almost \$16,000 a year. But the number of four-year scholarships offered annually will drop to five from seven.

"We've been looking at African-American recruitment for a while," Ruderman said. "We don't want to lose African-American students for reasons of money. We want to reclaim our

lost ground."

The announcement comes after the president of the 16-campus UNC system ordered a review of all race- and gender-preference policies. Earlier this fall, the UNC system began assessing its scholarship program to make sure it complied with a 1994 decision by the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The court struck down a state scholarship program for black students at the University of Maryland at College Park.

Black students make up about 8 percent of Duke's 6,200-student undergraduate enrollment. The university has seen a recent drop in the number of black high school seniors applying for, and accepting, admissions offers.

A survey of black students who turned down Duke and current scholarship recipients revealed concerns about the Howard Scholars program, Ruderman said. Many of those questioned said they had received better scholarship and financial aid offers from other schools.

Duke officials last increased the Howard award — to \$6,000 — in 1984, when yearly tuition was about \$7,500, said James Belvin Jr., director of undergraduate financial aid. The new award will increase as tuition rises.

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