



CONCORD  
SUNDAY SCHOOL

LECTIONARY  
LESSON 16

SUNDAY,  
APRIL 19, 2020

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**1 Peter 1:3-9**

3 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, 4 and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, 7 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.

8 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, 9 for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

**Background**

First Peter is addressed to a community of Christians in a wide geographical area. New Testament Scholar Eugene Boring (yes, this is his real name) helps contextualize this area's size. Its 200,000 square miles would make it bigger than Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and six states of New England. The people in this broad land are in a peculiar situation. The main reason for their marginalization is their absence from their "previous life." Boring argues that this audience is composed of mainly "Gentiles who previously participated in the society that now rejects them." This was nothing like what many consider petty "anti-Christian bias" today. Christians could be tried for their faith in Christ and even be killed for their convictions.

Today's lesson will focus on **believing in the extraordinary.**

Read the scripture out loud.

Discuss with someone in your home. **Look around your room. What invention in your room would have been strange to someone living 100 years ago?**

### **What's happening during this passage?**

The writer begins this passage with praising God and the son Jesus Christ. The letter rehearses the greatness of the faith. We know a Jesus who gave us a “new birth” through the resurrection. Or, as we discussed last week, a resurrection through baptism. He gave us an “inheritance” that is “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.” We are “protected” by the power of God through “faith.” Like a compassionate pastor, the writer acknowledges the “various trials.” Still, the writer expects that the people will emerge with a genuine faith more “precious than gold” and “tested by fire.”

### **What kind of faith is described here?**

The writer consoles the audience with a challenge to focus on the right things. The people who would read this letter have not *personally* met Jesus. And yet they believe. They believe in Christ, even though they face great persecution and scrutiny.

A common proverb is, “I’ll believe it when I see it.” Or, “if you believe that, I have a bridge to sell you.” We doubt things every day. We are conditioned to wait until we get all the facts before we get excited. The writer reminds the audience of the illogical nature of faith. We “love him” even though we have not seen him, and we believe in him “even though” we do not see him. According to logic, you see things *first* and then believe them. But for these people, they believe *even though* they have not yet seen. Perhaps these people believe because they have been convinced because they trust the faith of those who *have* seen. Perhaps these people had “a praying grandmother” and they draw from that faith for themselves.

### **Does God require difficult trials in order have real faith?**

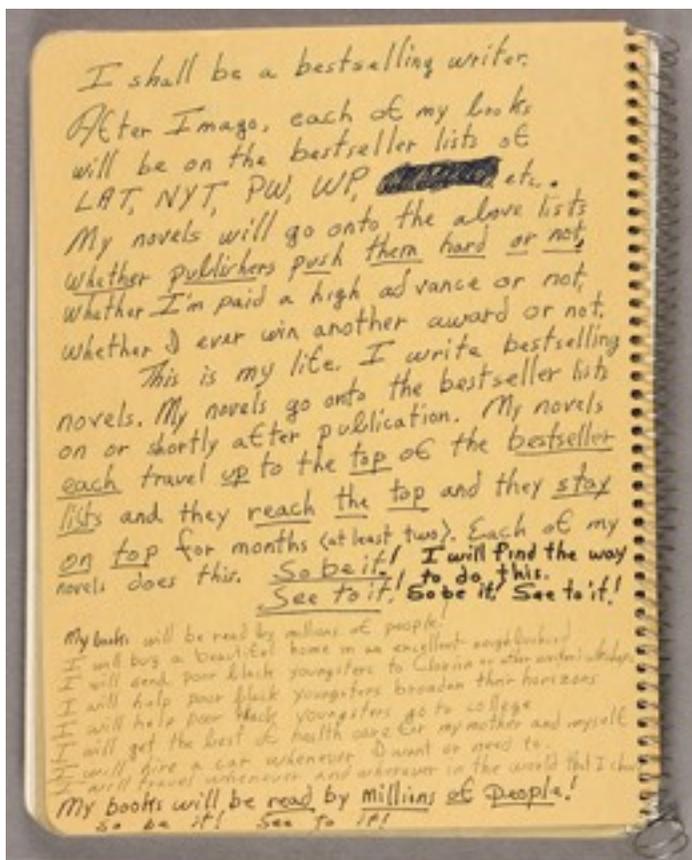
Sadly, we live in a world full of great heartbreak and difficulty. For different reasons, the audience of First Peter lived in a challenging world, too. And the writer of this letter knows this. The writer is intimately aware that whoever reads this letter is enduring great challenge. Because of this knowledge, this letter opens with a reminder that the trials help test the “genuineness” of the faith.

Nobody wants to struggle. No one intends to endure pain or heartbreak. But sadly, there is trouble all over this world. We cannot escape it. We cannot hide from it. Grief and struggle is part of the human condition. But the writer of First Peter helps the audience imagine that perhaps we can learn something from this moment. In other words, suffering is not something we should endure or even glorify. *But* we can learn something from suffering. We can expect to learn something that is worthwhile. We can struggle with dignity. For more on this, check out poet Claude McKay's "If We Must Die" poem. Click [here](#).

*What questions do you still have of this scripture? How will you commit to journeying with this text this week?*

### Connection to Today's World

Octavia Butler was an award-winning novelist who broke several color-barriers in science fiction writing. Her most popular works are the *Parable of the Sower Series* and *Kindred*. All of her writing takes place in some recognizable, but certainly distant setting. Characters make sense of human ideas like race, gender, justice, class and oppression in outer space, or in the future, or even through time travel. She won many awards, including the coveted MacArthur Award. Years before she was a successful author, she was just a writer with dreams. She often found a way to write down her dreams before they came to pass.



On this journal, she wrote, “*my books WILL be read by millions of people! I will buy a beautiful home in an excellent neighborhood. I will send poor black youngsters to Clarion or other writer’s workshops. I will help poor black youngsters broaden their horizons. I will help poor black youngsters go to college. I will get the best of healthcare for my mother and myself. I will hire a car whenever I want or need to. I will travel whenever and wherever in the world that I choose. So be it! See to it!*” Butler’s commitment to “speaking things that be not as though they were” is a challenge to all of us who believe. Before we can do things, we must believe they are possible. When we believe in the possibility of something, we

put action behind the things that are in our control. Do what you are able to do; leave the rest in God's hands.

**Journal:** Think back to a moment that required great faith. What was that moment like? How did you "believe" before you saw it?

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**Closing:** Sing "Because He Lives"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjyiW5q2y3I>

God sent His Son  
They called Him Jesus  
He came to love, heal and forgive  
He lived and died to buy my pardon  
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior  
lives

Because He lives I can face  
tomorrow  
Because He lives all fear is  
gone  
Because I know He holds the  
future  
And life is worth the living just  
because He lives

**Prayer:**

Dear God,

You are the source of our strength. This is the oddest Easter season we have ever experienced. We know that you can empathize with our concerns, frustrations and pains.

You sent your Son to us to teach us how to "love, heal and forgive." We believe, even though we have not yet seen him. Keep us fortified and keep our eyes on the right target. Help us to hold out. Equip us with the wisdom of experts, the comfort of Christ, and the peace that passes all understanding.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen

**Works Cited:**

Introduction to the New Testament, Eugene M. Boring

[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/octavia-e-butler-wrote-the-story-of-her-success-years-before-it-happened\\_n\\_56ab92ffe4b0010e80e9c6fa](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/octavia-e-butler-wrote-the-story-of-her-success-years-before-it-happened_n_56ab92ffe4b0010e80e9c6fa)