

"A LIVING HOPE"

I. Introduction

- A. There are many things that we hope for in life.
1. When we are young, we nourish hopes about pursuing a career, getting married, making a home, raising a family.
 2. When we have plans to do something outside on a certain day, we hope that it won't rain that day.
 3. When we find ourselves facing some kind of adversity, we hope that it soon comes to an end.
- B. While many of our hopes have to do with the things of this world, it is important to remember that our supreme hope as Christians is focused on the next world.
1. God reminds us of this through the trials that he brings into our lives.
 2. As John Calvin once wrote, "In whatever trouble comes to us, we should always set our eyes on God's purpose to train us to think little of this present life and inspire us to think more about the future life... the Lord teaches His people about the emptiness of this present life through constant lessons in suffering." [*A Little Book on the Christian Life*, 89, 90]
 3. Of course, Calvin was not denying that this life is filled with many evidences of divine kindness.
 4. He was simply warning us against making "our plans as if we were constructing immortality for ourselves in this world." [93]
 5. That would be a very foolish thing to do, because Scripture tells us that our life in this world is "a mist that appears for a little time and

then vanishes.” (James 4:14 ESV)

- C. This truth is underscored by the fact that Easter is at the heart of the Christian hope.
1. Easter, of course, is about the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 2. Easter morning was the point in history when a member of our race entered into the life of the world to come.
 3. In his glorified human nature, Jesus put on the imperishable and ascended to the right hand of God the Father in heaven.
 4. That is where the Christian’s hope resides.
 5. As we study these verses from 1 Peter today, we will come to a better appreciation of what Peter means when he says that we have been born again to a living hope.

II. The Source of Living Hope

- A. We begin by looking at verse 3, where the focus is upon the *source* of our living hope.
1. The fact that Peter begins by blessing God makes it clear that God is the ultimate source of our living hope.
 2. And notice how God is described here.
 3. He is called “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 4. In the Old Testament, God is often referred to as the God of Abraham and of the other patriarchs.
 5. This was done in order to distinguish the true and living God, the God who made himself known to the patriarchs, from the idols that were worshipped by heathen peoples.

6. In the New Testament, God reveals himself in all his fullness through Jesus Christ.
 7. This is why God is now known as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 8. It is only through Christ that we can have saving knowledge of the one true God. (see Jn. 17:3)
- B. Peter also says that our salvation is according to God's great mercy.
1. In other words, God is motivated to save us by his merciful character alone and not because of anything that he sees in us.
 2. This point is further emphasized by what Peter says about being born again.
 3. We need to be born again because we are by nature dead in our sins, and are subject to divine judgment.
 4. But we can't do anything to make ourselves born again.
 5. This is why Peter says that God "*caused us* to be born again."
 6. We don't have any more power over our being born again than we have over our being born the first time.
 7. Of course, the new birth is evidenced by placing our faith in Christ.
 8. But faith is the *result*, not the cause, of being born again.
- C. Peter continues by saying that we have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
1. In the Bible, hope is not a matter of wishful thinking.

2. Biblical hope is a matter of certainty, because it is rooted in something certain.
 3. It is rooted in the promises of God in Christ.
 4. The people of this world do not have that kind of hope.
 5. This is why the apostle Paul tells the Ephesian Christians that before they came to Christ they were without hope and without God in the world. (Eph. 2:12)
 6. Our non-Christian neighbors may not feel hopeless in a subjective sense, but they do not have any hope in an objective and ultimate sense.
 7. That kind of hope can only be found in Jesus Christ.
 8. This should motivate us to pray for the non-Christians we know, especially during this time of disruption and uncertainty.
 9. Pray that they will come to see their need for something more than the diversions that they are using to get through this crisis.
 10. Pray that the Lord would open their eyes to see their hopeless estate and give them true hope.
- D. Peter describes Christian hope as a *living* hope.
1. It is a living hope because it resides in a living person, in the risen Christ.
 2. We have been born again to this hope through Christ's resurrection from the dead.
 3. This is what makes our hope so certain.
 4. Christ's resurrection is a matter of historical fact.

5. And his resurrection is the firstfruits of the resurrection harvest that will take place at the end of the age.
6. Peter was an eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection.
7. He had the dramatic experience of being unexpectedly delivered out of hopelessness and brought to a place of confident hope.
8. His resurrection hope fueled him for the rest of his days.
9. He lived in that hope, and he died in that hope.
10. The same thing can be said of every Christian.
11. Because we have a living hope, our souls will not be overcome by the disappointments, worries, and uncertainties of this present life.
12. Because we have a living hope, we will not sink under the billows of suffering and sorrow that continue to wash over us as long as we live in this world.
13. And because our living hope resides in the One who conquered death, it will endure until we too are raised to immortality.

III. The Security of Living Hope

- A. Having considered the source of our living hope in verse 3, we turn now to verses 4 and 5, where Peter discusses the *security* of our living hope.
 1. There are two aspects of this security.
 2. First, our hope is secure because of the inheritance that is being kept in heaven for us.
 3. This inheritance is the fulfillment of what God promised Abraham when he said, "I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting

possession, and I will be their God.” (Gen. 17:8)

4. That promise was not ultimately about Canaan.
 5. Canaan was merely a type and shadow of something far greater, something permanent.
 6. The writer of Hebrews explains this when he writes the following: “By faith he [Abraham] went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God... These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.” (Heb 11:9–10, 13-6 ESV)
 7. Those of us who share Abraham’s faith are numbered among his offspring, and this means we are heirs with him of that better, heavenly country.
- B. Consider how Peter describes this heavenly inheritance.
1. He says that it is imperishable.
 2. This sets it apart as entirely unique.
 3. Everything in this world is perishable.
 4. Our bodies will one day perish.

5. But the inheritance that is being kept for us in heaven will endure forever.
 6. And when Christ returns at the end of this age, we will be raised in bodies that are imperishable and thus fit for an eternal inheritance in glory.
- C. Peter also says that our heavenly inheritance is undefiled.
1. Everything in this world is polluted by sin.
 2. There is nothing that is completely pure.
 3. There is nowhere we can go to be free from the corrupting influence of sin.
 4. Even though we ourselves have been born again, there is no part of our being that is free from the taint of sin.
 5. But when we enter into our heavenly inheritance, we will dwell in a world that is entirely unspoiled by sin, in glorified bodies that are entirely free from sin.
- D. Peter also says that our inheritance is unfading.
1. Unlike everything in this world, it is not subject to change and decay.
 2. It never wears out.
 3. It is solid and permanent.
 4. It will endure for all eternity.
- E. The last thing that Peter says about our inheritance is that it is being kept in heaven for us.

1. The Greek term translated as “kept” in this verse can also convey the sense of being guarded.
 2. This is the idea that Peter has in mind here.
 3. The fact that Christ has already secured this inheritance for us means it is beyond all danger and is perfectly safe.
- F. Having said these things about the security of our inheritance, Peter moves on in verse 5 to speak of our security as believers.
1. God is guarding us to ensure that we receive the fullness of our salvation when it is revealed on the last day.
 2. We need to be guarded and protected, because we face many threats in this world.
 3. If we were left to our own power, we would have no hope of survival.
 4. But because we are being guarded by God’s power, we can be confident that we will endure to the end.
- G. Notice also that Peter says that God guards us “through faith.”
1. The faith by which we are saved is the faith by which we are kept secure.
 2. Faith is the instrument by which we appropriate Christ and all his benefits.
 3. The fact that Peter says that *God* guards us through faith makes it clear that faith is not a work that we perform.
 4. Faith is something that God works and sustains within us.

IV. Enduring Suffering with Living Hope

- A. This brings us to verses 6 through 9, where the prominent theme is how Christians endure suffering with living hope.
 - 1. In verse 6, Peter reminds us that we already experience the heavenly joy that will be fully revealed in the last time.
 - 2. Christian joy is not merely the joy of anticipation.
 - 3. It is also the joy of participation.
 - 4. We already possess Christ and the blessings that are found in him, and this causes us to rejoice in his salvation.

- B. At the same time, our joy in Christ is mixed with griefs produced by various trials.
 - 1. Peter says several things here that should shape the way we view suffering.
 - 2. First, he describes the period in which we are subject to trials by the phrase “a little while.”
 - 3. It doesn’t always seem like “a little while” to us, but that is only because we tend to lose sight of the big picture.
 - 4. As Paul points out in Romans 8:18, “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”
 - 5. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 4 he says, “this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” (v. 17)

- C. Peter also says that the trials that come into our lives are necessary for the testing and purifying of our faith.
 - 1. Notice how this relates to what Peter previously said about faith being the instrument that God uses to guard us for our eternal

inheritance.

2. This requires that our faith be proven and strengthened through the fires of affliction.
 3. As Edmund Clowney explains, "Our trials keep us trusting; they burn away our self-confidence and drive us to our Savior." [52]
 4. Trials remind us of our weakness and of our utter dependence on God.
 5. Trials might even be seen as the fuel that keeps our faith burning.
- D. The fact that God deems our trials necessary for our salvation means we should not face suffering in the same way that our non-Christian neighbors face it.
1. In our present crisis, we are seeing a lot of people responding to this trial with a spirit of optimism and grit.
 2. While there certainly are good things about that kind of response to adversity, there is nothing distinctively Christian about it.
 3. The thing that is distinctively Christian is submitting to our trials in patient and grateful faith.
 4. We can do this because we know that God has deemed our trials to be necessary for our salvation.
 5. As John Calvin explains, "the godly bear sorrow, as the tamed ox the yoke." But when the reprobate are afflicted, it is like "when a bridle is by force put in the mouth of a ferocious and refractory horse; he kicks and offers every resistance, but all in vain."
- E. Of course, this does not mean we shouldn't be troubled by our trials.
1. After all, Peter readily admits that suffering produces grief.

2. And Jesus was certainly no stoic in the face of his suffering.
 3. We don't have to pretend that suffering doesn't produce grief, and hardship, and pain.
 4. But we do need to remain confident that our God is sovereign over our trials, and that he has a good purpose for us in them.
- F. In the final verses of our text, Peter says two additional things about saving faith.
1. First, he reminds us that faith is not a matter of sight.
 2. Christians love Jesus, and believe in him, and rejoice in him, even though we do not see him.
 3. Our life in this world does not line up with the fact that we are heirs of a glorious inheritance that will endure forever.
 4. We have a living hope, but we have it by faith, not by sight.
 5. Our hope is as real and as solid as Jesus' risen body, but that body is presently ascended to heaven and seated at God's right hand.
 6. Yet even though our hope is veiled, by faith we begin to realize something of the greatness of our living hope.
 7. This is what Peter means when he says that our present joy is "inexpressible" and "filled with glory."
- G. The last thing that Peter says about saving faith has to do with its goal.
1. The outcome, or goal, of our faith is the salvation of our souls.
 2. And we are already obtaining that outcome, even though we are still waiting for the day when we will receive it in all its fullness.

V. Conclusion

- A. This passage reminds us that we are saved by faith from beginning to end.
 - 1. It is by faith that you first received Christ.
 - 2. It is by faith that you are being preserved through the various trials that are necessary for you in this life.
 - 3. And it is by faith that you will be brought safely to your eternal home.

- B. The coronavirus crisis is reminding us that everything in this world can and will be shaken.
 - 1. What a blessing it is for us to know that we have our inheritance resides in a world that will never be shaken, and that we are being guarded by God's power until our salvation is revealed in the last time.

 - 2. In the words of Geerhardus Vos, "Amidst all the vicissitudes [changes] of time the Christian knows that the foundations of the city of God are being quietly laid, that its walls are rising steadily, and that it will at last stand finished in all its golden glory, the crowning product of the work of God for his own." [*Grace and Glory*, 147]