

A Living Hope

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV))

The many benefits and blessings that come to us when we are “born again” in Christ are vast beyond any measure that our minds can know or imagine. Yes, we can immediately sense some changes within our souls when we are first saved, burdens are lifted, we feel “cleaner” than we have ever felt before, we stop wanting to do some of the things we used to do, and on and on. But beyond those changes, there is something else, very special that begins within our souls, something that was never there before. It is what these words call “living hope”.

As I have studied through this passage and others like it over these past few days, I've become so aware of just how often God makes mention of this special gift of “hope”. And I'd like for us to study about it more carefully before we move on.

First of all, as we have said on other occasions here recently, all people have some form of hope within them whether they believe in God or not. Hope simply is one of those basic natural responses that is born into every person. For those people who have not placed their faith and hope in God, their hope simply rests in some other source, some unknown, mystical provision, like that of fate, or destiny, or coincidence, or something else.

But here in these words, God speaks to us about another very different kind of “hope”, a hope that actually has a very real Person “living” within it, a Person who hears and answers our cries. And in Romans 5, we see that that person is actually the whole “Trinity of God”, God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. All of Who God “is” is vested in making our “hope” become “real” to us, and in bringing about the best of all possible results, both within our souls, and within the circumstances that we encounter

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Listen to these words of Romans 5. And as we read, take careful notice that all of these blessed benefits are available only to those who have received Christ as their Savior and Lord, those who have been “justified by faith”. Listen, beginning in verse 1!

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Romans 5:1-5 (NKJV))

These are precious words of promise as we suffer through the many sufferings of ordinary daily life! But may I say again, this great blessing of a “living hope” is ours only if and when and as we have Christ living within us.

But sadly, as we look around us, the uncomfortable truth is, most people do not have His presence living in them. Yes, many do want to believe that they do, and they go about doing all the many things that people who have Christ do, so much so that they convince themselves and others that they really are saved. But the reality is, they aren't. Somehow, even with all their good works and efforts, they still fall short of going ahead and completing that final and necessary transaction of surrender and of receiving Christ into their souls. And so they live each day, in what these scriptures call a “strong delusion”.

As I observe these things taking place, it seems most often to do simply with a need to hang onto that which has always been most comfortable and natural to us. From the earliest days of our childhood we have learned to depend upon our own wits and abilities to meet our daily needs. And to transition our faith and dependence from ourselves over to God is just too difficult. And so, we opt out for that which is most comfortable to our senses, our “commonsense.” And folks, the reality is, in most all circumstances, “faith in God” and the dictates of our “commonsense” are in complete opposition to each other.

And so, because we opt out for dependence upon our own selves, in a very real sense, we become the actual “lord” of our life. If we think about those words for a moment, we immediately don't like the sound of them. They sound too arrogant, “being Lord of our life”. And so, we reject the thought and we deny it to be true about ourselves.

But the reality is, when our only source of strength and knowledge and wisdom and ability is our “self”, then the simple truth is, we are the “Lord of our lives”. And with that being so, any “hope” that we might conjure up within ourselves can only reach to the level of some clever solution or bright idea that our own minds think of.

But here in our worship text, God is speaking to us of a far better “hope”, one that He wants to provide to us. And all we have to do to receive His “better hope” is to go ahead and complete the final transaction of giving up on our fruitless striving and dependence upon our self, and actually surrender our hearts over to Christ and let Him become the “Lord” of our lives.

And note again in these words that God has given us everything that we will need as we take those steps of surrender.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3 (ESV))

Here, we read that it was by the Personal Hand of God the Father that we have been born again into a “living hope”. He Himself “causes” it all to take place.

But also take careful note that it is because of the “resurrection” of Jesus Christ from the dead that this blessing is able to take place. May I say that too often my mind can easily “read right on by” such blessed truths as this and never give them the proper consideration they deserve!

These words tell us that we have been “born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” But “What do those words mean, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?” Why is Christ’s resurrection from the dead so important to our being able to have life and to live each day with a “living hope”? The answer to that question is, “There is a very special power that resides within the “resurrection” of Christ”. We are told about it in the first few words of Philippians 3, verse 10. Listen!

10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (Philippians 3:10 (NIV))

May I say again, there is a very special and miraculous power within the “resurrection of Jesus Christ”, and as these words that I just read tell us, we ought to want to know that power for ourselves!

So then, what do all these words mean? Consider for a moment . . . in those hours that Jesus hung there on the cross, He did something He had never done before. “He, who knew no sin, became sin for us.” Hanging there on the cross, the forever pure and holy Jesus Christ took upon Himself the burden of every sin of the whole world, every sin. And as He died, He took all those sins into the place reserved for them, into hell. And yes, please realize and accept that many of those sins were yours and my personal

sins. But there in hell, in some miraculous way that we will never understand, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit dealt with all those sins.

And then, praise be to God, as Jesus was cleansed from all those sins and was resurrected, He came forth from His death into new life completely freed from all those sins. And as He did all of that, a miraculous thing took place. God calls it “propitiation”, a word that means that our sins were completely “atoned for” and wiped away from our souls. That is what John the Baptist meant when He said the words,

29 . . . “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
(John 1:29 (ESV))

This special truth is what God intended for us to understand in the words He gave to us in Romans chapter 6. There He said that as we “unite ourselves” with the Lord Jesus Christ, as we become “one” with Him in His death and in His resurrection, then just as He was completely cleansed from the sins that He had taken upon Himself, so also, by joining with Him, we also become completely cleansed and freed from our sins. And may I add, not only from the sins themselves, but also from the nature within us that causes us to ever want to sin again. Listen to those words in Romans 6!

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?
2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. (Romans 6:1-7 (NASB))

These are precious words for us as we live through all the many difficulties of daily life.

5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, (Romans 6:5 (NASB))

In those days before we surrendered our lives to Christ, sin and our sin nature completely controlled us, drawing and dragging us into one entanglement of sin after another. But thanks be to God, the resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead and freed Him from the power of sin and death has also freed you and me from the power of sin and death. And now we can go about our day with a “living hope”.

Folks, this is “real” and it is “effectual”. We really are now very different people. And as Romans 6 verse 1 reminds us,

1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! (God forbid) We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? (Romans 6:1-2 (NIV))

We can confidently accept that we are no longer controlled by sin. We do not ever have to give in to those temptations that the world, and our flesh, and the devil throw at us each day. They no longer have any control over us. None whatsoever! Now that we are in Christ, the Holy Spirit is the “Stronghold” of our life. He is the one who is in control.

And I love these next words that tell us what awaits those of us who have received Christ and have become part of His Royal Family, verse 4,

4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, (1 Peter 1:4 (ESV))

Folks, this word “inheritance” is so very meaningful to our understanding of this new relationship that we have with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. I know that we have talked at length about this in the past, but I love to be reminded of its meaning.

Here God speaks about an inheritance that we will receive. Who is it that ordinarily receives an inheritance? According to most all of the statutory laws that prevail here in our country, those who receive inheritances are the children, the “sons” and “daughters” in a family. Yes, the owner of the estate can leave bequests to persons outside the family, but it is only the immediate members of the family that really have “rights” to an inheritance.

I explain all of this to say that while yes, through “common grace” God does freely bless many outside of His family, the real benefits of salvation and “adoption” into God’s family accrues to the children of God, His dear sons and daughters. Listen to these words that define for us this special family relationship that becomes ours when we receive Christ as our Savior. Romans 8, verse 14,

14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:13-17 (NASB))

These words tell us that in a real sense, we actually become “sons of God”, not “hired men” or “servants”, but actual “sons”, fully adopted; and because of that adoption, “heirs” who are able to receive a “sons” portion of the inheritance. Praise be to God for such sweet, and generous, and undeserved free gifts.

And note here too in verse 4, this inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us.

Here again, these words bespeak the permanence of our salvation and our inheritance. We have been adopted as “sons”. This is a permanent covenant that was made by God Himself which He cannot go back on and nothing else in existence can ever separate us from God and from our inheritance. Romans 8, verse 38,

38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 (NASB))

And note here also that this relationship and our inheritance are guaranteed to never diminish, kept and guarded by God’s power. Verse 4 of 1st Peter 1 . . .

4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:4-5 (ESV))

So then, may I say again to us, God is our Father, our loving Father and He wants each of us to have the “blessed assurance” that the hope that rises up in us will be completely and eternally realized, beginning in this life and then lasting on out into eternity as we take up the blessed inheritance He has promised. Praise be to God.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV))