

## Living Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

What is so great about being a Christian?

Have you ever had anyone ask you that question? How would you answer? Perhaps you could answer: "After I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, my life has been perfect. I'm happy all the time. I've never been healthier. I've never faced any kind of financial hardship. People treat me wonderfully. My spouse is a perfect partner. My kids are always obedient. Life is just one blessing after another."

You could answer that way, but you know it would be a bald faced lie. Christians suffer financial hardship. Christians experience emotional distress. Christians get sick and Christians die. Christians have family troubles. Jesus said "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33) Paul said "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12)

There are health, wealth and prosperity preachers out there. They say you can live your best life now. They say God wants you to have all the stuff and junk this world can provide. They lie!

What is so great about being a Christian? It is not your life here on Earth.

I'm not saying that this life is all bad. There are many blessings to be enjoyed in this magnificent creation. God has been incredibly good to me ... to us. He's provided for my every need. I have the best wife ever. I've got great kids. I get to be the pastor of this wonderful church body. We all should enjoy the blessings God lavishes on us with heartfelt thanksgiving. But no matter how well your life is going, this is not as good as it gets. Not if you're a Christian.

*But as it is written: "EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." (1 Corinthians 2:9)*

And if you are going through hard times, and many of you are, you can still have supernatural peace and supernatural joy because God has promised you a future that is quite literally out of this world. Paul writes:

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18)*

The Christian has hope not because of how great things are going here and now. The Christian has hope because God has promised us an inheritance. It is reserved in heaven and it is our living hope.

Last week we looked at the first two verses of First Peter and we found that those who have placed their trust in Jesus are those who have been chosen by God. If you are a Christian, God has selected you. He's picked you out to be a member of His family and His kingdom. That's such an amazing, wonderful truth, that it isn't surprising that Peter follows it up with a hymn of praise. And that is exactly what we are going to look at this morning.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)*

We should remember that Peter was not writing to people who were on easy street. They were enduring persecution and their persecution was going to get worse. Yet Peter delivers this hymn of praise.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Blessed be the name; blessed be the name; blessed be the name of the Lord!

I think we often expect way too much out of this life and when we do, it robs us of our joy. I've told you before about the condition among boaters called "two-foot-itis". We used to see it all the time when we boated on Puget Sound. It didn't matter how big or how luxurious a yacht folks had, they always seemed to be looking for something just a little bigger, a little nicer. "I have a 32 footer ... if I only had a 34 footer ..." "Well, I have a 65 footer, but what I'd really like is the new 67 footer."

Two-foot-itis!

Instead of enjoying the great things God lets us have, we're always looking for more ... more ... more. When we attach ourselves to the stuff and junk of this world, it sucks the joy right out of life. But if you attach your joy to the fact God loves you and has chosen you, nothing in this world can take it away. Peter understood this, and he wants us to understand it too. That's why he opens his letter with this hymn of praise. It is a hymn of joy. He's praising God for what we have been given.

What, exactly, have we been given? Let's dissect this short doxology. Let's unpack it so we can see what's really great about being a Christian.

The first thing we see is that God has given us new life.

*... who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope*

He has begotten us again; if you are a Christian, you have been reborn. It's what Jesus was talking about to Nicodemus in the third chapter of John. And Paul talks about it too:

*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), (Ephesians 2:4-5)*

Have you been born again? It's not something you can do for yourself; the Holy Spirit has to bring you to spiritual life. So pray for it! Faith in Christ is a gift given by a gracious God. By grace you have been saved! By God's mercy you are saved! And, praise the Lord, He is rich in mercy!

Are you having trouble with faith? Pray for more faith. Do you need God's mercy? Pray for His mercy. We really need mercy because we're all sinners and the wage of sin is an eternity in hell.

I wish I could make clear to you how horrible that would be. God revealed the penalty for sin in the opening chapters of Genesis. He gave Grandpa Adam one command.

*... of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:17)*

There is the penalty for rebellion against God: "you shall surely die." Literally it means "dying you will die". Hell is where you exist in a forever state of dying. You have no peace, no joy, no future, and no relief from suffering. There is no hope. There is no

meaning. There are no relationships. You will be separated from God and from everyone else. Your worm will never die and your fire will never be quenched. It is as bad as it could ever get and it is what every one of you deserves. Me too.

But God loves you anyway. He is rich in mercy

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

Jesus endured the cross to keep you out of hell.

*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

It is a gift, all wrapped up for you with your name on it. All you have to do is receive it. You do so by faith ... by simply deciding to believe, as an act of your will. God will even give you the faith to believe.

Can you believe? Can you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and believe that God raised Him from the dead? If so, then you are saved and you have been born again to a living hope.

This was all made possible by our Lord ...

*... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3)*

Jesus went to the cross to pay for your cosmic treason but He rose on the third day, proving that sin and death has been conquered. The resurrection is absolutely essential. Without it, Christianity is a sham, a con. But with it, we can have a living relationship with a living Savior. Blessed be the Lord and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

In Jesus, we have been reborn. Look again at verse 4:

*... to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (1 Peter 1:4)*

You know what an inheritance is. It is not something you earn. It is something that is bequeathed to you. With an earthly inheritance, generally, somebody's got to die. And somebody had to die for your heavenly inheritance too: Jesus ... but now He's alive. So you can have your cake and eat it too. You get the inheritance, and you can keep your relationship with Jesus. Forever! In fact, He is the absolute best part of your inheritance.

And it is a glorious inheritance. Far better, far greater than anything anyone has experienced on this earth. We are talking about a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells. There will be no more sorrow, no more pain, no more death, no more crying because God will wipe every tear from our eyes. It is incorruptible. It is undefiled. And it will never fade away. Best of all, it is reserved; it is guaranteed. It is waiting for you. The price of admission has already been paid. If you have committed your life to Jesus, it's already yours.

But while you're still hanging out in your earth-suit, you do not want to neglect so great a salvation. Please do not treat the cross of Christ in a cavalier manner. This is a great prize; you need to strive for it. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling! Have the same attitude as the Apostle Paul: Who in this room has produced anywhere close to the spiritual fruit that this man did? As the Apostle to the Gentiles, he evangelized much of the Mediterranean Basin but he never rested on his laurels. Listen to what he wrote to the Philippians:

*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)*

That has to be our mindset. Folks, you need to go all-in for Jesus. He must be more than just one more ornament you hang on your life. He is the life; He must be your life. If He is your Lord, you must let Him lead. Search the scriptures to draw close to Him. Get to know Him better. Find out what He wants of you and determine right now that wherever He leads, you will go.

Our salvation is too important to take lightly. We need to work it out with fear and trembling. But here's the good news: It is God who works in you to both will and do for His good pleasure. That is what Peter tells us in verse 5:

*You are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:5)*

God loves you so much! He secures your salvation. You are kept secure by the power of God. And yes, you are kept through faith, but your faith is a gift that God gives you. He will not take it away.

Sometimes you wonder why you have to go through such difficult trials in this life. Sometimes you might even be tempted to doubt God's goodness and grace. But here is a promise embedded in Holy Scripture by the God who cannot lie. God knew you, called you by name before the universe came into being. You were chosen by Him and at a point of time, you confessed your faith in Jesus and found salvation. But that is not the end of the road. Your final, glorious salvation will be revealed in the last time. Our God will keep you secure so you know you will be able to enjoy it.

And that, my friends, is our living hope.