

1 Peter 1:3-9

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 April 2020

Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] Our text for this morning's Bible study is 1 Peter 1, verses 3-9. So please take your Bible and join me there.

Last week we concluded our study of the book of Hebrews, which was a pastoral letter to beleaguered Christians living on the outskirts of Rome. The letter was written to encourage hope and enduring faith in these beat-down, tired, suffering Christians.

This Easter Sunday we're going to consider a passage from a letter written by Peter to the beleaguered churches of Asia Minor. This seems to be a recurring theme in the scripture, that Christian people will need encouragement as they suffer.

They were being abused by unjust masters, chapter 2 and verse 18, threatened by unsaved spouses, chapter 3, verse 1 and verse 6, and insulted by an unbelieving world, chapter 4 and verse 14.

On top of this, there were rumors of a much more severe form of persecution that was coming their way, chapter 4, verses 12 through 18.

[1:16] And it is into this context that Peter, much like the author of Hebrews, wrote to encourage hope and enduring faith. Perhaps this morning, God will use this text to encourage the very same in us.

Immediately following his greeting in verses 1 and 2, Peter declares a blessing toward God because of his saving work. And in verse 3, he states that we have been born again to a living hope.

Living hope. I want to ask and answer three questions this morning about this living hope. Number one, what is it?

Number two, how do we obtain it? And number three, how does it change the way we live? Before we get to those questions, let's read the text in its entirety.

1 Peter chapter 1, verses 3 through 9. 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, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for our salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[2:38] In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

So, number one, living hope, what is it? The New Testament uses the word hope much differently than we typically do today. Not long ago, someone asked me, do you think we will be able to meet in person on Easter Sunday?

And I replied, I don't know, but I hope so. The word hope used this way expresses a desire for something in the future with the uncertainty of it happening, right?

That was a hope I expressed that was not fulfilled. Here we are meeting via a computer. Peter means something quite different when using the word hope.

[3:59] Similarly, the author of Hebrews states in Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 19, we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain.

So, this hope that Peter is referring to is a sure hope. It is a confident hope. So, in the case of 1 Peter, we can understand that the hope he is referring to is a strong hope.

It is a surety that the promises of God will, in fact, have their fulfillment. Peter mentions some of those promises in this immediate context, namely verses 4 and 5, an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, and our final and full salvation.

But Peter doesn't just say that we are born again to a hope, but that we are born again to a living hope. So, what is a living hope?

It seems right off to be a bit of a play on words as he speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and I think he intends that to be the case.

[5 : 15] But a living hope is the opposite of a dead hope, a lifeless, unproductive hope.

So, a living hope must be a productive hope, right? It produces something. It's not inactive, but it's rather very active.

It's a hope that produces a change in us. And that change gives evidence to the fact that there is a hope.

So, what is living hope? In a very simple definition, living hope is a surety that the promises of God will have their fulfillment that produces a change in us.

So, the second question, living hope, how do we obtain it? We do not obtain living hope by our own fruition. Verse 3 tells us that God grants to us living hope by a new birth, and this is His doing.

[6 : 20] He has caused us to be born again. It is according to His great mercy, and He is the causation of it. You have the power to declare yourself born again to a living hope, but you do not have the power to cause yourself to be born again to a living hope.

Some will say, I have faith, and it is that faith that caused me to be born again to a living hope, right? After all, verse 9 states that the outcome of my faith is the salvation of my soul.

I will say to you that verse 5 states that it is by God's power you are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

So, it is God's power that empowers your faith. God is the cause. Your faith is the effect.

Paul agrees with Peter in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9, where Paul wrote, For by grace you have been saved through faith, And this is not your own doing.

[7 : 25] He's referring to the faith, right? It's not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

So again, Paul is saying, God is the cause. He is the gift giver, because He is gracious. Your faith is the effect.

It is itself the gift that God has given. Far too many of us try to define our reality by how we feel.

The basis for who we believe that we are is our feelings about who we believe that we are. Our feelings become the arbiter of truth for us.

They reign in our lives. And beloved, this just should not be so. Only God has the ability to define your reality, to declare who you are in actuality.

[8 : 30] And this is really good news for beleaguered Christians, right? Christians who feel tired, who feel strained, who feel misguided, who feel like the affections of their soul are not placed on the things they ought to be placed on.

We find ourselves perplexed, trying to understand how it is we are in fact in Christ. Too many of us let our feelings dictate the truth for us, rather than running our feelings through the truth and seeing what sticks.

What has God said to be true? So very much more important than what our feelings declare about us.

So this is really, really good news for tired, beleaguered Christians. It was good news for the churches of Asia Minor, and it is good news for us.

If we have been born again to a living hope, then it is because God has acted on our behalf through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[9 : 49] But how does the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead produce a living hope in you and I? We don't always feel that hope, do we?

Verses 23 through 25 of chapter 1 can help us a bit with this. So Peter says in 1 Peter 1, beginning in verse 23, And this word is the good news that was preached.

Good news preached. The gospel coming to us produces hope.

Produces in us hope. It does so at the point of our salvation, and it continues to do so as we hear of the hope of the gospel.

This is why we must be constantly preaching it to each other and preaching it to ourselves. The gospel coming to us produces hope, but the gospel must come to us credibly.

[11 : 14] That is, we must believe it, right? Simply hearing it does us little to no good. Those are just words, but we must take it up into ourselves.

We must hold it to be true in our hearts. And I suppose this is why Paul labored to build confidence in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus was not raised.

And the good news is not really even news, much less good. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 3 and 4, he defines the gospel.

So here's a brief gospel presentation. Paul says, For I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

Then in verses 5 through 8, he goes on to build credibility, right? That people would believe that that is in fact true. Beginning in verse 5, he says, And that he appeared to Cephas, that is Peter, then to the twelve.

[12 : 25] Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

So he labors to say to them, this good news is a good news worth believing in, because Christ is raised from the dead, right?

He showed that to be true to all of these people, is what he is saying to us. And we now have their testimony declaring the very same thing to us.

John Piper, in a sermon on this text, said, Christian hope arises in the heart through hearing a credible testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Incredible gospel proclamation gives to its born-again hearers, first, confidence that Jesus is with us, that he is alive, and that he is seated at the right hand of God, right?

[13 : 29] He's interceding for us, that he's given to us his helper, as he said that he would. This should give us confidence even to pursue hope, living hope.

Secondly, credible gospel proclamation gives to its born-again hearers confidence that all that Jesus said is true, that Jesus died for me and for you, John 15, 13.

Jesus said, We are counted in that number through faith.

That he ransomed me and you. Mark chapter 10, verse 45, Jesus says, For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

You're counted in that number through faith. That he is my and your righteousness and has restored my and your relationship with God.

[14 : 35] First Peter chapter 3 and verse 18, For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit.

Paul states in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 17, If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins.

But because he is risen, my and your sins are forgiven, and God is for us. Romans chapter 8, beginning in verse 31, What then shall we say to these things if God is for us?

Who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised. Who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

[15 : 45] So, how do we obtain living hope? By hearing and believing the gospel of Jesus Christ. And this is a thing for people to do when they're not in Christ, right?

When they've never repented and believed in Jesus. And this is a thing for those who have been found in Christ, who are now in Christ, who have been caused to be born again to a living hope, to do once again, to do it now and probably later today and on into tomorrow and all the days that follow.

That we would once again, fresh and new, hear and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. This will produce in us a living hope.

Third question, living hope, how does it change the way that we live? Remember that this letter was written to encourage the beleaguered churches of Asia Minor.

Peter, right? But Peter does not encourage them toward quiet introspection, self-pity, like he doesn't say, make everything in the world about you because you're going through something hard, or self-service, but rather toward holiness and all that that means.

[17:10] Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1, verses 13 through 15, therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that we brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

He doesn't call them to inactivity, but to activity, to get outside their present circumstance and live for the glory of God.

Those promises that will be fulfilled because of the living hope that Christians can have. And he hints at this in our text in the last half of verse 6 and the first half of verse 7, where he writes, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

There's suffering that's been going on. So that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire.

[18:25] Difficult times are meant to test the genuineness of our faith. How do we respond when things are difficult in our lives?

And I'm not just talking about COVID-19. For some of us, this is really easy. For some, it's been really difficult. But all of the circumstances of our life that press at us, how do we respond?

Do we respond to those opportunities to grow in holiness? Or do we recoil, turn inward, use them as excuses for sin? Something should be produced in us.

Something should be happening in us as we walk through the trials of life. And that is holiness.

What is it that Peter expects will be produced in them and in us as our faith is being tested, as our living hope is on trial?

Well, he expects to see a number of specific activities. You can read the entire letter to pick up on those things. Things that will be put off and things that will be put on. But in this text, we can observe two that I think will be helpful to us this morning.

[19:37] The first one is love for God. Love for God. The first part of verse eight says, though you have not seen him, you love him. Living hope transforms our desires.

It changes what we are affectionate toward. This love that Peter writes about is a holy love. It's a supernatural love, right?

Though we have not seen God, we love him. It's a love that's produced in us. We were once enemies of God. We hated him. But now, being in Christ, we love him.

And if you love God, then you will love what he loves. You will love his will and you will love his ways. John wrote in 1 John 2, verse 15 and following, Do not love the world or the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

[20:44] And the world is passing away along with its desires. But whoever does the will of God abides forever. So living hope produces in us a love for God.

also produces in us joy. Last part of verse 8. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Living hope transforms our feelings. When we allow God to define our reality and hold the good news in our minds, the good news that has caused us to be born again to a living hope, then we will be joyful.

I think most of you know this about me, but if you don't know, I battle a bit with depression, with what I would call dismeasured sorrow.

And typically it's in moments, maybe across a couple of hours of a day for me. But the trouble of this life, often as I see it beating up on you all who I love immensely, just the hard things that you go through will cause me to feel down.

[22:03] And I can tell you that every time I feel that way, it is because I am not rightly holding the truth of the gospel in my mind. Because I kind of, I get it as a distant reality, but it's not close and present.

I don't have a living hope in those moments. In those moments, I've just disbelieved altogether that God can and will, in fact, accomplish all that He has said He will accomplish.

As I see my beloved brothers and sisters suffering, that should bring me to some measure of sorrow. But rightly, if I put that under the truth, what God will accomplish, I know that He is going to complete the good work that He began in each and every one of you.

I know that He is growing you in holiness. I know that He will bring you to the day of Christ and that He'll say of you, well done, my good and faithful servant. When I'm believing that, I'm not turned to dismeasured sorrow, but to joy.

Even amidst the measure, the proper sorrow, the weeping with you, I have joy. Because I know the eventual outcome of everything that we're walking through together.

[23 : 19] So when we define, I'll say it again, God to define our reality and we hold the good news in our minds, the good news that has caused us to be born again to a living hope, then we will be joyful.

King David wrote in Psalm 16 and verse 11, The born again do not have perfect love for God or perfect joy.

Both must be fought for. I've just told you, I fight for joy sometimes. But our lives ought to be growing in these aspects and all the more as we see the day drawing near when all that God has promised will fully and finally come to pass.

So how does living hope change the way we live? Living hope produces in us love for God and inexpressible joy.