

A Living Hope
September 4, 2016
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1 Peter 1:3-9

Human beings are wired for hope! **How would you define the word, “Hope?”**

In Peter’s first letter to Christians under persecution, he says followers of Christ are born again to a “living hope.” The Greek word he used for hope translates: to *anticipate*, usually with pleasure; *expectation* or *confidence*¹ That word for hope shows up 53 times in the New Testament, five of them in 1 Peter. In fact, hope is so central to Peter’s overall concern in the letter that “hope in the midst of suffering” may be called his essential theme.²

Why would you say hope is vital in life? What kinds of things do people hope for? When is hope MOST needed? How often do people need hope?

One of our Pastor’s favorite quotes:

“A person can live 40 days without food, 4 days without water, 4 minutes without air, but you can’t live 4 seconds without hope.” (As quoted by Johnny Hunt)

Big Idea: When life gets rough, hope can pull you through. Followers of Christ can hold on to a hope that is living and breathing. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we too will be raised from the dead and live eternally with Him in Heaven. That’s a LIVING HOPE! (1 Thess. 4:14)³

- Before we dive into this text, let’s get the context of what was going on.
- This is the mid-60s AD. Nero is on the throne in Rome. You remember Nero. The lunatic leader who burned Rome so he could rebuild it to honor himself (and played his fiddle as it burned.) Nero, the crazy man who coated Christians in wax and burned them alive as torches in his garden.

- Peter wrote this letter just as the persecution of Christians was heating up. No wonder that Peter called it a “fiery trial” later in this letter (4:12.) The early followers of Christ could almost smell the smoke. Worse yet, they could anticipate the pain. In seven short verses Peter reminds us that no matter how bad life gets, followers of Christ can rejoice in hope.

1 Peter 1:3–9 (ESV)

Born Again to a Living Hope

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.

- Verse three: Peter begins where we should always begin – praising God!
Why does verse three say God did that should cause us to praise Him? What motivated God to do this for us? How did God do it?
- Peter says God the Father, in His great mercy, “caused” us to be born again (regeneration.) We don’t earn this living hope of eternal life in Christ; we receive it as a gift from a loving Heavenly Father. We receive it because our loving Savior (Jesus) suffered, died, and was RAISED from the dead to pay the penalty for our sin.
- Verse four: Peter calls this living hope our “inheritance.”
- Some are hopeful because they are expecting a financial inheritance.
- Peter writes that every follower of Christ has an inheritance. No matter whether Granny left you lots of dough, or if you’re as “poor as Job’s turkey,” if you’ve been born again you have a BETTER inheritance.
- Look at the description: An inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. **What do those words mean?**
 - o Imperishable – un-decaying; immortal. It won’t die.
 - o Undefiled – un-soiled; It won’t get dirty.
 - o Unfading – Never fades; vibrant forever; It won’t dim.

- o Every earthly inheritance will eventually lose value in some way.
- o A Christian's inheritance won't die; won't get dirty; and it won't dim.
- The inheritance of a follower of Christ is also SECURE. **Where is it kept? Who keeps it safe? What do you think it means that it's kept safe?**
- We don't need the FDIC because we have the F-A-T-H-E-R!
- Ever get to your hotel and your reservation is missing? I have!
- I like how Chuck Swindoll uses that illustration to describe the security of our inheritance:

"You give him your confirmation number, but it does no good. In the end, you wind up in a flophouse two blocks down, with nothing but a halfhearted apology because somehow your reservation vanished... faded away.

Peter offers great news: this will never happen to your reservation in glory! Your heavenly reservations are purchased by the blood of Christ and confirmed by His glorious resurrection. Some celestial receptionist won't look at you and say, "Now, what was your name again?" or "Could I see your credit card just one more time?" No, after your long, painful journey in this life, the living God will welcome you home without an inch of red tape. We can rejoice in times of suffering because our inheritance is sure."⁴

- Not only is our inheritance of eternal life after death kept safe, **what else does verse five promise to keep safe?**
- Look at how the NLT translation renders verse five:
⁵*And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.*⁵
- **What does it mean that God is protecting us until we receive this salvation? Weren't Christians suffering and dying then (and today?)**
- Peter was writing to Christians some of whom were facing torture and death. Jesus encouraged us in Matthew 10:28: "... do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." No matter how horrible or painful things are here on earth, our soul is secure.

- Peter said this living hope is so POWERFUL we can not only endure life's pain; we can REJOICE in the midst of it:

⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ 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.

- **What does Peter say we can rejoice about? How does he say God uses our pain during trials?**
- We can rejoice! Not because we're happy about the pain we're going through. That would be insanity. We rejoice because God will use our pain to purify our faith. Faith that is tested by fire.
- It has been said by many, *"A faith that hasn't been tested can't be trusted."*
- And on the other side of our pain, there's PRAISE. Because every moment of our pain the hand holding ours has nail scars in it! And one day Jesus will wipe away every tear, remove all pain, and we'll praise Him forever. How does that make you feel about this living hope? Peter tells us how it SHOULD make a follower of Christ feel:

⁸ 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, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

- So what should you and I do this week because of these verses?
- We give a word power when we decide to change it from a noun to a verb.
- Example: When we use the word LOVE as a noun it's just a nice concept. When we make it a verb – we act on it – it's comes alive! We don't just talk about love; we LOVE! I might say, *"Love you!"* You might say, *"Prove it."*
- What about HOPE? Is hope just a noun in your life? Is it just a nice concept or even a cop-out? *"Well, I hope things will work out."*

- We're told in business, "Hope is not a strategy." That's because in the modern world the definition of the verb form of hope is: "to want something to happen or be true and think that it could happen or be true."⁶
- That doesn't sound very confident, huh?
- But look further in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary and the "archaic" or old definition of the verb hope is: "to expect with confidence: to trust."⁷
- Because of this eternal inheritance kept safe for us, followers of Christ can use that word HOPE as a verb in the "old" definition.
- We can HOPE with confidence because we TRUST in our inheritance and the God who keeps it secure for us.
- We need to go not only use HOPE as a noun, we need to actually HOPE! **Let's think of some ways we can change hope from a noun to a verb. When life gets tough; when Satan whispers lies to discourage you; when worry takes up residence in your mind; what are some things we can do to change hope to a verb and claim this promise?**
- Will you take the challenge today to change HOPE from a noun to a verb? Don't just think of HOPE as an inspirational concept, ACT on it!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- We're wired for hope. When life gets rough, hope can pull you through.
- Followers of Christ can hold on to a hope that is living and breathing.
- Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we too will be raised from the dead and live eternally with Him in Heaven. That's LIVING HOPE.
- We can only benefit from this living hope when we change hope from a noun to a verb. We need to actively anticipate, with confidence, the promise that God has secured our salvation in Heaven.
- Hebrews 6:19 (NIV) tells us: *"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."*
- Hold on to that anchor and your Heavenly Father will bring you through whatever storms of life come here on earth, safely into the harbor.
- It's a living hope. It's an anchor for the soul.

¹ Strong, J. (2009). *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 27). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

² *Explore the Bible Commentary 1 Peter 1:1-9*. (n.d.).

³ ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (1 Th 4:14). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁴ Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary) by Charles R. Swindoll - Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. (December 1, 2014)

⁵ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Pe 1:5). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁶ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hope>

⁷ *ibid*