

A Living Hope

1 Peter 1:1-12

Introduction

The difference between a dead hope and a living hope

A dead hope would mean hoping in something that has already proven to be incapable of delivering on its promises. A living hope would mean hoping in something that has already proven to be capable of delivering on its promises.

In this morning's passage, Peter tells us that Christians have "been born again to a living hope."

M.P.S. – Because of the living hope that we have in Christ, we can endure suffering as we live in obedience to God.

1 Peter 1:1-12

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

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. 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. 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.

¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Exposition

Our living hopes consists of a New Identity, a New Perspective on Suffering, and a New Pattern for Living...

I. A New Identity (Vss. 1-5)

According to 1 Peter 1:1-5, Christians are those who, while having no permanent home in this world, have been chosen by God the Father, set apart by the Holy Spirit, and cleansed and forgiven by Jesus Christ. As a result of God's work in our lives, we now possess a living hope for resurrection, an imperishable inheritance of eternal life, and are waiting for the full revelation of our salvation from heaven.

Given both the comfort that many of us enjoy in this country and the current debate that rages on in the public square, if we are not careful, we will be deceived into believing that the most fundamental and important identity that we possess is the identity that is also most temporary.

That identity might be political, ethnic, national, or even social, but there is a greater, more important, eternal identity that Christians possess in Christ. We are chosen by the Father, set apart by the Holy Spirit, and reconciled by Jesus Christ. More important than our retirement plans or lack thereof is the “imperishable inheritance of eternal life” that we both enjoy and look forward to in the future when Christ returns. We must not allow other identities to ultimately shape our lives in this world.

T.S. - If we do, then we will never make much sense of the situations that we encounter in this world, which leads me to the second section of our passage in verses 6-9...

II. A New Perspective on Suffering (Vss. 6-9)

The blessings of our identity in Christ, according to Peter, foster our joy in God. Yet, our joy is not without complications and difficulties. Verses 6-9 address the complications and difficulties that Peter’s audience faced as believers in the world. While their salvation was sure, the situation was not always easy. This leads to the natural question: “Why do we suffer? Does God have a purpose in the trials of my life?”

I am sure that some of you have felt this way before too. You have asked, “Why am I suffering?” Peter answers our question with the assurance of God’s purpose in our suffering and sorrow. Our suffering is not aimless. It is not pointless. According to verse 7, God is refining our faith through the fires of suffering so that our faith might prove to be genuine. And, according to Peter, a genuine, tested faith results in the reception of the “salvation of our souls.”

So, if you are a Christian here this morning and you are asking yourself, “Why has my life been so hard lately? Why does my life seem full of trials and complications?” While eternity will provide you with a more specific explanation of these circumstance, in general, we know that God is bringing us through the difficult times for the purpose of strengthening our faith. And you might ask, “Well why does my faith need to be strengthened?” Our faith needs to be strengthened because the outcome of our faith is greatest treasure in the universe – “the salvation of our souls.” In other words, God cares more about our salvation than our comfort. He cares more about our eternal joy than our temporary troubles. God is not absent in our suffering. He is working through the suffering to bring about His purposes!

T.S. – In fact, God’s pattern for eternal joy is always preceded by suffering in some sort. This is the pattern that we find in scripture, and it is what we should expect in this life, which leads us to the final section of verses in 10-12...

III. A New Pattern for Living (Vss. 10-12)

Peter’s message regarding our identity and our suffering should not come as a surprise to those who are familiar with the patterns in the Bible. Verses 10-12 tell us that Christ’s own identity and suffering was prophesied about by the Old Testament prophets. And if Jesus’ own life reflected this pattern, we should not be alarmed when our life follows this pattern as well. When Jesus came into the world, the people should have expected that the Christ would suffer before His glory. Yet, the religious leaders in Jesus’ day did not seem to have a category for a King who would suffer for His people. Their understanding of the Christ’s identity did not include suffering.

But, as Peter explains, the pattern of suffering before glory was revealed in the Old Testament through the prophets. So, contrary to popular belief, Christians should expect to suffer and experience trials in this life. The Christian's best life is the life that is to come when Christ returns and the fulness of our salvation is revealed. Christ did not die to free us from trials and suffering, but instead, to strengthen us in and through the trials that in those circumstance, we, like Christ, might glorify the power of God to hold us and preserve us. This means that what Satan and others may intend for the destruction of our faith and confidence in God, Christ intends for our holiness and our joy!

If we are not equipped with an understanding of this pattern of living a life of sorrow with rejoicing before our inheritance of eternal salvation, we, like many religious leaders in Jesus' day will turn away from God's salvation.

Conclusion

Peter wrote to equip his audience with an identity that will last, that will endure, that will make it through the trials and tribulation and come out refined and strengthened on the other side. The identity that Peter details in verses 1-5 is a durable identity, able to make it when things get tough, and this is the same identity that we need to realize is ours in Christ Jesus.

If we have trusted in Christ Jesus for salvation, then we can be sure that we have been chosen by our Father in heaven and set apart by the Holy Spirit and are able to endure the testing of the fiery trial when it comes upon us because Christ Jesus has gone before us into the trial and the testing on our behalf. When we walk through difficulties in this life, we can be certain that we are not walking a road that has never been tread. Christ walked down the road of suffering before He was glorified and exalted to the right hand of His Father in heaven. And because God the Father was faithful to Christ, we can be certain that He will be faithful to us and bring us through the trial because we have a living hope. A hope that does not disappoint. A hope that is rooted in Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Do you have a living hope in this midst of the trials that threaten and torment you? Do you have living hope to strengthen you when all your world seems to be crashing down around you? Do you have an identity that is not threatened by the ever-changing culture?

Peter and I call you this morning to embrace the living hope of Christ, who gives you a new identity, who preserves you in the midst of your trials, and who goes before you in order to save you and bring you safely into your true home!