

Series: God of All Grace
Message: A Living Hope / Jeff Kennedy / May 3, 2020

Thank you Patrick. Just to reiterate, we are going to be providing a re-opening plan within the next couple of weeks, so be watching for that in your email and on facebook. We are looking forward to the day when we can all fellowship together, in person. Until that day we echo Paul's Sentiment in 1 Cor. 5, that even though we cannot be present physically, we are with you in spirit.

We're reminded of Our Theme: 1 Peter 5:10-11 "The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. ¹¹To him be dominion forever. Amen."

We're continuing our series called "God of All Grace" and the title of today's message is: A Living Hope. The passage we look at today is going to encourage our spirits with an enduring hope.

Now, Last week we saw that Peter used trademark Jewish terminology to refer to the people of God in Christ—calling them exiles, scattered throughout the Roman empire.

We learned that his purpose was to encourage them as "The people of God in an increasingly hostile world, guarded by God until our salvation appears."

We get that purpose statement from the passage we're looking at today which is chapter 1 verses 3-5. Peter says, **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ⁴and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. ⁵You are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."**

Let me just make a few observations from these brief verses that bring encouragement to the believer exiled and scattered in Idaho Falls.

1. We praise God in the midst of every hardship. We don't always praise him for every hardships though sometimes in retrospect we do.

Peter begins with an expression of praise that is exactly the same form we see in 2 Cor. 1:3 and Eph. 1:3.

The Word Blessed—can refer to a person who is favored or gifted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. We can be blessed, favored, advantaged by God.

But here, the word means "praise." Peter and Paul use this phrase as a doxology of praise; and they specify the object of that praise. God the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the OT, when the two terms "God" and "Lord" appear together in the same context—THEY ALWAYS REFER TO THE ONE GOD OF ISRAEL. For example, we mentioned the *shema of Israel*: Duet. 6:4 "Hear O Israel, the LORD (Kurios) our God, the LORD is one."

WE praise God in the midst of hardship: because he is worthy.

And...

- **We bless and praise God in response to the mercy and comfort he alone can bring.**

2 Corinthians 1:3 **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort."** When do we experience the God of mercies? When we face a problem that no one else has a solution for.

When we were dead in our trespasses—there was no technology, no gadget or widget, no philosophy could have rescued us from that wretched hopeless state. If it were not for the mercy of God the Father to send God the Son—we would be lost. This is why both Peter and Paul call him the Father of mercies. If and when we receive a diagnosis, unwanted news about a child, or from a spouse who announces divorce—sometimes we hear news that leaves us inconsolable. Nothing can rescue us from the despair and the heartache we face. When we were dead in our sins, only God himself could show us mercy and forgiveness. And when we experience despairing news, only the God of all comfort can speak and whisper words of solace to the despairing soul.

Summary: We praise God in the midst of our hardship because he alone is the God of mercy, the Lord who comforts.

And we also

- **We bless and praise God because he has blessed us with every imaginable advantage.**

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Ephesians 1:3 “Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ.” Along with his Son, God has blessed us in the heavenlies with every spiritual advantage. Folks, this is a generous God we’re talking about here. Kind beyond words.

Summary: For believers driven into the wilderness of hardships and suffering—into the desert of despair, we bless God the Father and Jesus Messiah who reigns supreme.

2. We praise God for a new start and an enduring hope. vv. 3-4, Peter says, “Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ⁴and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” Regardless of how your “FIRST START” began: Maybe with an abusive or absent parents; exposure to substance addiction; or pornography; or economic disadvantages. Maybe you made some catastrophically bad choices—the consequences of which you are still living with. Whatever characterized your first start out of the gate. You may have swung and missed every time the ball crossed the plate. I want you to hear me clearly: You can have a new start. A new beginning. You can say goodbye to the old life full of deception and poor choices. And you can begin again. Peter says, “because of his great mercy we have a new birth into a living hope.” You can be born again. Regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

What does he mean by saying that we have a living hope? We use this word all the time. We buy a lottery ticket and say, “Man I hope I win this time.” Or we invest in a new venture and think, “Man I hope this one pays off.” Or we hope we get a raise or the economy bounces back quickly. We hope there’s a vaccine or an effective therapy etc. What kind of hope is this? Well, It’s a positive outlook, an expectation of better days ahead based on whether or not circumstances change in our favor. But any and every one of these things we hope for are passing away.

But a living hope given to believers is qualitatively different than hoping in this world alone.

First, let’s identify what that hope isn’t:

- **Christian hope isn’t circumstantial.** What I mean by that is, it isn’t tied to the shifting nature of outcomes and circumstances. The conditions are fluid—they change. We may have a banner year without a twinge of pain or so much as a sniffle. Or, we may be diagnosed with a life threatening disease that robs and steals the better part of your year, or a decade. The hope we have in Jesus is not anchored in the changing conditions and circumstances we face.
- **Christian hope isn’t self-referential.** I’d like to think I was the master of my own fate. I tend to think that when a problem is presented to me I can just think or work my way out of it. Christian hope isn’t self-referential it’s Christo-centric. Meaning, if my hope is based in my ability to get myself to heaven and to become a candidate for final resurrection glory—I am doomed. And may I be blunt? So are you. And in your bones you know it. Stop and think—have an honest conversation with yourself—*when is the last time you had one perfect day?* A day when you’ve just gotten it all right? Christian hope isn’t circumstantial and it isn’t self-referential. We don’t look to positive forecasts and don’t look within ourselves—because in of myself, I have no reasons for confidence in the future. The third thing Christian hope isn’t...
- **Christian hope isn’t perishable.** He says our hope is imperishable, incorruptible, and preserved in heaven until the day of our redemption. Unlike your retirement savings, this hope will never run out. Unlike your physical body which gets sick and weak and outwardly wastes away—this hope can never atrophy. Unlike an earthly inheritance which can be spoiled, misused, and gambled away—this inheritance is inexhaustible. It is an in-extinguishable hope. You can’t put the flame of Christian hope out.

So, if our hope isn’t (1) circumstantial wishfulness, or (2) self-generated or (3) corruptible, then what is it?

The biblical word for **Hope** means “A confident expectation of a future outcome where there exists a reasonable basis for the expectation.” The strength of the expectation is directly proportional to the basis for the expectation.

What is our Hope? It’s the promise of an abundant life in Christ, eternal life at death, and new creation at the end of the age. It is the promise that all things work out for the good of those who love Him and are called according to his

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purpose. And Paul says right there that everyone called and chosen (as we talked about last week) we are destined to be conformed into the image and likeness of God's Son (Rom. 8:28-29).

So we know what the hope is not; We know what the hope is; and we know that the strength of the expectation is directly proportional to the basis for that hope.

What is the basis of our Hope? How firm is the foundation? We begin with...

- **A reasonable inference.** An inference is an extrapolation. It's what the evidence suggests is true. All the historical evidence points to the fact that Jesus has indeed been raised bodily from the grave by God the Father. And if this risen Jesus went around saying things like "I am the resurrection and the life, everyone who believe in me, though they die, yet shall they live." I think it's reasonable to infer that he's telling the truth.

But we have more than a reasonable evidence to infer from; we also have...

- **An unbreakable promise. Now any promise is only as good as the character of the promise-maker.** Here are some highlights of just some big promises God made in the OT: God promised to send the Messiah in the OT. He promised to unwind and reverse the curse on humanity due to sin. He promised to send a son who would undo the works of the devil. He promised that that Son would be in the line of King David, that he would heal the sick, open blind eyes, set captives free in the Power of the Spirit; He foretold that this Son would be despised and rejected by his own people, pierced for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquity and sins, and that the punishment that brings us peace would be upon him instead, and that by the lash of the whip on his back we would be healed and restored in fellowship with God. And he also promised that this despised, crucified Son would die and see the light of life in resurrection again. He promised that his Son would pour out the Spirit on all people, young and old, men and women—the Spirit poured out in power to save and transform everyone who believes.

And God did exactly everything he promised to do. Listen, he makes good on his promises. He comes through. This is why Paul said that this hope doesn't disappoint us. It can't. Because the God who made the promise is faithful. The God who issues the promissory note is good for it.

We have an inference to the best explanation—a reasonable inference, and an unbreakable promise. But wait, there's more.

- **We have the experience.** We weren't just given evidence to examine so that we can make reasonable inferences from it. We weren't just given unbreakable promises from a God who backs them up. We have the actual presence of the Holy Spirit—God's Spirit dwelling in us.
 - We have New birth into a living hope—the promised Spirit is already at work in the life of the believer.
- **Ephesians 1:13-14 In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. 14 The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.**
 - This earnest payment is a first installment. And the first installment vouchsafes the future transaction. You know the rest is coming because part of it has already been given.
 - This first installment is a glimpse and a foretaste of future resurrection glory. You can see some of it now. You can have it in a qualitatively real measure now.

Illus. Years back when I was a car salesman at Dave Smith Motors, I would sometimes have a customer who ordered a custom vehicle from the manufacturer. They didn't want a stock vehicle off the lot—they wanted their truck or whatever, as custom as they could get it.

(Earnest Deposit Down): We required them to put about 20% down. That was the earnest payment, the first installment. That earnest payment was a pledge that the rest was on its way.

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(Documents Signed and Confirmed): Most often than not, I would offer to FedEx all of the paper work the contract so they could sign it so that the deal was done months before they ever visited the lot.

(Vehicle Stored Safely in a Secure Lot): When the vehicle arrived off the train we would store it all wrapped in protective plastic in a secured lot.

(Pictures Sent to Fuel Anticipation): While in that secured lot, the customer would text or email me to take pictures of it. I'd peel off the protective plastic and take 25-30 pictures, which just fueled their anticipation for their shiny new car.

(Eventually Delivery Day): Eventually they'd come to the lot, test drive it, and drive away with their shiny new car.

THAT'S THE KIND OF SITUATION WE HAVE IN CHRIST:

(1) THE SPIRIT AS OUR DEPOSIT GUARANTEEING A FUTURE TRANSACTION.

(2) DOCUMENTS SIGNED, JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH A DONE DEAL.

(3) OUR RESURRECTION PROMISE KEPT SAFELY IN THE SOLD LOT AS WE CATCH GLIMPSES IN OUR GATHERINGS OF HEAVENLY GLORY

(4) AND SOMEDAY, JESUS WILL RETURN AND WE WILL DRIVE AWAY WITH OUR SHINY NEW SALVATION.

We have evidence, we have a promise, and we have the presence of God's own Spirit dwelling in us to fuel our anticipation for better days.

And in the meantime...

1. We praise God in the midst of hardships.

2. We praise God for a new start and an enduring hope.

hope isn't circumstantial.

hope isn't self-referential

hope isn't perishable.

"A confident expectation of a future outcome where there exists a reasonable basis for the expectation."

A rational inference.

A promise underwritten by the character of God

We have the experience, a preview and a foretaste of glory with Christ. We gather to fuel our anticipation for a sure future.

A living Hope. We must choose to live in that hope.

Let's pray