

1 Peter 1:3-9

A Living Hope

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he gave us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴into an inheritance that is undying, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. ⁵Through faith you are being protected by God's power for the salvation that is ready to be revealed at the end of time.

⁶Because of this you rejoice very much, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various kinds of trials ⁷so that the proven character of your faith—which is more valuable than gold, which passes away even though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not see him now, yet by believing in him, you are filled with a joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Sure Hope

I.

He understood turmoil.

He had been there. He had bragged. He would be there in defense of his Leader, even if no one else would be. He had been brash. He pulled out his weapon to defend when his Leader was threatened. It was almost as if he were trying to say: “See? I *told* you all I would not desert.”

And then...he fled. Just like everyone else that was there that night, he got scared. Peeking around bushes and rocks and trees he crept around, following the soldiers to see where they were taking his Leader. He snuck into the courtyard, pretending to be one of the other lackeys so he could find out what was going on. When challenged, he denied being one of those attached to this man. He denied that he had ever known him.

The Leader went on trial. Despite having never done *anything* wrong, he was convicted and executed. You have guessed the name of the Leader; it was Jesus.

The other man was Peter. Yes, he understood the turmoil of emotions. Hope for a bright future with the Messiah had dominated Peter as he walked with Jesus during Jesus' earthly ministry.

Jesus tried to temper the expectations of his disciples. “Jesus said to them, “This night you will all fall away on account of me” (Matthew 26:31, EHV). Giddy with hope fueled by the Palm Sunday crowd that had welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem, Peter said: “Even if all fall away because of you, I will never fall away” (Matthew 26:33, EHV). Luke adds to what we know of Peter's bragging: “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death!” (Luke 22:33, EHV). Bold. Very bold.

When a person makes outrageous statements, sometimes we feel a need to back up our braggadocios claims. Pride led Peter to the brashness of pulling a sword to attack the soldiers who came to arrest Jesus in Gethsemane. Then fear was the emotion he knew best, as Jesus allowed the soldiers to arrest him. Peter, along with all the others, turned and ran.

Though now he was scared, he watched the trial. He heard the rooster crow. He hung his head in shame when Jesus turned and looked at him when his three-fold denial was complete.

Jesus died. His hopes were dashed. All was lost. The One he had looked to with such

confidence, the One in whom he had placed his hope, was gone. Dead. It was finished.

II.

I can say with some degree of certainty that *your* hopes have changed in the past few weeks. Hope has changed radically, hasn't it? We hope for things that are less exorbitant. Our hopes tend to be more basic, more immediate, more elemental, than they had been.

"I hope I can get back to work again soon."

"I hope we get back to "normal" as quickly as possible."

"I hope I can figure out how to keep the bills paid and food on the table until that happens."

"Well, *I* hope that any return to normalcy isn't made too cavalierly—at the expense of assuming the threat is over. Another outbreak might be worse than the first."

"*I* hope *I* don't get coronavirus—or any of my loved ones or friends, either."

You have probably experienced more than one of these hopes through the past days and weeks.

No doubt you have gone through a turmoil of emotions—highs and lows. I "hope" you have not sunk to the depths of despair Peter must have faced after Jesus died on Good Friday.

As we went through the Lenten season, we were reminded that all the problems and tribulations of the world are due to the fact that there is sin in the world. We were reminded that there needs to be a remedy for *that*, above all else.

Peter says: "You rejoice very much, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various kinds of trials" (1 Peter 1:6, EHV). You can probably think of "various kinds of trials" that have "grieved" you lately. Have you remembered to "rejoice very much"?

III.

Peter's original hopes had been misplaced. Not his hopes in *Jesus*, to be sure, but his hope about exactly *what* Jesus had come to do and what his own expectations for the Messiah looked like. He had been hoping for the wrong things. His hopes were political. His hopes were for this temporary life. Jesus came to fulfill bigger hopes.

Peter had learned. Peter had grown. When Jesus rose, Peter had an attitude adjustment. Jesus reinstated Peter. Jesus could use the temperament of Peter—his boldness was once his Achilles heel, but now it became an asset in his preaching.

Peter knew the truth, and was unafraid to speak the truth. After everything he had been through, he could jab his thumb at the middle of his chest and tell people: "*I* can tell you something about boneheaded moves. I can tell you about the turmoil of emotions. And *I* can tell you the truth about Jesus and what he has done."

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he gave us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3, EHV).

Peter's hope in Jesus did not stay in the grave. Jesus rose. Peter's hope was revived and renewed.

Real hope, true hope, *sure* hope, does not come from temporary things or political things. *Sure* hope comes from knowing that sin—the thing that kept you from a pure relationship with God—has been dealt with.

Peter was down in the dumps when Jesus died on Good Friday. When Jesus announced

“It is finished,” Peter thought all his hope was finished. He was depressed. He was in despair.

What was finished, however, was not hope. Peter’s hope was just being refined by fire. Though his hope “fell away,” as Jesus had predicted all his disciples would do, hope had been restored because of Jesus’ pronouncement from the cross. Peter came to realize that Jesus had paid for sin there on Calvary’s cross. A sure hope of a real relationship with the Heavenly Father was restored. Hope was alive. Hope was living.

“By his great mercy he gave us a new birth... ⁴into an inheritance that is undying, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4, EHV). That sure hope continues into eternity. Heaven is waiting, because you own forgiveness of your sins through Jesus Christ. An inheritance in heaven is unlike anything else. If you inherit property on earth, you have to maintain it or sell it. If you inherit money, no matter how much it is, it doesn’t last. Even if it continues to grow throughout *your* lifetime, eventually you lose it—for *you* die and must pass it on to other inheritors.

Your undying, undefiled, and unfading inheritance is heaven. Heaven means a relationship with God that is not just personal, it is present.

IV.

“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not see him now, yet by believing in him, you are filled with a joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8-9, EHV).

Though your hope is sure, you haven’t seen your Heavenly Father yet. You haven’t seen your Savior in person yet. None-the-less, you are filled with joy, because you know what is to come; you know that the salvation of your soul is complete.

“Because of this you rejoice very much, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various kinds of trials ⁷so that the proven character of your faith—which is more valuable than gold, which passes away even though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:6-7, EHV).

Faith is like gold. Gold is a valuable metal, yet when one finds a nugget in nature, there are impurities. The gold must be refined; dirt and other impurities must be removed. *Then* it’s value is increased.

Faith gets tested by fire, too. Adversities come in this life. You have been facing various kinds of trials your entire life. The current situation is just one more of those trials. This particular trial is shared among more than most.

But the character of your faith shines through. Because you live in the joys of Easter, you rejoice very much. Your inheritance in Christ Jesus is kept for you—undefiled and unfading. God grant you the peace the Lord Jesus announced to the disciples who met behind locked doors on Easter Sunday evening. Peace that passes all human understanding. Peace that comes because the forgiveness of sins gives you a sure hope. Amen.