

**SO GREAT A SALVATION - IN THE HOPE IT INSPIRES
I PETER 1:3-9**

NEED: HOPE

**PROPOSITION: GOD'S GREAT SALVATION PROVIDES A GOOD
AND BLESSED HOPE TO THE SAVED.**

**OBJECTIVE: TO LEAD THE LOST TO RECEIVE GOD'S GREAT
SALVATION AND THE SAVED TO ENJOY IT.**

INTRODUCTION:

Have you noticed the loss of hope in our society? Leslie Newbigin, a missionary statesman who spent most of his years of ministry in India, suggests that the terminal illness of the West today is its loss of hope. He finds this clearly in Europe among the masses who have given up on the future and are living meaningless lives on the edge of despair. With the exception of pockets of Christians he senses an atmosphere of doom in the air. According to this wise man this is something that has happened in just one generation. Just a generation ago the West throbbed with the hope that reason and technology would solve our problems and bring in a golden age. But all of this has been changed.

It is again against this background of despair that permeates the culture in which we live that we begin to see the greatness of God's salvation. God's salvation provides for those who receive it a blessed and good hope. Peter includes it among the mercies that God gives to those He saves. If we are to know the fullness of God's saving purpose in our lives we must not neglect the hope that He has given us. We will look into these words from Simon Peter to learn more about our Christian hope. The words were originally written to a generation of Christians that were going

through a time of extreme suffering. The Roman government had begun to turn its wrath toward those little Christian assemblies scattered across the world. Being a Christian was beginning to be considered a crime against the state. It is to these who lived in such difficult times that Peter spoke of a "living hope." So, if we are living in difficult and uncertain times this is a word for us.

I. THE BASIS FOR THE HOPE.

Hope for the Christian is a confident expectation concerning the future. It is not just a strong wish or desire. It is rather something about which the Christian has an unshakable confidence. Upon what does the Christian base this confident expectation? Peter suggests two underlying convictions upon which the Christian bases his hope.

1. A living Christ - a Lord who cannot be defeated.

"In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The resurrection of Jesus from the dead changed every thing. It first gave a basis for the faith in Him that would bring about the new birth. Some believe that this is the primary emphasis of Peter in this text. They understand him to be saying that we have been born anew by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This was emotionally and spiritually true for Simon Peter himself. When he saw Jesus hanging on the tree in shameful death, it was the end of everything for him. But when he was confronted by the living Christ on Easter, it was the beginning of a whole new life. The only way to describe it would be to speak of a new birth. It is true for us that we experience the new birth when we come to the conviction that God raised

Jesus from the dead and place our faith in this living Christ.

But it is also true that His resurrection is the basis of our hope. Our hope is not in forces within history that are going to make everything turn out alright. Our hope is not that some events are going to transpire which will make everything come out good in the end. Rather, our hope is based upon the confidence that Jesus Christ is alive and He is the Lord of history. It is based on the confidence that our future is in the hands of the living Lord Jesus. We are not following a dead leader.

Early in his cinematic career, Charlton Heston played the title role in a movie called "El Cid." El Cid was the Christian hero in the Spanish War against the Moslem moors. In a preliminary skirmish before the great final battle the Cid was mortally wounded. Hemorrhaging, he was carried back to the castle where he would soon die. Before his death, the Cid made his generals promise that he would be mounted on his horse in full armor and lead the awesome final battle with the Moslem Moors.

After the Cid died, the faithful generals did exactly as he had asked. They mounted him on his horse, clad in his armor and sent the horse on a trot out from the castle walls. The dispirited Spanish troops, knowing that he had sustained a mortal and deadly wound, looked aghast as their leader marched before them in the battle. They believed him to be alive by a miracle; he was in fact stone dead.

This is not so with the Christians following the risen Lord Jesus Christ. He is not a dead hero from the past or a mythological figure about which we have read. He is the living Christ who has the keys of death and hell in His hand. This is the bases for our hope.

2. A living word - a God who cannot lie.

Later in this letter Peter will remind the believers of the living word.

"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living and enduring word of God. For, all men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field, the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of God stands forever. And this was the word that was preached to you." In this book that I hold in my hands the living Christ has made promises concerning our future. It is upon these promises that we base our expectations for the future.

Missionary Harold Vokel who worked among the prisoners of war during the Korean Conflict, says that he saw thousands of the young men come to Christ. As they were disciplined in the internment camps, one book of the Bible drew them without fail. It was the book of Revelation which some memorized in entirety. Why was this so? This is a book that has the promise of God concerning the future. God has given to His people His description of the last chapter of human history. Based upon what God has said the end will be the child of God finds a life of hope and confident expectation.

So, we have as the bases for our hope a living Christ and a living Word.

II. THE BASICS OF OUR HOPE

Simon Peter gives us in a brief form the basics of our Christian hope. "In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you."

Peter draws upon his knowledge of the Old Testament to present the basics of the Christian message to us. When God brought His Old Testament people into the land of promise, family by family they received an inheritance. Their inheritance was a portion of the land of Canaan. This inheritance was to remain in the family throughout all the generations. The only one of the tribes that did not receive such an inheritance was the tribe of Levi. God assured that the tribe of Levi, which had the priestly responsibilities, that He Himself would be their inheritance. Peter is contrasting the inheritance that we are to receive with the inheritance that Israel received.

1. Our inheritance is heavenly rather than earthly.

Peter after describing the inheritance says that it is "kept in heaven for you." What ever we are to receive has been set aside for us in heaven and is being preserved for us in heaven. Their inheritance was an earthly inheritance. It was subject to all the elements that characterize the earth. Since it was an earthly inheritance, though it would remain in a family generation after generation, a particular individual could enjoy it only for a brief period of time. Our heavenly inheritance is one that can be enjoyed eternally.

2. Our inheritance is superior to the inheritance of Israel.

Peter uses three terms to describe this inheritance. He indicates that it can "never perish, spoil, or fade." These terms give us something very basic about the inheritance that is ours in Christ.

They indicate the superiority of our inheritance over that of God's Old Testament people.

"Never perish" means that the inheritance is death proof. Death will never be able to touch, destroy, or end our inheritance. Any inheritance you receive upon the earth is subject to death.

The inheritance you receive in Christ will never perish.

"Spoil" means that the inheritance is sin proof. The word used by Peter means to defile, or to have a defect or flaw. The word means that it is incapable of pollution. This is one of the glories of heaven. It is one of the glories of the new body we will receive in the resurrection. The new body will be "incorruptible." There will be no possibility of sin or evil defiling the body that we will receive or the heaven in which we will live in that body.

"Fade" means that the inheritance is time proof. The word means to wither, to lose its beauty or grace. This inheritance that is ours in heaven will be unfading. Everything will be kept in its original brightness and beauty.

We use to sing an old gospel song that's made the declaration, "How Beautiful Heaven Must Be."

This is substance of our hope. It is even now being kept in Heaven for us.

III. THE BLESSING OF THE HOPE.

There are a number of good things that come out of having such a hope.

1. It brings joy into life.

"In this you greatly rejoice, though for now a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials." The thing in which you can rejoice in the midst of any circumstance is the hope of the completed salvation that will mean a new body in a heavenly fellowship with the people of God and the presence of God forever. God's people always have a reason to sing because of their confidence expectation, their hope in the Lord.

2. It gives patience.

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, he writes, "We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 1:2-3). The hope that we have in Christ does inspire us to keep on keeping on in the midst of adversity. It is remarkable how much a person can endure as long as they have hope. Since we, the children of God, have a hope that grows brighter with every passing day, there is always this inspiration for patience and endurance.

3. It challenges us to purity.

John wrote about this hope and said, "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies Himself, just as He is pure" (I John 3:3). And so it does. When you have the confident expectation that the

Lord Jesus is going to come and at His coming you are going to receive a new body. When you have the confident expectation that when you see Him at His coming that you will be transformed into His likeness and will be allowed to live in His company for all of eternity, it gives you reason to seek purity and holiness in your walk.

This is the great salvation that God has given us. It includes the gift of hope. Surely, we need to have on our thanksgiving list the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ.

If there is no other reason for you today to open your life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior this is reason enough. His salvation is the only source of hope known to man. If you will receive His saving mercy, He will give you this wonderful gift of hope.