

THE GIFT OF HOPE

1 PETER 1: 3-5

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 that 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. Some have labeled that as the Greatest Generation. But all of this has been changed. The Greatest Generation has died, and their hope has been buried with them. Their children and grandchildren are left with despair.

What a contrast this situation presents to the witness of Simon Peter in the first century! Outwardly the Christians had no reason for hope. The power of the mighty Roman government was increasingly bringing death and destruction to powerless Christians. But Peter writes this word of doxology that celebrates the gift of “a living hope” by which we can live in a turbulent society.

This is a good word for us on this Easter Sunday morning. We have received a precious gift of a living hope.

David Dykes has given an acrostic which defines hope. Hope is Having-Only-Positive-Expectations. It is a way of looking to the future with expectancy. It could be defined as what faith sees when it peers into the unknown.

Let's explore these words of Peter together.

I. THE GIFT OF HOPE FOLLOWS THE NEW BIRTH.

1. This birth is a merciful work of God in us.

“...who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again.”

2. This birth is the spiritual impartation of the life of God to us.

“....who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope.”

The new birth is obviously the work of the Father through the Son by the Spirit.

The basic idea in the new birth is that we receive the life of God through Christ which changes everything. This new life makes it possible for us to relate to God in a new way and to enjoy the privileges of sonship in the family of God.

In our physical birth we received the DNA of Adam which was infected with sin and death. In the second birth, the spiritual birth, we received the DNA of the God which is eternal life.

The only people who have any basis for hope are those who have received the DNA of God through His Son. Have you been born again?

II. THE GIFT OF HOPE RESTS ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS FROM THE DEAD.

No one appreciated the resurrection of Christ more than Simon Peter. He spent two horrible days after his denial of Jesus on Thursday night, but Sunday morning changed everything. When he saw the empty tomb, he knew that Jesus was alive. And then Jesus came to him personally and assured him of His victory over death and the grave, and restored Peter to his place in the work. This changed everything! And still does! All of our hope rests on the glorious and sure resurrection of Jesus from the dead. If He had not risen, none of us would have any hope. Since He lives, we can have a living hope.

1. The resurrection gives us a living Savior.

. 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.

Sing it with me, “He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today.”

2. The resurrection makes the life of Christ available to us.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, (by grace you have been saved.) (Ephesians 2: 4-5)

As mystical as it may sound, it is true—when He died, we died; when He was raised, we were raised. We live in and through Him today. He lives in us and lives for us.

3. The resurrection promises our resurrection.

“But now, Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ, all shall be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15: 20-22)

The firstfruits were offered to God as a promise of things to come. When God raised Jesus from the dead, it was a pledge that He would raise all who believe in Him. Our Easter will come when He comes on the clouds of

glory. He will call all who have died in faith out of their graves to live with Him forever. This is our hope!

III. THE GIFT OF HOPE PROVIDES ASSURANCE FOR THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

Peter focuses on two elements in this hope. It is an inheritance, and it is the completion of our salvation. We are painfully aware that our salvation is not completed yet, and that we have not received our inheritance. Consider them!

1. It is the hope of a heavenly inheritance.

In order to share in the inheritance you must be a member of the family. You come into the family through the new birth.

This inheritance is “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

“Incorruptible”—like God, it is free from death.

“Undefiled”—like our Lord, it is free from sin.

“Does not fade away”—like God, it is free from the waste of time. It will never lose its luster and attraction for the people of God.

“Reserved in heaven”—is kept like a treasure awaiting our arrival.

2. It is the hope of a completed salvation.

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” “...receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.” (v. 9)

The consummation of our salvation awaits the Coming of the Lord. We live with the expectation that He will finish what He has begun in us.

Conclusion:

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. You can be born anew this morning, and when you are, you will have a living hope. This hope will sustain and give meaning to your life regardless of what may happen in this old world.

Let me invite you to turn from this world and its hopeless promises, and put your faith in the risen Christ. You will find in Him the life and the hope that you seek. Amen.