

"THE NATURE OF OUR LIVING HOPE"

I. Introduction

- A. We might say that hope is a matter of living in the present with confidence about the future.
- B. Easter shows how Christian hope also draws the past into this equation.
- C. When Jesus was bodily resurrected on Easter morning, a member of the human race entered into the life of the world to come.
- D. In his glorified human nature, Jesus put on the imperishable so that he could ascend to the right hand of God the Father in heaven.
- E. And this was not merely a matter of Jesus's individual experience.
- F. It secured the same blessing for all whom Jesus was given to save.
- G. This is why your hope as a Christian resides in what happened to Jesus on the first Easter Sunday.
- H. This leads Edmund Clowney to say that, in this passage from Peter's first epistle, "Peter writes of a sure hope, a hope that holds the future in the present because it is anchored in the past." [44]
- I. As we study these verses today, we will come to a better appreciation of what Peter means when he says that we have been "born again to a living hope."

II. Rooted in God's Sovereign Mercy

- A. We begin with verse 3, where we see that our hope is rooted in God's sovereign mercy.

1. The fact that Peter begins by blessing God makes it clear that God is the ultimate source of our living hope.
 2. And notice how God is described here.
 3. He is called “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 4. In the Old Testament, God is often referred to as the God of Abraham and of the other patriarchs.
 5. This was done in order to distinguish the true and living God, the God who made himself known to the patriarchs, from the lifeless idols that were worshipped by heathen peoples.
 6. In the New Testament, God reveals himself in all his fullness through Jesus Christ.
 7. This is why God is now known as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 8. It is only through Christ that we can have saving knowledge of the one true God. (see Jn. 17:3)
- B. Peter says that our salvation is according to God’s great mercy.
1. In other words, God is motivated to save us by his merciful character alone, and not because of anything that he sees in us.
 2. This point is further emphasized by what Peter says about being born again.
 3. We need to be born again because we are by nature dead in our sins, and are subject to divine judgment.
 4. But we can’t do anything to make ourselves born again.
 5. This is why Peter says that God “*caused us* to be born again.”

6. We don't have any more power over our being born again than we have over our being born the first time.
7. Of course, the new birth is evidenced by us placing our faith in Christ.
8. But faith is the *result*, not the cause, of being born again.

III. Secured by Christ's Resurrection

- A. Moving on in verse 3, we see that our living hope has been secured by Christ's resurrection from the dead.
 1. This is why Christian hope is a *living* hope.
 2. It resides in a living person, in the risen Christ.
 3. Christ's resurrection is a matter of historical fact.
 4. And his resurrection is the firstfruits of the resurrection harvest that will take place at the end of the age.
 5. As Edmund Clowney puts it, "In giving life to Christ, God gave life to all those who are united to Christ. God's elect have a hope that is as sure as Christ's resurrection." [46]
- B. We should remember that Peter was an eyewitness of Jesus's resurrection.
 1. He had the dramatic experience of being unexpectedly delivered out of hopelessness and brought to a place of confident hope.
 2. That resurrection hope fueled him for the rest of his days.
 3. He lived in that hope, and he died in that hope.
 4. The same thing can be said of every Christian.

5. Because we have a living hope, our souls will not be overcome by the disappointments, worries, and uncertainties of this present life.
6. Because we have a living hope, we will not sink under the billows of suffering and sorrow that will continue to wash over us as long as we live in this world.
7. And because our living hope resides in the One who conquered death, it will endure until we too are raised to immortality.

IV. Kept in Heaven

- A. Peter also speaks of our living hope as something that is being kept for us as an inheritance in heaven.
 1. This inheritance is the fulfillment of what God promised Abraham when he said, "I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." (Gen. 17:8)
 2. That promise was not ultimately about Canaan.
 3. Canaan was merely a type and shadow of something far greater, something permanent, something that the writer of Hebrews refers to as "a better country."
 4. Those of us who share Abraham's faith are numbered among his offspring, and this means we are heirs with him of that better, heavenly country.
- B. There are people in this world who seemingly have it easy because they are heirs to massive fortunes.
 1. As Christians, we are heirs to something that is infinitely better than any earthly legacy or estate.

2. The superior quality of the inheritance that we have in Christ becomes evident when we consider the way Peter describes it.
 3. He begins by telling us three things that it is not.
 4. First, it is imperishable, able to endure forever.
 5. And when Christ returns at the end of this age, we will be raised in bodies that are imperishable and thus fit for an eternal inheritance in glory.
 6. Second, our heavenly inheritance is undefiled by sin.
 7. When we enter into our heavenly inheritance, we will dwell in a world that is entirely unspoiled by sin, in glorified bodies that are entirely free from sin.
 8. Third, our inheritance is unfading.
 9. Unlike everything in this world, it never wears out but will endure for all eternity.
- C. Peter then goes on to say that this inheritance is being kept in heaven for us until the time that God has appointed for our reception of it.
1. The Greek term translated as “kept” in this verse can convey the sense of being guarded.
 2. This is the idea that Peter has in mind here.
 3. The fact that Christ has already secured this inheritance for us means it is beyond all danger and is perfectly safe.
 4. On top of that, verse 5 tells us that God is guarding us to ensure that we receive the fullness of our salvation when it is revealed on the last day.

5. We need to be guarded and protected.
 6. We face many threats in this world.
 7. As Edmund Clowney points out, "It would be small comfort to know that nothing could destroy our heavenly inheritance if we could lose it at last." [49]
 8. If we were left to our own power, we would have no hope of spiritual survival.
 9. But because we are being guarded by God's power, we can be confident that we will endure to the end.
- D. Notice what Peter says about how God guards us.
1. He does so "through faith."
 2. The faith by which we are saved is the faith by which we are kept secure.
 3. And this faith is not our achievement.
 4. Faith is the instrument by which we appropriate Christ and all his benefits.
 5. The fact that Peter says that *God* guards us through faith makes it clear that faith is not a work that we perform.
 6. Faith is something that God works and sustains within us.
- E. Lastly, Peter tells us that our heavenly inheritance is "ready to be revealed in the last time."
1. It has already been fully prepared for us.
 2. There are no finishing touches that still need to be completed.

3. Nothing needs to be added to it.
4. Christ secured it for us by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

V. Experienced by Faith

- A. This brings us to verses 6 through 9, where we see that, though this life is filled with trials and sorrows of many kinds, we presently experience our living hope through faith.
 1. In verse 6, Peter reminds us that we already experience the heavenly joy that will be fully revealed in the last time.
 2. Christian joy is not merely the joy of anticipation.
 3. It is also the joy of participation.
 4. We already possess Christ and the blessings that are found in him, and this causes us to rejoice in his salvation.
- B. At the same time, our joy in Christ is mixed with the griefs that are produced by our various trials.
 1. Peter says several things here that should shape the way we view suffering.
 2. First, he describes the period in which we are subject to trials by the phrase “a little while.”
 3. It doesn’t always seem like “a little while” to us, but that is only because we tend to lose sight of the big picture.
 4. As Paul points out in Romans 8:18, “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

5. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 4 he says, “this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” (v. 17)
- C. Verse 7 says that the trials that come into our lives are necessary for the testing and purifying of our faith.
1. Notice how this relates to what Peter previously said about faith being the instrument that God uses to guard us for our eternal inheritance.
 2. This requires that our faith be proven and strengthened through the fires of affliction.
 3. As Edmund Clowney explains, “Our trials keep us trusting; they burn away our self-confidence and drive us to our Savior... Fire does not destroy gold: it only removes combustible impurities.” [52]
 4. Trials remind us of our weakness and of our utter dependence on God.
 5. Trials might even be seen as the fuel that keeps our faith burning.
- D. The fact that God deems our trials necessary for our salvation means we should not view suffering in the same way that our non-Christian neighbors view it.
1. We are called to submit to our trials with patience and gratitude.
 2. We can do this because we know that God has deemed our trials to be necessary for our salvation.
 3. As John Calvin explains, “the godly bear sorrow, as the tamed ox the yoke.” But when the reprobate are afflicted, it is like “when a bridle is by force put in the mouth of a ferocious and refractory horse; he kicks and offers every resistance, but all in vain.”

4. This does not mean we shouldn't be troubled by our trials.
 5. After all, Peter readily admits that suffering produces grief.
 6. Jesus was certainly no stoic in the face of his suffering.
 7. We don't have to pretend that suffering doesn't produce grief, and hardship, and pain.
 8. But we do need to remain confident that our God is sovereign over our trials, and that he has a good purpose for us in them.
- E. In the final verses of our text, Peter says two additional things about saving faith.
1. First, he reminds us that faith is not a matter of sight.
 2. Christians love Jesus, believe in Jesus, and rejoice in Jesus, but we do not presently see Jesus.
 3. Our life in this world does not line up with the fact that we are heirs of a glorious inheritance that will endure forever.
 4. We really do have a living hope, but we have it by faith, not by sight.
 5. Our hope is as real and as solid as Jesus's risen body, but that body is presently ascended to heaven and seated at God's right hand.
 6. Yet even though our hope is veiled, by faith we begin to realize something of the greatness of our living hope.
 7. This is what Peter means when he says that our present joy is "inexpressible" and "filled with glory."
- F. The last thing that Peter says about saving faith has to do with its goal.

1. The outcome, or goal, of our faith is the salvation of our souls.
2. Notice that Peter says we are already obtaining that outcome.
3. This is true even though we are still waiting for the day when we will receive salvation in all its fullness.

VI. Conclusion

- A. The living hope that we have as Christians is a hope that can never die because it is grounded in Jesus's resurrection from the dead.
- B. He lives forevermore.
- C. Amid all the changes, uncertainties, sorrows, and troubles that you experience in this world, you can know for certain that the foundations of the city of God rest secure, and that your God will bring you to your eternal home.