



A BETTER RESISTANCE | A LIVING HOPE (2)

January 24, 2021

1 Peter 1:3-5

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

BACKGROUND

Here in this passage, Peter introduces “hope” as the Central theme of his letter. He blesses God because he has given Christians new life and has guaranteed their future glory. This enables them to live with purpose and joy, even in the midst of hardships and suffering. No matter what is happening in the world around them, Christians can have the strength to live with confidence in God and in his future for them. Peter reminds them of the foundation of this hope, which is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and which he saw for himself firsthand. He tells them that they have been born anew to this hope and have before them a glorious inheritance that awaits them. As they take hold of this inheritance, Christians can live with unshakeable joy as they grow in the knowledge of the greatness of their salvation and all that they have received through Jesus Christ.

PURPOSE

To understand how hope in Jesus Christ shapes a Christian's identity

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Peter begins his letter with a praise to God. How can praising God be a helpful remedy when our hearts are weighed down with discouragement because of suffering? How can the practice of gratitude change our perspective?
2. According to this passage, what does it mean to be “born again”?
3. How does being “born again” to a living hope change and transform the way Christians understand their identity? What practical difference does this make in daily life?
4. Hope is a powerful force that drives us forward in life. Hope is confidence about the future that it will ultimately be better than today. So why do you think that Peter refers to Christian hope as “living” hope?

LEADER'S NOTES

Question 1: The purpose of this question is to encourage members of the group to think about the importance of practicing the discipline of gratitude. We can so easily forget all the good we have received and all the good we can be thankful for to God. Even more so, Christians often do not think about the greatness of their salvation and all that God has promised them in Christ. By dwelling on the good, they can often see their circumstances from a more accurate perspective. By regularly practicing this discipline, Christians can deepen their hope and faith in God.

One practical way of doing this is setting apart time each week (perhaps) to make a list of everything, big or small that comes to mind when you think about the things you are grateful for. As a starting point, you can run through categories such as your relationship with God, your relationship with others, your physical health and well-being, your church and community, and your work and vocation. You can think of the past and how God has cared for you along the way.

“A hope that holds the future in the present [is a hope that] is anchored in the past.” – Edmund Clowney

Question 2: The purpose of this question is to understand how Jesus' resurrection from the dead enables new spiritual life. According to this passage, to be “born again” means to experience an active hope in God through the resurrection of Jesus that looks forward to the future that God has promised. New birth makes this hope “alive” in the life of the believer.

In our natural state, we are all “spiritually dead” in the sense that we are spiritually unresponsive to God. Because of our innate sin, our hearts are inclined away from God and towards ourselves. This means that none of us can have a deep and personal relationship with God apart from Christ. But Jesus' resurrection from the dead changed that. When a person places their hope and faith in Christ, they become deeply united with him. So, the death he died, they also died to sin and self. And in his resurrection, they are made new. So, to be “born again” means to receive new life that comes from the Spirit of God that allows a Christian to experience the reality of God's Kingdom in the present time. See John 3:1-8. When a person is “born again” the world looks different. Whereas, a person once lived without seeing any evidence of God in the world, now God's word becomes the very truth that illuminates all knowledge of the world.

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but not I am found
Was blind, but now I see*

Question 3: New birth is having the ability to receive the grace of God that is offered to us in Jesus Christ, and to live in joyful response to that grace. For the Christian, this means that neither our successes nor our failures define us. Rather, they experience the ability to trust in God and to increasingly find their home in him.

This question is an extension of question 2 and relates hope to identity. A person's identity is shaped by what they believe is true about themselves. Often, this is based on many

factors such as upbringing, vocation and other factors relating to social status and power.

Christians may sometimes envy those whose financial future seems secure because of their birth, like sons or daughters of a wealthy family who are heirs of a fortune. Peter tells his readers that they have far surpassing reasons to rejoice in what God has in store for them. Such confidence changes the way we think about our present circumstances and what matters most. When one understands what Peter is writing, he or she understands that the title “Christian” is of greater value than any other title one could have. What a privilege to bear the name of Christ!

Christian hope transcends all other factors and it can give a Christian deep confidence about their standing and value to God—which ultimately matters most. This means Christians have confidence and joy in spite of their circumstances. On a practical level, this means that a Christian can endure any hardship as they cling to the hope of Christ.

Question 4: The purpose of this question is to see how Christian hope continues to grow over time. In comparison to Christian hope, all other hope in this world is dead in the sense that all other hope will ultimately fail. Christian hope is living hope because Christ is alive. This means that the good news of the gospel is not merely wishful thinking or “hoping for the best.” It is a reality that Christians can experience in the present time as God assures us of the truthfulness of his Word and the trustworthiness of his character. The God of all Creation is pleased to give his children an eternal inheritance that is kept for them through faith.

“All of God’s promises come true in Christ. There is more to come, for Christ is to come, but our living hope is real in our living Lord.” – Edmund Clowney