

1. Why Do We Need Living Hope?

- a. We are suffering (v5-6)
 - i. Humanity has brought suffering upon ourselves when we exited the peace of God by thinking that we could do it better.
 - ii. **We lost step in the dance, and now we’re stepping all over the toes of God, of each other, of ourselves, and of creation.**
 - iii. This pervasive and self-exalting rebellious attitude toward God has made ourselves out to be His enemies (Rom 5:10)
 1. As such, we are against Him in this, believing ourselves to be not merely as wise as God, but **wiser than God (I wouldn’t do it that way), more righteous than God (His rules are stifling and foolish), and greater than God (I am the Captain of my soul)**
 2. Thus, God cursed us with death
 - a. Death is the opposite of the peace with God: it is the de-creation of the way things are supposed to be (worship of God, love for one another, stewards of His creation for His glory)
 - b. This de-creation that we experience here on earth (suffering of violence, shame, depression, death, etc.) is but a foretaste of the ultimate de-creative judgment of God in the last day (the second death)
 - c. These present experiences are a mercy of God to warn of us the ultimate death
 - iv. Suffering exists because of this sin, and if we are going to suffer well we need hope that is not only outside the circumstance of suffering, but ultimately we need an answer for its root, sin
- b. Hope is necessary because there is no way to get through life unless you know how to get through suffering, **and you can’t suffer well without living hope**
 - i. How we live today, with joy or joylessly, is due in large part to what we hope in *and whether it is alive – capable of true, eternal, qualitative life in the face of these deaths*
 1. What are you living for?
 2. What you live for will dictate *how* you live today
 - a. Two women, same job, 85hrs/wk, no vacation, one paid \$40k/year, one paid \$40m/year
 - ii. How we deal with suffering and evil in this world **reveals what we hope in (or don’t hope in)**
 1. How do we usually respond to suffering?
 2. **We are told to “keep ourselves safe”, “just take care of yourself”, and “When times get tough, don’t worry about others, just worry about yourself.”**
 3. **But Peter doesn’t do this. Instead, he basically says that when times get toughest, pour out your lives for the sake of others because you have the imperishable seed of life within you**
 - a. *Having purified your souls, by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brothers, love one another earnestly from the heart. (1:22)*
 - b. *Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (2:11, 12)*
 - c. *Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, which you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly. (2:21–23)*
 - d. *Do not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling; but on the contrary, bless; for to this you have been called, that you may obtain a blessing. For “He that would love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile; let him turn away from evil and do right; let him seek peace and pursue it.” (3:9–11)*

e. *Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins.* (4:8)

4. We can cling to a return of goodness after suffering
 - a. Try and change our circumstance because we believe that our circumstance is the problem, not the inability of the object of our hope
 - i. If I get a new spouse, a new job, a better house, more reliable car
 - b. Yet, what happens when suffering continues or if you never receive back what **you've lost**
 - i. Family member dies? Fired and unemployed? Foreclosure and homeless? Government registers your family as terrorists? Living in a death camp?
 - c. Peter tells us, also, not to trust in such things as our hope, to stop being conformed by our former over-desires, because everything else fades away, like petals off a flower (1:14,24,25)
 - i. We may hope in family, but ultimately even our family fades, thus our hope is not secure
 - ii. We may hope in wisdom, but ultimately even our minds fade, thus our hope in knowledge or wisdom is not secure
 - iii. We may hope in strength to protect us, but ultimately every strength is limited, and everybody faces death, thus our hope is not secure
 - d. Only the eternal God never fades, and only His Word lasts forever (v25)
5. We can cling to something eternal outside of our present experience that has objectively answered *decreation*, i.e. death
 - a. Our hope is in the cornerstone, Jesus Christ, the foundation and solid rock upon **which we are called chosen, precious to God and "my people"** (2:10-11)
 - b. Believing that Jesus defeated de-creation (death) and promises you the ultimate change in circumstance enables us to suffer with a hope that is active
 - i. To love others in the midst of suffering, to serve, to give rather than self-centeredly grab and divide, to honor the emperor rather than disobey

2. This Living Hope in the Risen Jesus Enables Us to Rejoice and Agonize *Simultaneously*

- a. The Christian's **new birth** gives a very intriguing view of suffering and hope and its relationship to joy
 - i. vv6-7 – **"In you this you greatly rejoice, even if for now you are grieved by various trials..."**
- b. **This is an incredible paradox: the living hope that Jesus brings you causes "great joy", even though "now" you have been suffering various trials**
 - i. **These are both present tense verbs "greatly rejoice" "you are grieved" both at the same time**
 1. **Also, this word "trials" is the same word used of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when he was so "troubled" or "stressed" that sweat poured off of him in streams of agony**
 - a. **"my soul is troubled even unto death" – "I am crushed with sorrow"**
 2. What this means that we cry out in sorrow *at the same time* that we are greatly rejoicing
 - a. **It's not that we were rejoicing and now we're sorrowful, or that we were grieving, but now we rejoice**
 - b. They occur at the same time – presently!
 - ii. This is considered impossible by most of us because our hope is actually a *present* circumstance
 1. **If a changed circumstance is your hope, you can't have both joy and sorrow because the circumstance is singular**
 - a. **I can't rejoice until I have better health, better romance, better boss, better house**
 2. The average Christian does this, too, because many of us don't really believe what v6 says
 - a. He believes that suffering will come, but that there will also be joy *later*
 - b. **This is why we struggle to agonize well, we kind of think that we're not supposed to cry out in agony because it's not faithful or hopeful or joyful**
 - i. **"Just praise God anyway!" – not what Peter is talking about**

- c. Did Jesus rejoice on the way to the cross? Was the garden a moment of joy for Him? What were his words on the cross if not agonizing? “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”
 - c. Not only do they exist simultaneously in this living hope, but the experience of suffering actually increases the experience of joy when the gospel is believed
 - i. **“more precious than gold refined by fire”**
 - ii. The suffering is the crucible which raises the joy value of the experience of the living hope
 - 1. **A living hope, since it’s not** based in your present circumstances, means that when you lose your circumstance the sorrow drives you into what gives you hope and joy
 - 2. It drives you into Jesus, your living hope, and you get stronger, your hope gets stronger, **your circumstances haven’t changed**, but your hope grows purer and your dependence upon Jesus runs deeper and His strength and love is poured out upon you to joy
 - iii. The way that you suffer as a Christian is that suffering kicks on faith, drives us to Jesus, raises our joy and enables us to suffer
 - 1. The new birth gives us the ability to suffer without hardening our hearts, but instead to soften and rejoice with hope by believing in the risen and living hope of Jesus
 - 2. This type of hope keeps us from running away from suffering, but enables us to face into it fully with a living hope and not flee from it or harden our hearts towards it but to rejoice in a greater and deeper way
 - 3. This means that Christians are always happier and sadder than we would have ever been without the new birth, and always stronger and weaker than we ever would have been without the new life to living hope
 - d. This is an astounding heart – deeply sad and deeply joyful at the same time!
3. How Do We Obtain This Living Hope?
 - a. How can we love well, and greatly rejoice at the same moment that we are experiencing such tragedy and pain and suffering against our very souls?
 - i. We need a *new life, a differing quality of life* that strengthens us with living hope.
 - 1. The new birth from God gives us a new relationship between suffering and hope and joy that is different than any other persons relationship between this present suffering and this present joy
 - ii. Apart from the new birth, suffering & joy consume each other and cannot exist simultaneously
 - b. This new life to a living hope is rooted in the resurrection of Jesus to hold an inheritance imperishable like Him, through the gospel which was proclaimed
 - i. This hope is based upon the resurrection of Jesus comes through the proclamation of the gospel
 - 1. **“born again into a living hope...through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead” (v3)**
 - 2. **“born again...through the living and abiding word of God...the gospel which was proclaimed to you” (v23,25)**
 - ii. The gospel is the proclamation not of some moral code that you must adhere to in order to have life, but it is the announcement of what God has done and accomplished in the singular person of Jesus of Nazareth, through his death for our sin and shame AND through His life for our hope
 - c. We are born anew by God into the living hope which has to do with these things:
 - i. Imperishable inheritance, kept in Heaven for you, guarded by faith
 - 1. Look at the utter guarantee of these words, their eternity, their surety, their certainty
 - a. Imperishable, undefiled, unfading
 - b. Kept and Guarded
 - 2. This means that nothing anyone can do, including you, to corrupt it, defile it, fade away!
 - a. This is the ultimate safety for the sufferer! Nothing can steal this away!
 - b. No matter what loss and grief that you may experience on earth, your honor being stolen, innocence defiled, your very life poured will be able to separate you from Him

- ii. The resurrected Jesus is keeping praise, glory, and honor to be revealed for you!
 - 1. This praise, glory, and honor is not for Jesus (although there will be!)
 - a. **“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one...so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (Joh 17:22-23 ESV)**
 - b. God will honor His children on that day! Your shame will be removed and you will know what it feels like to be well-spoken of by God, beloved, delighted in.
 - 2. This is all by repentant faith, note, the humble dependence upon Jesus as our eternal hope of glory, Christ in you!
- iii. Thus, your salvation and hope of glory is KEPT for you, being guarded not by your faith, but by HIS FAITH, is an act of total GRACE!!
 - 1. The gospel proclaims that the love of God is so far superior to the ugly hatred of my sins that Jesus is my absolute substitute – JC died for enemies!
 - a. 2 Cor 5:21 – God made him sin so that we become the righteousness of God
 - 2. And He lives to hold it, to keep it, to secure it for you!
 - a. 1:21 – **“God raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God”**
 - b. This is why the resurrection of Jesus matters to your salvation!
 - c. Jesus has walked through death itself, the ultimate unknown, so that we have certainty of His Word
 - d. "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. (Rev 1:17-18)
- iv. **The Gospel of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection reveals that Christians live on Saturday,** between His death (our death with Him) and His resurrection (our resurrection).
 - 1. Knowing that your glory and surety and acceptance with God is kept for you empowers you to endure suffering with joy – **Friday’s work accomplished, Sunday’s Life on the way!**
 - a. **What’s coming is the ultimate security, the ultimate joy, the ultimate wealth, the ultimate LIFE!**
 - 2. When you believe this, you endure these present sufferings as light afflictions in comparison to the *eternal weight of glory* that is being kept for you and ready to be revealed when Jesus, the risen Savior-King, returns
 - 3. When you see Jesus bearing your suffering on the cross and raised to keep and protect your honor by His grace, according to His mercy and love, it empowers you to living hope

We are born again to a living hope because *Jesus lives to hold secure our ultimate joy* by His grace. And because Jesus lives I know that God is for me, even in the midst of this suffering! If God sent His Son to die my death to pay for my sins, to purify me from lawlessness and to redeem me for Himself, then I know that God is for me! If Jesus lives to hold my destiny secure, to fill me up to all the fullness of what I am meant to be, then I rejoice now! If God is for me, what suffering will *destroy* me? What loss? What grief? What act can separate me from the Almighty foundation of reality and beauty and good and holy to which I am called to enjoy? Where is my hope but in my Savior, the only one who can hold my destiny secure and proved it by raising from the dead.

“He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies! Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, yes who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who surely intercedes for us.”
(Rom 8:31-34)

In Jesus, we **don’t come to a God removed from suffering, but to a God who didn’t have to, but lovingly chose to enter** into our suffering, to feel our shame, to bleed with the sin infinitely opposed to Him. We come to the suffering God who swallowed our death to bring us to His presence in the land that needs no hope, for sin will be melted away like dross with one look upon His glorious face.