

We Have a Living Hope

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[0 : 00] I'll talk a wee bit and mention a couple of things from the end of the chapter as well.! And he said vehemently and clearly, I will die for you.

And the Lord Jesus Christ replied by saying, you will deny me three times. And he did say, he would remind him also or predict that his untimely death would be very difficult as well.

He would know what it is to suffer persecution. But when all of that happened, of course, Jesus is arrested. Jesus was eventually crucified, all of which Peter saw.

Peter saw Jesus on the cross. Peter saw Jesus dying on the cross. Peter saw Jesus laid in a tomb. And Peter and the rest of the disciples, in a sense, scattered or disappeared and locked themselves away because of fear of what might happen to them.

[1 : 32] What happened to Jesus might also happen to them. What happens then is that some women came running up to Peter and the fellow disciples to tell them that Jesus is raised from the dead.

They ran, and according to John's gospel, you can read it yourselves, and they go and they see an empty tomb. But it's really interesting that as they go from there, they lock themselves away in a room.

And it tells you why. John records it for us. He was there. We were fearful of the Jews. They lock the room. There is nobody can get in.

And what happens then is that Jesus, the resurrected Jesus, appears in the room. And, of course, they're terrified.

And Jesus simply says, peace be with you. I'm not entirely sure it would be that easy to persuade me to peace, to be at peace, if I saw the person on the cross and in the tomb appear in the room with me.

[2 : 42] Of course, we know why. But he demonstrates to Peter the words of Scripture that the grave couldn't hold Jesus.

Yes, he laid down his life as a ransom for many. The perfect Son of God gave his life to dead sinners that we might have life.

But the wonder of what Peter now reveals to these suffering Christians is that Jesus didn't remain dead. He was resurrected from the grave. We met him face to face.

In a locked room, the resurrection body is different. And what is even more amazing that Peter, when he writes these words, was also the same person that would meet Jesus on a beach a few days later and have breakfast with Jesus, the resurrected Jesus.

And there, Jesus would restore the bungling Peter. And that's why we love Peter, I think. I don't know, maybe you don't, but I do.

[3 : 50] Because in my life, I see the mistakes and I see Peter's mistakes. And I have a sense of hope that I, too, can know the continual redeeming love of God for my mistakes, too.

It's just amazing to see. But it's this thought that I want you to hold in your mind as we turn to 1 Peter. The one who writes the testimony of what it is to have a living hope is the one who saw Jesus die, breathe as last, shed his blood, and was raised again on the third day to life by the power of the Spirit.

Who walked with the disciples, who talked with the disciples, who explained to the disciples that all of the Old Testament had been pointing to him. It is such a marvelous experience and insight.

And now he writes to these Christians in the five towns, shall we say, that are being persecuted because of their faith in Jesus Christ. It was a time when Paul and Peter would be put to death, mid-60s, shall we say, of 60 AD, 65 AD, around that sort of time.

And he is writing this to people who are experiencing great trial because of their faith. And they were probably beginning to either doubt or wobble in their faith.

[5 : 18] Now, who hasn't had a wobble in their faith? Maybe health issues. Maybe things that have happened to us and we have a wobble. We start to question. Lord, are you really walking with me?

What is this? And it's interesting that Peter didn't turn around to the churches and say, I'm really sorry that you're experiencing great trial.

It breaks my heart. What he does is, he doesn't diminish that, by the way. He goes straight to the very foundation of their lives and their relationship with Jesus.

He goes straight to the fact that they have been called by God, saved by Jesus through the sprinkling of his blood, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, they have a living hope. Not a maybe hope. Now, I said earlier to the kids that we have this thing in Lewis, this hope in Lewis.

[6 : 22] You know, we can even say, yes, I believe in Jesus, but I don't know if I'll get to heaven. No, no, that isn't biblical.

When we trust in Jesus for our salvation and have a living hope, we're trusting in him and what he has done, what he has completed, what he has fulfilled, that he has risen from the dead, that he ascends to the right hand of God the Father and continues to intercede.

It is all dependent on our relationship with him. If you have Jesus as your Savior, you have a living hope.

It's all to do with him. It's on him, through him. And so that's really important for us as we delve into this bit of scripture today.

And the first thing, of course, in verse 3, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He's just oozing with a sense of joy and privilege and blessing. And it's just expressive.

[7 : 32] Praise be to God, as we would sing maybe the additional element to Psalm 100. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him, all creatures here below. Praise him above ye heavenly hosts.

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It's this expression of a believer who knows the Redeemer. Praise be to the Lord, the one who has provided salvation, who has redeemed his people.

So what does he then express? It's so important for us to understand that when we are going through trials in life, the challenges that each and every one of us face, the questions that we have, whatever it might be, here Peter underlines again the foundation.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ because of his mercy. Because of his mercy.

It's a great challenge to us hearing that because of his mercy. Justice is getting what you deserve.

[8 : 44] Mercy is not getting what you deserve. Grace is getting what you do not deserve. That is what we receive.

Grace, we don't deserve it. But in Jesus Christ, we also get mercy. Mercy is such an amazing blessing given through the sacrificial work of Jesus.

Everything that we are as believers, if you are a believer today, you know the mercy of God. You know that steadfast love.

And God's steadfast love isn't in the absence of judgment. It's in the presence of it. They work hand in hand. What do I mean? There is not a person in here that surprises God.

There is not a person. I mean, when I had backslidden way years ago, I would always try and persuade myself to come to church and do better. You've got to do better, Barvis.

[9 : 47] Do better. And I would come in and try and hide wherever I would be. And I would just turn up in church, which is a good thing, by the way.

But the battle was much deeper. A lack of understanding of what it meant just to understand the mercy of God. And Lord, I'm sorry I messed up.

I messed up again. Lord, help me. And in his steadfast love, he does again and again and again. And gives me and every believer the grace of repentance.

Daily repentance. That great term named in a book, St. Claude B. Ferguson wrote, the grace of repentance. Go get it. It's worth reading every word of it.

True love. The love of God doesn't exist in the absence of judgment. There are no surprises here today. There are no mistakes here today. Not one of you.

[10 : 51] We might make mistakes, but there are no mistakes. God knows everything. And he demonstrates his mercy for you. Wherever you have been, there is nothing that you have done that God's mercy can't redeem because of the powerful, sacrificial love of Jesus.

Nothing. Nothing. There's not one person, the sin of one person here today that overwhelms the steadfast love of God in Christ Jesus.

Not one. So that is this mercy that he speaks about. He understands that God has always been active right from the beginning of the fall.

At the fall, when he exclaims, the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. The serpent will bruise his heel. That whole picture of mercy is strewn right through the Old Testament until the arrival of Jesus, the seed of the woman.

Hence why Peter calls him here as the seed, the imperishable seed. He is the seed of the woman who would overcome the world, who would overcome sin and our rebellion within us and bring us home because he is merciful.

[12 : 18] And it is the great joy of every Christian to know today that mercy. And it is exactly that mercy that is always, always on offer for every moment you take, for every breath you take in your life.

That mercy, if you haven't trusted in Jesus, King Jesus, it's on offer constantly. But there can be a time when that ceases, when it evaporates in our final moments.

If you haven't, I beg you to follow him, to receive this mercy, to understand what he is doing. That mercy then is explained that he has given us new birth, born again, born again, not of Adam's seed, but the imperishable seed, God, the Christ, the Savior, the seed of the woman.

Through him, we're born again. We start again. We have a restoration of our relationship. Now, when we talk about the great sin, in churches, we talk about sin.

Now, almost inevitably, we're thinking about things that we do. But the great sin, ultimately, is unbelief or inner rebellion.

[13 : 46] That is the great sin. Other things are follow-ons. As Jesus would say, you deal with the heart. The other things are from the hand, what flows from the heart.

That's essentially what he's saying in the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, I should say. And so here, you understand the call to new birth, to a new start with him.

If you haven't, that is the blessing that you are being offered, a new birth. And what does that mean? It means that through new birth in Christ Jesus, you believe in him, you have a living hope. And I'm just going to quote a person first of all, and then two or three scriptures afterwards. I want you to understand the power and the depth and the majesty of this mercy, this new birth, this call for you to follow him.

And if you're a believer here today, I want to challenge you. I will challenge you at the end. But it's a challenge for you. How now shall you live?

[14 : 57] In the title given to one of Chuck Colson's book, how now shall you live in light of this? Do we hide?

When you have this living hope, do you hide? So we're going to challenge ourselves at the end for that. I don't know, as I do, I'm like a kid in a sweetie shop, and I don't say what I'm going to do for the last, and I just chuck it in now.

But we're challenged with this. And of course, if you're a non-Christian, that's the case today.

Edmund Clowney, in his commentary, writes, Peter writes a letter of hope.

The hope he proclaims is not what we call a fond hope. We cherish fond hopes because they are so fragile. We hope against hope because we do not really expect what we hope for.

But Peter writes of a sure hope, a hope that holds our future in its hands, a current hope that is anchored in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus.

[16 : 05] Peter knows that God's salvation in Christ means deliverance from sin and death and on God's fulfillment of his promise for salvation.

That is because God has accomplished his salvation in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and you are through him ready for his return.

You, in Christ, are ready for his return. Now, very often, I get the question about end times. And I've stopped really thinking about it other than this.

Exactly what he said at the end. Be ready. Be ready now. Be ready. Be ready for his return.

We don't know the time or the hour. You can be near the kingdom. You might have been sitting in the pew here for, in the pew that you're sitting in for many years because your family has.

[17:08] But here's the answer. Be ready. Be ready for his return. And to be ready for his return is not to be found in church, in a pew, but in your relationship with him who is merciful in his great mercy.

Come to him and be ready. That's how you're ready. Now, the rest is, I don't know when he's going to return. There might be indications. I don't know. But in Christ, I'm ready for whatever happens, whether it's trials, sickness, or whatever.

I am ready in Christ. That's the answer that Clowney here says. He gives you. Be ready for his return. The only way to be ready is in Christ.

Now, in a couple of bits of Scripture, Paul writes, first of all, in Corinth, he talks about the challenge of those people who were beginning to bring doubt about the resurrection.

And he really challenges them about that. And he writes this. He says, For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.

[18:16] And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. You are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

All in Christ will be born again. Now, to one of my favorite chapters in the New Testament, I need you to hear the cast iron guarantee of a living hope.

I need you to hear what it's saying. And in many ways, it would have been suitable for Paul to write to these struggling, suffering Christians as well in these five towns. Romans 8, verse 33 and onwards.

[19:33] Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God in his mercy, that's my added bit, who justifies.

Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died. More than that, was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and also interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written, for your sake, we face death all day long. We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[20:51] God. If there is a bit of scripture I would like you to read when you go home today before you eat your lunch, read it together. Read it together.

Chew over it. Meditate on these words. This is the power of Christ. The grave couldn't hold him and in him it cannot hold you. Sin cannot hold you.

It puts it to death. We are raised with Christ. We have new life. It is incredible to understand this because on this foundation you live out the Christian life.

You live it out. Far too often we go into our shells. We end up fighting cultural wars. Everybody's waving their flags anti this, pro that and we're getting swallowed up in it all and we're getting quieter and quieter as believers.

But we have this living hope. You have it in Christ and there is nothing nothing means nothing.

[21:59] Absolutely nothing can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. It's truly fabulous. It changes everything.

And we're all concerned about the changes that happen in our culture. You have them here. We have them elsewhere. But nothing can rob you of this.

Not even Satan. He lost the battle. He can damage you but you can't lose this. It is cast iron.

Nothing can separate you from the Lord, the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

And I pray then that it would work in you. Mold that into your thinking and understanding and you're looking at people around you and storing away. How many people I see and I work with or used to work with or play football with or fight with or whatever.

All of these things back in the day. Now I'm seeing all these people. Many of them don't even come to church. They don't engage. But that is our calling. We have this message that is our calling to go. [23 : 09] Not to retreat. To get into fight mode. To bicker. This is our calling. This is what we're called to. Paul also said, we were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Very quickly then. You're thinking how am I going to finish in this time? Probably not. I might go over a minute or two or whatever. If the clock bothers you I'll go over it anyway probably a wee bit but not much.

The joy then he says to these people is this that you have an inheritance. Now my wife often tells me you're the only Lewis man I know that has never been left a croft. That's true.

I haven't but I don't know if I'm the only one. I doubt very much that I'm the only one. But we are heirs of God. What an incredible privilege we have.

We are heirs through the work of Jesus the atoning work of Jesus the resurrection power in our lives we have an inheritance that cannot perish. It's undefiled.

[24 : 32] It's unfading. It feels like the Christian witness is fading in the church of Christ. But God hasn't changed.

He's still sovereign. He's still ruler. He's still the merciful one. He's still the one who brings people to life. I had the opportunity a few months ago to speak about Mission International and to share incredible stories.

One of them in Malawi when the second blast of Cyclone Freddie absolutely obliterated Malawi. And the pastor we were working with we were working with several but he was the main guy he was a translator he starts preaching in these camps.

Tens of thousands and he proclaims Christ and all I get was a message pray for me for the Muslim leaders are looking for me with red eyes. They're full of rage because over 50 Muslims became Christians and nearly 600 came to faith.

Is God working? Yes he is. And he still uses you as the body of Christ. It's not just ministers who stand up here and preach.

[25 : 46] He uses you and your testimony and this reality in your life is what he's calling you out for. There is no hiding under the bed. You are a body of Christ you work together and you share this reality together and it's a living testimony of it being together.

It's imperishable it's undefiled it's unfading this is kept in heaven for you. That's the promise. It's kept in heaven for you. It's like an anchor into eternity.

Why? Because Jesus is alive. He's resurrected he is alive and at the right hand of God the Father interceding for you. That's how certain it is. And finally you get to this verse in verse 5 where it says what's really together unfading and kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Now I think I've talked enough about the ready to be revealed stuff. Okay? Jesus is coming again. You now understand all of that from what I've already said. But it's interesting to me that as you go on in this chapter and then into chapter 2 it became very clear through Peter's writing that there were things happening within the church.

He talks about loving your brother intently loving each other deeply and driven by love the body of Christ driven by that unifying love that keeps him together.

[27 : 31] Now I've heard various comments about love in my time as a preacher. Oh love love love love what about the law or something derogatory as if love was some thing just you know wavy thing.

But isn't it interesting that when Jesus was asked to give a synopsis of the Ten Commandments isn't it interesting that he says love the Lord your God with all your heart mind soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

Interesting. What is the first fruit of the Spirit mentioned? Love. Now Peter said this to a people who by all accounts were beginning to he says in chapter two briefly and I want to go to John to finish put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander put it away put it away chuck it get rid of it get it out of sight because that should not belong in the body of Christ that is giving Satan a foothold to bring division in a time of great trial which is probably bringing doubt about their relationship with Jesus and the certainty of a living hope hence why he emphasizes all of that get rid of it put it in the bin if I can use all the descriptions you get the idea get rid of it it's just destructive

it's just damage it breaks friendships it breaks churches that's what he's saying to them now where have we heard that before this love one another deeply well it's in John 13 isn't it in the upper room where Jesus powerfully just after he revealed that Judas will be the one to betray him he says the words now the son of man has lifted up it's time to prepare for me to return to the father to fulfill what

God has called me to do to lay down my life final few hours are here before I return then he says this to love one another deeply as I have loved you love one another the world will know me by the way you love one another it's a variant that lasts a little bit but essentially saying the same thing how would you like to be known today is it as someone who attends free church chemistry or a disciple of Jesus surely that's the answer surely that's secondary whatever value and joy we have meeting together here the first principle has to be

I'm a disciple of Jesus if you're a disciple of Jesus then how do you love one another how do you love one another because I believe in the first principles here there are plenty other things that we can challenge ourselves with but here is the basis the foundation that is built upon the way we love one another unifying one another facing challenges together have difference of opinion with each other by how we love one another like Christ loved us Christ had just revealed a betrayer and his words to the disciples is love one another why because he knew the enemy would divide he knew the enemy would maim that's why he's saying love each other like I have loved you that surely is the first building block of everything that we should have as a body of

[31 : 51] Christ we're putting we're imitating Christ that is essentially the fruit of the Spirit imitation imitating Christ in our lives that should be our joy that is our privilege and he equips us and intercedes for us and helps us to do so that's the challenge that you face so you go from here ready to be challenged what comes next ask the question you've got great preachers around here ask the question how do we grow in Christ how do we have stronger bonds together you pray with one another you love one another that's the foundational principles to mission the trouble is we get so engrossed with the culture and the wars that we have in the culture we're forgetting to mission the culture we're forgetting the calling to go ye therefore into all the earth including our own town and go and proclaim the name of

Jesus the good news of Jesus to whomever even people that we might have fallen out with over the years it's time to learn to put these things right now another thing and I'll close with this I promised I'll close just about on time now I did have the privilege again I mentioned this but I want to do it again because I feel myself that I learned so much of this moment in Rwanda!

that I want to try and show you that God can work even in extreme circumstances and obviously if you are at the prayer meeting you'll know exactly what I'm going to say.

When we were out last year in Uganda When we were out last year in Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, in that middle trip we went to the genocide museum and it's truly heartbreaking, terrible, there's just nothing that you can say that even remotely gives you a good feeling.

It was just terrible. 800,000 people dead, killed in about 100 days. After that we went to a church.

After that we went to a church. My predecessor, Hugh Henderson, did a commissioning of a building that were over a thousand people in African style. Don't complain if you've got an hour and five minutes. Just saying. We were five and a half hours. And it was just incredible. Right? So the next two days, four of us had the opportunity to preach.

[34 : 16] And I was the last of the four. And afterwards we went for lunch and I'm sitting beside Stephen. It's just like I'm still there. Stephen and Bonnie, the other African guy who's the assistant with the Bishop of Kigali, Bishop Amoti. Brilliant, brilliant people.

And then Stephen starts telling us his story. That he lost his whole family in the genocide. Every single one. Close family, extended family, all killed. And I'm looking at the other three guys across the table and I'm going, what do you say now? What do you say in this moment?

And it's just, I'm looking at them and they're looking at me. Well, you're a team leader, mate. I didn't know what to say. And then he says, you know, Roddy, so when you were preaching today, two or three of my elders and some of that congregation were the people who killed my family.

I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to say. Then he explained, after the genocide, I became a Christian.

And there was one time I was praying to the Lord. And the Lord made it absolutely clear to me, hear this. This is what he said to Stephen. Rwanda will never survive unless you forgive.

[35 : 36] Now, anybody who knows my past will know that my instinct will be to fight. I was struck dumb at what this guy was saying.

As we came away that day, there are more things I could say, but as I came away that day, all of us in the car were silent. And what we discovered was this.

We just saw the power of Christ in someone's life. That he wouldn't allow Satan to get a foothold to bring division. To bring an end to the potential of the work of the church in that area.

Absolutely incredible. That he understood. Every day he would stand in the pulpit. They wouldn't have one like this. It's a lower platform.

But he would be speaking to the people. And you know what? Every day is an opportunity to give Satan a foothold. Every day is an opportunity to allow bitterness to overwhelm him. Just bitterness.

[36 : 43] Enough bitterness to bring hate. But 26 years later. And a school of 2,000 people. And a thriving church. Testimony.

Testimony. To the magnificence of the power of God in someone's life. Imitating Jesus. Because you see, he knew forgiveness.

His forgiveness through Christ. He knew what it meant to him. And he knew that through the power of Christ. He could forgive others. That is something we need as believers.

To stand out from the crowd with. God bless you. Let's pray as we close. Lord God, our Heavenly Father.

Lord, we thank you today for the incredible sacrifice of Jesus. That we are covered in him. That you have us covered. And through him we have this living hope.

[37 : 47] This imperishable, undefiled, unfading, living hope. We're also so delighted, Lord, that you are holding us now. That your power is holding us now.

Helping us now. Strengthening us now. And we know that in your power. Forgiveness is possible. Transformation is possible. All of these things we've spoken about today.

Are all possible because of your majestic grace and love. And so we pray for every person here.

That we would rest today in Jesus Christ. The Savior of our soul.

The Savior who was raised from the dead. Defeating sin and defeating the enemy. The grave and the evil one. Lord, in him, in you, we have a living hope.

And I pray that each and every one of us would rejoice deeply in our hearts today as we leave here. And may you be the glory. And may all the glory be to you today. You are an awesome God.

[38 : 43] And we love you and we thank you for your radical love for us. In Jesus Christ's name we pray. Amen. Okay, we're going to sing from Psalm 93.

Oh, is it Sing Psalm, is it? Yeah, Sing Psalm 93. It's on page 123. We'll sing the five verses.

The Lord is King. His throne endures, majestic in his height. The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength and might.

These five verses to God's praise. Amen. The Lord is King.

His throne endures, majestic in his height.

[39 : 54] The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength and might.

The world is broken, firm and sure. The world is broken, firm and sure.

We moved it cannot be. Your throne is strong.

And you have brought from all eternity. The seas, O Lord, have lifted up.

They lifted up their voice. The seas have lifted up their waves.

[41 : 09] And made a mighty voice. The Lord is broken, firm and strong. The Lord is broken, firm and strong.

The Lord is broken, firm and strong. Royal statutes, Lord, stand firm of changing His pure word and holiness and virtue of ours for endless days.

Praise the Lord. May your mercy and grace and peace which we find in you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, may these blessings rest upon each and every one of us, not only now, but for every day as we wait patiently for your return, because we know in you, Lord Jesus, we have a living hope.

Lord, we thank you, and may the glory be all yours in Jesus' name. Amen.