

## STUDIES IN FIRST PETER (The Elect's Heavenly Hope – 1:3-12)

### Introduction:

- I. Without hope life is hardly worth living. Man longs for hope. Man is sustained by hope and without hope man struggles to survive the drudgery of everyday living. Sometimes the only thing that can help a person make it through a particularly difficult time is the hope of a brighter day.

Illus. The Dying Boy:

The school system in a large inner-city had a program to help children keep up with their school work during stays in the city's hospitals. One day a teacher who was assigned to the program received a routine call asking her to visit a particular child. She took the child's name and room number and talked briefly with the child's regular class teacher. "We're studying nouns and adverbs in his class now," the regular teacher said, "and I'd be grateful if you could help him understand them so he doesn't fall too far behind." The hospital program teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain, struggling to survive. Upset at the sight of the boy, she stammered as she told him, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left she felt she hadn't accomplished much. But the next day, a nurse asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize. "No, no," said the nurse. "You don't know what I mean. We've been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment. It's as though he's decided to live." Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization. He expressed it this way: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?"

This boy's attitude changed and he started to fight for life when he realized there was hope. Hope does the same thing for those of us who are Christians. It helps us to have a better attitude and outlook on life and it causes us to fight hard to achieve the end of our hope. This morning, I want us to go back to the book of 1 Peter and observe "*The Elect's Heavenly Hope*."

- II. Last time we looked at 1 Peter, we examined "*God's Elite Election*." And let me tell you that no one has a better hope than God's elect (ver. 3-12). Peter reveals four things worth discussing about this hope that we have.

### Lesson:

- I. **The Superiority of Our Hope (ver. 4).**

Why is our hope as Christians superior to the hope sustained by those of the world? The truth is there are several factors that make our hope better than any other, but in our text Peter reveals the superiority of our hope by emphasizing its very nature. Peter uses three terms in ver. 4 to describe the inheritance of our hope. Our inheritance is *incorruptible*, i.e., it is not liable to corruption or decay. Our inheritance is *undefiled*, i.e., it is not susceptible to contamination. And our inheritance *fades not away*, i.e., its beauty and splendor is perpetual.

How different is the hope of our inheritance from that of an earthly inheritance? What can you inherit in this world that doesn't soon lose its attractiveness and its appeal? In fact, what can you inherit in this world that doesn't at some point perish altogether? Can you think of anything? You inherit money and before you know it, it is being spent by someone else and soon it is all spent up. You inherit a house and before you know it the roof is leaking and the floors are squeaking. You inherit your father's business and before you know it instead of you running the business, the business is running you and your health begins to fail. You see, earthly inheritances don't offer much hope. But our hope involves an inheritance that is endless, eternal and everlasting. Our hope is permanent, perpetual and predetermined. Our hope is unchangeable, unmovable and unalterable. Our hope, Peter says, fades not away. You see, our hope is reserved for us in heaven. Now, this leads us to our next point.

## II. **The Security of Our Hope (ver. 5).**

Have you ever gone to a hotel and found that they mixed up your reservation and didn't have a room for you? That happens with earthly reservations, but not with heavenly reservation. As Christians we have a room reserved for us in our Father's heavenly house. Jesus said,

*John 14:1-3*

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

Now how can we be sure that our room is being reserved? Peter said that we are being kept (ver. 5). The word translated *kept* is a military word that means *guarded* or *shielded*. *Strong* says that this word for kept means to hem in or protect. *Adam Clarke* says, "The true disciples of Christ are under the continual watchful care of God, and the inheritance is guarded for them." *Barnes Notes* says, "The idea is, that there was a faithful guardianship exercised over them to save them from danger, as a castle or garrison is watched to guard it against the approach of an enemy." So then, the word *kept* points to the security of our heavenly hope. Now this security under consideration has a divine side and a human side.

### A. **The divine side: we are kept "by the power of God."**

If we were kept by our own ingenuity, our hope would be precarious at best. If we were kept by our own strength, the devil would have no problem having his way with us. But the fact that we are kept by the power of God should give us confidence and assurance in regard to our hope. Now, what power is Peter talking about? We know that God has all power. We know that God has miraculous power. We know that God has creative power. But what power keeps us in good standing with God so that our inheritance and our hope remains secure? I would suggest to you that Peter is referring to the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16). God has provided for us His complete will for our lives through the written Word

revealed by the Holy Spirit. And that Word is able to guide, guard and protect us against all the assaults of the devil (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Tit. 2:11-12; Jas. 1:21; Psa. 119:11, 105). Without the power of God's Word to shield us against the evils of Satan, sin and the world, we wouldn't stand even a fighting chance.

**B. The human side: we are kept by the power of God "through faith."**

In order to continue in this "kept" state that Peter is talking about in our text, we must continue in faith. The question is, is it possible to lose our faith? The answer is a resounding yes (1 Cor. 15:1-2; 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Tim. 4:1). Now, understand this: departing from the faith doesn't mean that one stops believing that Jesus is the Son of God. Departing from the faith means that one stops abiding in the gospel of Christ, i.e., when one ceases to live by the gospel, he is no longer living a life of faith and his state of security is lost. So, if we want to remain safe, we must stay within the fortress that God has set up around us by living a life of faith according to the word of God. This is the human side of our security. So the bottom line is this: we are safe just as long as we want to be (Jn. 10:27-29).

**III. The Significance of Our Hope (vers. 6-8).**

What is the present significance of our hope? What does our hope of heaven do for us right now? Peter tells us. The hope that we have causes us to rejoice in Christ (ver. 6). The Greek word translated "*ye greatly rejoice*" refers, not to some casual sense of happiness, but rather to a state of exuberance. Strong tells us it means to exult or properly, "*to jump for joy.*" I have to tell you right now, if you are a Christian you have no business being in a permanent position of sadness and sorrow. If you are a Christian, you have no business being under the undeviating dilemma of distress and despair. If you are a Christian, this morning, you have no business being constantly agitated by anger and animosity. Why? Because you have hope and Peter tells us that this hope causes us to greatly rejoice; it causes us, ladies and gentlemen, to jump for joy.

Christians

As a third-century man was anticipating death, he penned these last words to a friend: 'It's a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians, and I am one of them.'

*Moody Bible Institute's, Today In The Word, June, 1988, p. 18*

Are you one of them? Someone says, "No I'm not because there are times in life when I'm sad and sorrowful." That doesn't mean you're not a Christian. Listen: I don't want you to misunderstand what I'm saying. Hear me again on this: Christians shouldn't dwell in a *permanent position* of sadness and sorrow, and I emphasize *permanent*. As Christians we shouldn't be constantly sad. But things

happen in life that cause us pain. There are bumps in the road of life and splinters in the fence of living and every once in awhile we get stuck. In fact, Peter wrote this epistle at the height of Neronian persecution against the saints. These saints were going through very difficult times. Today we may have trials for different reasons, but trials come upon all of us from time to time (ver. 6).

The word “*heaviness*” means *to be under distress or to be sad*. What causes this sadness? Peter says manifold temptations. The word “*manifold*” means *various in character*. And the word “*temptations*” means *to try or test*. And so, there are a variety of circumstances in life that come in the form of trials and tribulations, dangers and difficulties and sometimes even disasters that test the condition of our faith. Notice Peter writes of the trial of your faith in verse 7.

Listen to me: A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted! Do you remember the parable of the sower? Jesus said that some seed fell upon stony ground where there wasn't very much earth; thus, when they sprung up and the sun came out, they withered because they had no root (Matt. 13:5-6). In His interpretation, Jesus tells us that the sun represents tribulation. The point is those who allow the trials of life to cause them to wither and give up on Christ, are those who are not grounded and rooted in the faith. They are those whose faith is not true and so they quit when the going gets tough. If you are a true Christian, the trials of life won't hurt you, they will help you. If your faith is for real bad times won't cause you to run, they will cause you rise because you never stop believing that God is with you and therefore you never let go of your hope.

There is a picture of an old burned-out mountain shack. All that remained was the charred debris of what had been a family's sole possession. In front of this destroyed home stood an old grandfather-looking man dressed only in his underclothes with a small boy standing by his side. It was evident that the child was crying. Beneath the picture were the words, “*Hush child, God ain't dead!*”

Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, we serve a living God. We serve a God Who knows all about us and the everyday struggles. I know that at times this truth is harder to accept than others, but listen to me: God ain't dead! At the height of your personal problems, God ain't dead! At the moment when your pain is most pronounced and your agony is most apparent God ain't dead! We just have to hold on to our faith. Remember now, faith is our part in being kept (ver. 8).

Someone says, “Why does God allow us to go through difficult times?” I'll tell you why – it's because trials have a way of purifying us. This is illustrated by Peter when he refers to gold being tried with fire (ver. 7). Gold in its rawest state is put into the refiner's fire to burn away all the dross and impurities. The gold that comes out of the fire is more valuable than the gold that went in. Even so, the furnace of affliction will burn away the imperfections and weaknesses of our faith much more so than ease and prosperity. Trials and tribulations can draw us closer to God and help purify us as Christians if we allow them to.

So then, the point in all this is that we as Christians must go through life with the spirit of joy. This doesn't mean that we never have our moments, even days, of sadness because life can sometimes be tough. But our day to day disposition,

our common characteristic, even when we have trials of different kinds, should be one of rejoicing. This is the constant message of the Bible: Matt. 5:11-12; Rom. 5:3; Jas. 1:3. We continue to rejoice through it all because through it all we still have the hope of an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled and that fades not away and that hope is real because our faith is real.

#### **IV. The Salvation of Our Hope (vers. 9-12).**

Now Peter closes this section by telling us that the end of our faith is the salvation of our souls (ver. 9). How special is this hope that we have? How exciting is our hope? Is our hope really something that can sustain us through all of the ups and downs of life? Yes, when we remember what the salvation of our hope involves. Let's look for a moment at the *where* and the *what* of our hope. Heaven is the where of our hope and our glorified body is the what of our hope. Please be advised that we don't have an earthly hope, we have a heavenly hope. We are looking forward to being with God in a place where John tells us there will be no sadness of any kind or sorrow of any sort.

*Rev 21:4*

*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

Listen to me: heaven is a place where there will be no Kleenex company because their product will no longer be necessary. This world is filled with tear-stained eyes and the sound of people in sorrow, but in heaven those things will be no more. That's the where of our hope and we will be there in glorified bodies just like the one that Jesus now has.

*2 Cor 5:1*

*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

*1 John 3:2*

*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

This is our hope. Now Peter concludes this section by demonstrating just how valuable this salvation is. He does this by emphasizing two things:

##### **A. The Prophets searched for it (vers. 10-12a).**

Too many Christians take this salvation lightly. But the prophets of old searched diligently for it. The word *inquired* in ver. 10 means "to investigate" and then "to crave." The word translated *searched diligently* means "to explore with energetic application." The Old Testament prophets wrote about this salvation and studied closely what God revealed to them. They saw the sufferings of the Messiah, and the glory that would follow but they could not fully understand how everything would play out. You see the prophets of old did not have as much as we

do to go on. They wanted to know more but it wasn't time for the mystery of salvation and God's reconciliation of mankind to Himself to be revealed. They craved. They investigate. They explored but it wasn't for them to discover. But now in Christ the mystery has been revealed and the shroud has been removed. Now we know, not how God reconciles man to Himself, but we know the end of that reconciliation, even the salvation of our souls, and we know what that means, i.e., a home in heaven with God. How much more ought we crave this salvation?

**B. The angels desired to look into it (ver. 12b).**

What we as Christians know and what we are a part of is so special that even the angels of heaven in times past desired to look into what we are now experiencing. Paul spoke of this in the book of Ephesians (Eph. 3:4-11). Our salvation should always be taken very seriously. Why? Because it is the climax and culmination of all that God has prepared in regard to His creation of man. How can we ever take the salvation of our souls lightly?

**Conclusion:**

Yes, Christians will suffer. Sometimes our suffering will be random. Sometimes our suffering will be enforced, or at least allowed by God to purify us. Sometimes our suffering will be just a part of our lot as committed Christians. But through it all, God's elect has a heavenly hope that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Let's rejoice!