

Reading: 1 Peter 1:1-12

Theme: Our Living Hope through the Living Saviour.

Easter is centred on God and what He has done in and through the Lord Jesus, especially His death and resurrection. Throughout the ages we have mixed into the celebration of Easter many things - bunnies, chicks, eggs, hot cross buns and chocolate! It is to be centred on the death and resurrection of Jesus. In v3 of this passage, Peter links our new birth – our salvation, our new life from God to our living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I want us to look at those aspects of this verse using 2 headings:

1. Our Living Hope.

This living hope is something given to us and we cannot earn it by being religious, moral or good enough. It is given us by God in His great mercy as He gives us new life. This new life is a work of God and we cannot make ourselves alive. The Bible talks about being born again by and through the work of the Holy Spirit and we are brought to trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. Whether or not we are a Christian, we need to pause and wonder at this new life that God freely gives people like us. Nothing is or can be greater, more wonderful and amazing in our lives than being born again, having this new life from God. It is of God's mercy and grace and it takes His power to give life to those who were dead, dumb, blind and deaf to God and alienated from God. It transforms rebels and enemies into His children and affects our eternal standing with God from being condemned by Him, to being right with Him forever. None of us could ever earn or deserve this, but God does this because He is the God of great love and mercy.

In fact this experience of new birth is the greatest thing that will ever happen to us - not just in time, but eternity. We may feel going to heaven will be far more wonderful and amazing, and be the greatest part of salvation. Yet that will only be a change of place and experience of what God has brought about in our lives. The “hardest”, the most wonderful and glorious work has already been carried out - sinners made saints, rebels made children, the lost not only found, but are safe forever, the spiritually dead made spiritually alive to God. Yet all that heaven holds for us is part and parcel of God's work in us and our new birth brings us into a living hope, *"unto a lively hope"* (AV).

To become a Christian, to be born again, to have new life, to have this new birth from God is thrilling and amazing, and yet Peter adds that it is *"into a living hope"*. What is meant by this living hope? People use *"hope"* in various ways - all to do with uncertainty *"I hope to go to..., I hope to marry... I hope to get a job doing... I hope Wales will win the Rugby World Cup next year! I hope to recover from this illness..."* Hope used in this way has to do with uncertainty about things in the future.

Yet hope as it is used in the Bible, especially how Peter and NT uses it, **is not about uncertainty, but certainty!** It refers to the reality of things we do not yet fully see or possess. John Blanchard once said *"'Hope' is biblical shorthand for unconditional certainty!"* Peter could write of this hope, this certain expectation in v13 - we can fully set our hope on this grace, all God has said He will do for us when Jesus Christ returns and is fully revealed in all His beauty, power and

awesomeness. I would argue that our living hope is unpacked and laid out before our view in v4 & 5 - all that inheritance for us, it is kept safe and secure for us; but also we are kept, guarded, shielded for that inheritance. It isn't going to be worthless and useless when we get to have it fully and we will not miss out on it by something that happens to us. I remember a number of years ago going around a National Trust house down in Cornwall. The estate was enormous and the family were wealthy, and one room had memorabilia from WW1 and there was the uniform of the son and heir of the last owners, but he was killed in the war and never had the full and total benefit of his inheritance, all its wealth and provisions.

No such thing will happen to us who are born again of God - we have an inheritance secure which we are going to receive and that is our certain and expected hope. This hope is not a passive hope, nor a dead hope. We are told by James that faith without works is dead i.e. it isn't true faith - because faith has life and gives rise to works and actions. This hope is a living hope, as opposed to a dead hope. The AV translates it as a "*lively hope*". We can see pictures on television of children in disasters or famines, who, while they are alive, are still, quiet and only just alive. Now contrast that with a lively child in your house - you know they are alive! The word used here means living as opposed to dead, or lively as opposed to inactive.

This living hope is to be an energising hope, an animating hope - not so much causing us to be Christian activists and always on the go, although the Puritan Thomas Brooks said "*A man full of hope will be full of action*", but it will cause us

to have an active hope of heart and it will show in our lives. We are given new birth into this living hope. I suppose it is speaking of the active conscious enjoyment of the assurance of salvation. If we are born-again, then the devil cannot take that away from us. Yet he will try to rob us and starve us of the joy of our salvation which is to be a living, a lively hope and he cause us to go about as if being a Christian was a burden and not the most wonderful and thrilling thing that could ever have occurred to a human being.

This living hope is centred on God and all that He has done for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Don Bashan wrote "*Our hope lies not in the man we put on the moon, but in the man we put on the cross.*" This living hope centres on Jesus Christ and all He has accomplished for us and how we are brought into an eternal covenant with God, that God's power was involved out of necessity, because we were hopeless and helpless and in our being born again we are brought into this living hope. NT Wright wrote '*Easter week should be an eight-day festival, with champagne served after Morning Prayer or even before, with lots of Alleluias and extra hymns and spectacular anthems. Is it any wonder people find it hard to believe in the resurrection of Jesus if we don't throw our hats in the air? Is it any wonder we find it hard to live the resurrection if we don't do it exuberantly in our liturgies? Is it any wonder the world doesn't take much notice if Easter is celebrated as simply the one-day happy ending tacked on to forty days of fasting and gloom? It's long overdue that we took a hard look at how we keep Easter in church, at home, in our personal lives, right through the system. And if it means*

rethinking some cherished habits, well, maybe it's time to wake up.'

At this point we need to pause and consider do we have this living hope? We may say we are converted, have been born-again by God and yet we may struggle, we may doubt, we may fear we will not make it to heaven. If that is the case then consider that this hope is living and it is to continue to grow and develop in us. It is to become bigger, stronger, fitter and more mature as time goes on. That is part of our Christian life and development - so that our living and lively hope, will become more vigorous, it will develop in intensity and at times we can have such an expectation of all the certainty of our eternal hope and it seems that our faith is set firm for a future time (*one more definition of hope*) and we would be happy to be with Christ there and then, having heaven in our souls, even before our souls are in heaven.

Often we can see this in mature believers - their body failing, but there is such liveliness about their hope as it is a living hope and it gets clearer and stronger the nearer they get to death and we can see this hope living, active and pulsating in them. Pray that we would all have such a rich maturing living and lively hope. This is a hope that is to comfort us in our trying, testing and hurting times. Peter wrote of this living hope to those who were going through hurting, struggling and painful times and situations.

The same living hope is our birthright as God's children even today, no matter our situations in life. Pray God will make this birth right hope to be real and consciously active in our lives

in all situations and it would pulsate as we are assured of who we are in Christ and what glorious certainties we have set before us. If we are not a Christian this evening, then without Christ there is ultimately no reason whatsoever to thank and praise God. Yes, we may thank God we have had a good home, lovely family, great abilities and wealth and its right to thank God for such, but one day they will be gone forever, for we have no hope. Those who are Christians, whatever we have or do not have, whatever we do or do not do, then we are to recognise our living hope is provided by God in our new birth by His power and because of the living Saviour and pray that we will enjoy it. We should do for it is connected to:

2. Our Living Saviour.

I suspect we have been to funerals and the widow or widower has said "*My best friend is dead!*" If we are a Christian it is because our best Friend died for us and is **not now dead!** In fact He Himself said (Revelation 1:18) "*I am the Living One: I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!*" We are to realise that our living hope is intimately connected with the living Saviour. For us to be able to receive God's great mercy, or for us to be born again, it was not a case of God waving a magic or divine wand. Grace and mercy put the great plan of salvation into action and that plan hinged on, focused on the Lord Jesus - God the Son became a real man, lived a perfect life and willingly stepped into our place as our substitute to take our sin and all the punishment from God we deserved and He paid the price for us (*redeemed us*) by His death (1:18-19). His death was not some noble sacrifice, but by His death He secured our complete salvation and His resurrection declared in large print that there is a living hope, that the

sacrifice He made was accepted and the Son of God is the Conqueror over death.

The hope He gives when we are born-again into this living hope is rooted, springs from His resurrection. Commentators argue at this point about this fact and truth of the resurrection - is it the cause of our new birth, or of our living hope? I can't really see the difference! If the resurrection causes our new birth to spring out of it, then surely we have a living hope. If it causes our living hope, then that arises from our having the new birth through what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished in the resurrection. Thankfully we can let the scholars argue it out while we get on enjoying the new birth and the living hope He has given us. We know that without the resurrection of the Lord Jesus our faith would be in vain and we of all people would be the most miserable! We can rejoice that Jesus was raised for our justification and that justification is part of our being God's child and we are saved, not to live, die and rot, but His resurrection guarantees our resurrection one day. The best is still to come and Peter writes of it as our inheritance.

Whichever way we look at it, we will see the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the ground of our hope, of our new life here and all that lies ahead. As believers the Lord Jesus is our Head and we are His body and the 2 share, are united with the same glorious life. As He lives forever so will we. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:19 *"Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. **Because I live, you also will live.**"* As He was raised from the dead so too will we be. We have a

certain hope and it is written large and underlined through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

Yes, we will have conflicts now. Peter's first readers knew them also, but their hope was not in themselves, but in God who raised their Lord Jesus from the dead. Our hope lies with Him also. He has done this tremendous work and we have every reason to thank Him for raising the Lord Jesus and the promise it contains of our living hope. Christianity is not pie in the sky when we die, but also steak on the plate while we wait! The wonder of the new birth and the living hope it gives, is to be affecting us now as all these spring from the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and this living hope is to be worked out based on the reality of Jesus' resurrection.

At the start of v3 Peter wants his readers to praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and it's as if he starts a list of reasons why they and we should be praising Him. As we read what He has done for us, that it is guaranteed, underwritten by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we should live as children of the resurrection and praise God, have our hearts stirred and moved to worship Him who has done such amazing glorious things for us and remember the best is still to come! Having a living Saviour changes our view on things as we are on the victory side and have this One caring for us.

I pray that we would know this living hope shining bright in us, because we know the living Saviour who has given us it and that we will longingly anticipate all the fullness of what He will bring us - as Peter wrote of in the next few verses, but that is another subject!