

Easter Hope  
1 Peter 1:3-5  
 ABC Easter Sunday 4/4/21

On Dec 17, 1927, a US submarine (S-4, SS-109) was struck by the USCG Cutter *Paulding* off the coast of Cape Cod & sank immediately. The crew of 40 was trapped in a tube of death. Every effort was made to rescue them, but all ultimately failed. Near the end of the ordeal, a diver heard tapping on the wall of the sunken sub from the forward torpedo room where 6 men were trapped, but still alive. As he listened he heard the same question over & over: *Is there any hope?*<sup>1</sup>

That's a common question for many, especially this past year: *Is there any hope?* It's what parents wonder when the doctors say, *there's been an accident & your son is paralyzed from the neck down & there's nothing we can do.* Where's the hope for the mom-to-be who goes to her doctor for a routine checkup & hears, *I'm sorry, we can't find a heartbeat?* Or the man who stands by his wife's bedside as she lays dying? *Is there any hope?* Everyone needs hope. One writer expressed it this way: *We can live 40 days without food, 8 days without water, 4 minutes without air, but only a few seconds without hope.*<sup>2</sup> A psychiatrist wrote we all need hope, saying, *If I could find a way to package & dispense hope, I would have a pill more powerful than any antidepressant on the market. Hope, is often the only thing between man & the abyss.*<sup>3</sup> What is hope? The NT idea of hope is very different from our normal thinking about it. You ask, *Is the wearing of masks soon over?* & I say, *I hope so.* In other words, *hope*, as we use it, is a desire for some future thing which we're uncertain of happening. That isn't the way the NT defines hope. When Peter says in, **set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:13)**, he doesn't mean we should desire it & be uncertain of it. No, the coming of Christ is a matter of complete confidence for all Christians. So the command, **set your hope completely** means to be intensely desirous & fully confident that Jesus is coming again for His people. Another example would be Heb 6:11, **we desire that each one of you demonstrate the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end.** Biblical hope is an assurance, a certainty, therefore a full assurance God is going to do good to us & keep His word. Where is that hope found? You know the answer. It's Easter & you know what I'm going to say. The resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate reason to

<sup>1</sup> Story told at <https://ussnautilus.org/the-loss-of-uss-s-4-ss-109/>

<sup>2</sup> Swindoll, *Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*, p 274

<sup>3</sup> Dr Dale Archer, [www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/reading-between-the-headlines/201307/the-power-hope?amp](http://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/reading-between-the-headlines/201307/the-power-hope?amp)

hope. Easter Sunday points us to a **living hope**. It gives us a hope that'll satisfy every soul, a future so great & so glorious, that nothing else in this world can compare. & Easter shows us a hope in a Person that will never fail us: Jesus Christ. He's no longer dead. He is risen! & as He lives, He gives to us a **living hope** for a glorious future with Him. Turn to 1 Pt 1:3. Perhaps no NT writer captures so fully, yet so concisely, the glory of Easter better than Peter. **3**

Why could Peter make such a statement? How can this make a difference in our lives?

**1. FALSE HOPE** Before we get there, realize there are many hopes that are really no hope at all. Philosophies of despair surround us. *Eat, drink, & be merry, for tomorrow we die. You only live once so grab the brass ring while you can.* Those are the hopeless philosophies the world has. It's possible to cling to a hope that's worthless & often more destructive than having no hope at all. Almost 25 years ago, 39 members of the cult known as *Heaven's Gate* took their lives in the hope of linking up with a UFO that was supposedly traveling behind the comet Hale-Bopp. In videos found after their deaths, one woman said, *Maybe they're crazy for all I know, but I don't have any choice but to go for it because I've been on this planet for 31 years & there's nothing here for me.*<sup>4</sup> That's a woman in desperate need of true & certain hope. That's an extreme case & I pray none of us would fall victim to that kind of thinking. But most of us do buy into false hope at times. One way we do so is to tell ourselves things will get better. We try to build a case that our situation can't get any worse. & if it does, it won't last long. We use that thinking to try & create a sense of hope in us. But for many people this *things will get better* approach is a false hope because the truth is things might not get better. Another way we build false hope is to think, *I can do whatever it takes to overcome.* We tell ourselves, *If I suck it up, try harder, work longer, dig deeper, & be stronger, I'll make it.* But the truth is you might not be able to do what it takes. Better people than you & I crack all the time under the weight of life's burdens. I realize I sound really negative right now. That's not my goal. My point is that your hope must be based in reality to be valid. Hope that's based on wishful thinking is a hope not based in reality. That kind of hope is no hope at all. & that even applies to the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. If Jesus' resurrection is just wishful

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<sup>4</sup>By DEBORAH HASTINGS The Associated Press, 03/28/97, printed in the Kansas City Star

thinking or the product of over-active imaginations, it's no hope at all. What did Paul write? **If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is in vain** (1 Cor 15:14). The resurrection has to be real in order for it to provide a true hope. So how do we know it's real? How do we know Jesus was lying stone cold dead on Friday & then living, breathing, walking, & talking on Sunday? The answer has filled many books & my purpose this morning isn't to prove Jesus rose from the dead. But I'm convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that He did & so was Peter, an eyewitness to it. A pretty convincing proof of the resurrection of Jesus is Peter's behavior, who wrote this. This is the same Peter who, during Jesus' trials, denied he even knew Jesus 3x; the same Peter who during the crucifixion of Christ ran & hid for fear he'd be next; the same Peter who'd given up everything to follow Jesus only to find his world crumbling when the body of Jesus was removed from the cross & sealed in a tomb. Peter was crushed by what happened that Friday in Jerusalem. He was a man without hope, beaten, & defeated. On Saturday afternoon, if you could've chosen the person most likely to self-destruct, it would've been Peter. His hopes were dashed & destroyed. He was hopeless. Maybe some of you feel that way right now. You can relate to Peter. But Peter's story doesn't end there. A few weeks later, this very same Peter stands in Jerusalem & preaches to thousands of people, many of whom demanded Jesus be crucified. He tells them they need to repent of what they did to Jesus, because He was God in human flesh. Over the next few years he travels the world preaching the gospel. Several times he's beaten & imprisoned for it. Eventually, Nero has enough & gives him the ultimatum: *Stop preaching this resurrection myth or suffer the same fate as Jesus*. Peter makes his choice. According to some sources, he was forced to watch his wife's crucifixion before he himself wound up on a cross upside down, tradition says, because he didn't consider himself worthy to die as his Savior did.<sup>5</sup> Where did this hopeless, helpless man get the courage to live that kind of a life & die that kind of death? There's only one answer that makes sense. Peter didn't mindlessly hope that Jesus was alive. You don't take the risks he did based on that kind of hope. He didn't wish or imagine or deceive himself that Jesus was alive. You don't let people nail you to a cross over wishes, imaginations, & self-

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<sup>5</sup>Barclay, *The Master's Men*, (quoting Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3, 30) p 27

deceptions. There's no explanation of Peter's strange behavior other than the fact that Jesus was alive. The only answer for the life & death of Peter was that Jesus actually rose from the dead. Peter believed it & so do I. 3

Notice that it's *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ* that we have a **living hope**. Christ's resurrection is the sure & solid foundation of our hope. This is what we've come to celebrate today. Yes, Jesus died, but He's dead no longer. The One who was buried is no longer in His tomb. The stone is rolled away & the tomb is empty! God the Father raised His Son to life that He might reign forever at His right hand. The God who died is now the God who is alive forevermore. This truth is meant to lead us, not just to reflect & wonder, but to worship. We're to worship the Father for raising our Savior & we're to worship the Son for defeating the power of sin & death through His resurrection. God says Jesus rose from the dead. God also says that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we're all wasting our time, because without the resurrection, Christianity is a false religion that shouldn't be followed. The way God says these things to us is through the Bible, His Word to us. What it says, God says. & since God says that Jesus rose from the dead, we can either believe it & take God at His word or disbelieve it & reject God as a liar. For those who believe the Scriptures are God's Word, the fact it says Jesus rose from the dead is enough for us to believe. We believe the Scriptures because we believe God & need no further proof. But for those who don't believe the Bible is God's Word, there are many good reasons apart from the Bible to believe that Jesus' resurrection was a historical fact. There are many good books on the subject & we won't get into it today. We have...

**2. REASON TO HOPE** because Jesus is alive. A **living hope** must begin with a belief in the historical resurrection of Jesus. We're **born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**. The resurrection is the basis for our **living hope**, because it's through the resurrection that Jesus has shown He's defeated sin, Satan, & death. Our sin separates us from God, the source of all that is good. The resurrection testifies that sin is defeated. Satan & his demons scheme & plot against us, making us believe lies about God & about ourselves. The resurrection testifies that Satan is defeated. & our last enemy, death itself, afflicts us constantly. We see it with loved ones who've died & we feel it in the weakness of our own bodies. The resurrection testifies that death is

defeated. Yes, we'll continue to struggle with sin, Satan will continue to whisper his lies, & unless Jesus returns before we die, all of us must walk through the doorway of death. But because of His resurrection, we can know that, though we may suffer for a little while, we will not suffer forever. Sin, Satan, & death have been defeated in His death & resurrection. I believe all that is true. But more important than *why* I believe in the resurrection is *what* Jesus' resurrection could mean in each of our lives. We've seen what it did for the most hopeless man in the world. It gave Peter the hope he needed & it turned his life around. But why? What is it about the death & resurrection of Jesus that gives us reason to hope? Here are 4 reasons to hope as a result of what God did that 1<sup>st</sup> Easter weekend.

**A. WE MATTER TO GOD** The fact that Jesus died in our place is proof we matter to God. Jesus famously told Nicodemus that...

**God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him (Jn 3:16-17).**

Has it ever occurred to you that God sent His Son to die in your place so you could have life? Let that soak in. It's a profound truth that has amazing implications. If we matter that much to God, certainly He sees our troubles today & cares about them. It gives us hope that God, the Creator & Sustainer of the Universe, has an interest in us. That's reason to hope. This hope is offered to everyone, but many reject it. They'd rather submit to sin than bend their knee to God. That describes all of us in the natural inclination of our hearts. Apart from the grace of God, all of us would choose sin rather than choose God, because we're born sinners. We need God to save us because we can't save ourselves. Peter says that God has **caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**. When Jesus was raised from the dead, He also raised all who trust in Him from spiritual death to spiritual life. His resurrection leads to our resurrection, & now we're spiritually born again. Jesus says in Jn 3:4, **unless someone is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God**. All of us have been born once. Our moms gave birth to us. We all have been born physically to live a physical existence. Jesus says there's another birth we must have. We need to be born again spiritually. & this 2<sup>nd</sup> birth, a spiritual birth, can only come from God Himself. This leads to an implication we must understand if we're to comprehend what

it means to be born again. The need for us to be born again states that, until then, we're spiritually dead. We do what we want not what God wants. We can't have a **living hope** while in a state of spiritual death. Until we're born again our hope will always be in ourselves. & those who put their hope in themselves know it isn't a **living hope**. It's a dead hope, because we're unable to fulfill our hopes by our own efforts. So how are we born again to a **living hope**? **God has caused us to be born again to a living hope...** God is the one who raises us from spiritual death to spiritual life. We didn't give physical birth to ourselves, & we can't give spiritual birth to ourselves. God must do it. He must give us life. The dead can't raise themselves, it's impossible. But with God, nothing is impossible. Peter puts it this way in chpt 3, **Christ also suffered for sins once for all time, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God** (18). This doesn't mean we're passive, waiting for God to change us while we do nothing. The truth that only God can cause us to be born again is meant to lead us to cry out to God to change us, as we recognize that only He can do it. We can't do it ourselves. This should make us turn to God in humble, desperate dependence, trusting Him to do what we can't do. God has shown He can do what we can't do. **He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.** God has chosen to tie our fate to the fate of His Son. What Jesus accomplished, He accomplished on our behalf. All the benefits we receive in the gospel are given to us because of His death & resurrection. We die to the power & penalty of sin because Jesus died. We receive a spiritual resurrection, & await a future physical resurrection, because of His resurrection. When we put our trust in Jesus, we're united to Him by faith, so we receive all the benefits of His death & resurrection. As Rom 6:5 says, **if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.** Whether you've already been born again or you remain in spiritual darkness, we all need Jesus. We need His death to pay the penalty for our sins, so that we may be forgiven & reconciled to God. We need His resurrection to raise us to spiritual life, that we may seek God, desire God, & live for God the way we were meant to. All the benefits of Jesus' death & resurrection are offered to everyone as a free gift. We don't earn it & we don't deserve it. All God calls us to do is to turn from our sin & turn towards Him in faith, recognizing we need Him to save us. When we do, God forgives us, raises us to spiritual life, & brings us into a loving relationship with Himself

forever. When we're tempted to doubt God has truly raised us from spiritual death to spiritual life, we must look back to the resurrection of our Savior. There, as we see the empty tomb, we find assurance that God has resurrection power. We know we can be raised because Jesus was raised. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead abides in us, giving us spiritual life & strength.

**B. GOD CAN RELATE TO OUR DISCOURAGEMENTS BECAUSE HE'S BEEN THERE.** In Matthew's account of the crucifixion, he writes as Jesus hung on the cross, at **about the 9<sup>th</sup> hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LEMA SABAKTANEI?"** that is, **"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"** (27:46). Ever felt that way? Ever felt so down you thought God had turned His back on you? So has Jesus. As part of bearing the sins of the world Jesus was rejected for a time by His Father. He was totally cut off & alone. We've never experienced that. Jesus did. He knows what it's like. It gives us hope to realize that the Almighty God has experienced every emotion we've had. Heb 4:15 tells us, **we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin.** Jesus has been there. He knows what we're going through. That's reason to hope.

**C. THE DEATH & RESURRECTION OF JESUS IS EVIDENCE THAT GOD BRINGS GOOD FROM BAD.** On Friday of Holy Week things looked really bad. But by Sunday, it was a completely different story. Why? Because God is a Master at bringing good from bad. In fact, the Bible says that's what He does for people who've chosen to believe in & follow Him. **God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son** (Rom 8:28-29). To be like Jesus is the goal, the good. This gives us hope to know that whatever our situation, God can bring something good from it.

**D. GOD'S RESURRECTION POWER ACTUALLY WORKS IN OUR LIVES AS WE FOLLOW HIM.** Paul writes,

**I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, & what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead & seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places** (Eph 1:18-20).

Think about it: If God can raise Jesus, there's no situation, circumstance, or problem too big for Him. With God nothing is impossible (Lk 1:37). That should give us hope. The truth is we'll never

be without 2 persistent realities as we live the Christian life: We'll always have problems, that's life. But we'll also always have the power of the resurrection to help us in life. That's a **living hope!**

**3. EXPERIENCING HOPE** We all matter to God. God can relate to our discouragement because He's been there. God specializes in bringing good from bad. & God's resurrection power works in our lives as we follow Him. All of that is why we have reason to hope. Peter speaks of this as a **living hope**, & **living** means it's something that comes to us every day, something available at all times. Jesus Christ alive from the dead is the answer to all our broken dreams & false hopes. This isn't a dead but a **living hope**. Why? Because it's grounded in the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. But let's talk about the *how*. How do you apply these truths to your life on a day-to-day basis? How do you bring the hope of Jesus' resurrection to bear on the hopeless situations in which you may find yourself?

**A. DISCOVER WHAT GOD SAYS & DO WHAT HE SAYS** God says we're dead in our trespasses & sins (Eph 2:1). He's our only hope for life. What do we need to do? **Believe in the Lord Jesus, & you will be saved** (Acts 16:31). It's just that simple. & that's true in every area of life. *What does God say?* should be our 1<sup>st</sup> response & then we must be obedient to what He says.

**B.** Whatever the situation you face, **RELEASE IT TO GOD'S CARE**. We're told to **cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you** (1 Pt 5:7). That means instead of stressing over all the *what if's* of our circumstances, we trust our sovereign God instead. We say to Him, *I've discovered what You say about this & I'm doing it. The rest is up to You & the power that raised Jesus from the dead is going to have to kick in, or I'm toast*. Pray & turn it over to God. Pray & ask for His help. Pray & thank Him for what He's done, doing, & will do. Pray, pray, pray. There's nothing that will bring hope to a situation like knowing it's in God's hands.

**C. CHOOSE TO ACT & LIVE LIKE GOD IS IN CHARGE.** I've seen people who understand the resurrection is the source of hope. They can tell you what God says & what they need to do. They pray about the situation & release it to God. But then they act like none of that makes a difference in their life. Do you truly believe what God says & has done? Then choose to act on that belief. That's the faith we all need.

**D. What Is It We're Hoping For? 3-4**



In vs 4, Peter doesn't yet tell us what we're hoping for. Instead, he gives us 5 qualities of that hope. 1<sup>st</sup>, our hope is called an **inheritance**. Who receives an inheritance? The children of the one giving it. Like any inheritance, no one deserves it. No one has to earn it. It's a free gift given to us because, through Christ, all who trust in Him have been adopted as God's children.

2<sup>nd</sup>, our hope is **imperishable**, it lasts forever. All other hopes are perishable. They die. But our **living hope**, doesn't. It's **imperishable**.

3<sup>rd</sup>, our hope is **undefiled** or *pure*. All other hopes are tainted & disappoint & fail us. But our **living hope** is unblemished by any impurities & able to satisfy the deepest longings of our souls.

4<sup>th</sup>, our hope **will not fade away** & never decreases in glory. Other hopes may satisfy for a time, but with time, they fade away & lose their power. Our **living hope** never diminishes. It never fades away. It remains unfading in its glory forever.

5<sup>th</sup>, it's kept in heaven for us. God is guarding it in His domain so no one can break in & steal it away. God's preserving it for us until we meet Him in heaven & receive this incredible inheritance. So we must ask, what is this inheritance? Is it an eternity of playing harps, as popular culture depicts heaven? Is it the pleasure of having whatever we want? Is it the freedom of doing whatever we want to do? The answer is found in vs 5: **who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time**. We're hoping for **salvation: salvation** from the just wrath of God against our sin & **salvation** from all of sin's effects. We already have **salvation**, but we don't yet possess it in its fullness. When we put our faith in Jesus, we're truly saved. Nothing can change that or take it away. But though we have it, the fullness of our salvation is still to come. We have salvation like we have the love of our loved ones when they're away from us. We know they love us & we know nothing can change that love. But we won't have the full effect of their love until they're with us. All we need to do is look at our continuing struggle with sin, Satan, & death to know we don't yet possess salvation in full. There's still pain in this world. Yes, Christ has defeated all His enemies through His death & resurrection, but they're still in their death throes. They lash about seeking to destroy as much as they can, until they finally breathe their last. But the greatest evidence of the reality that we don't yet possess salvation in full is that we're not yet with our Savior. We're on earth & Jesus is in heaven. We know He loves us, but there's so much

more of His love to know & enjoy that we can't know & enjoy until we're with Him. But when the fullness of salvation comes, our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ will come in all His fullness, & He'll be with us, & we with Him, for all of eternity. Jesus Himself is our **living hope**. No matter what you're facing, if you're a Christian, your life is marching toward glory. There's a day when the experience of that glory will overwhelm every dark thing you've ever faced. We long for the fullness of salvation, because we long for Him. Vs 5 speaks of **a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time**. & vs 7 says that, after we've endured the trials of this life, our faith will result **in praise, glory, & honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**. As the fullness of our salvation is revealed, the fullness of Christ will be revealed, & we'll enjoy fellowship face to face with our risen Lord forever. Jesus is our **living hope**. He's both the object of our hope & the basis of our hope; the One we trust & the One we long for. We hope *in* Christ as we hope *for* Christ, waiting for the blessed day when we see Him. & as we hope for Him, we know that we will have Him, because our Savior has risen from the dead. When you've done these things that we've talked about, it's time to put a smile on your face & allow God to put a song in your heart. Your situation may not change, but your hope will because hope isn't about changing what's going on around us. It's about changing what's going on in us. Today, some of you need that change. You need hope. I challenge you to put your hope in a God who's demonstrated the ability to bring life from death, victory from defeat, & hope from despair. Like He did with Peter, Jesus wants to change your life & give you a **living hope**. Will you let Him? He is the **living hope** that won't disappoint. He is the **living hope** that will never fail to satisfy us. This hope, & this hope alone, gives us the kind of life, joy, & peace we need to endure through the struggles of life. I can't close with words more powerful than those found in vss 8-9: **Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, & though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible & full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls**. Today, on this Easter Sunday, let us put our hope in Jesus as we long for His return. Let us live with a **living hope** in a living Savior, because He has conquered the grave. PRAY

It was on the cross that Jesus took our sins with one outstretched hand & God's wrath against our sins with the other. It was there on the cross that the perfectly divine & the perfectly human

reconciled together. Because of Jesus' life, death, & resurrection we have access to a living hope.

Matthew tells us:

**While the disciples & He were eating the Passover meal, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it with you, new, in My Father's kingdom."**

We come to the communion table remembering Jesus' broken body & shed blood, His death, in our place for our salvation. But notice that His resurrection is included in this. He knew He would die the next day & yet He told them He'd drink of the vine again with them. So as we remember Good Friday & Jesus' death for us, we also remember He conquered sin, Satan, & death by rising from the dead. He is our living & victorious hope both now & forever. As we eat of the bread, we remember the punishment He took upon His body & upon His being as He experienced the worst man could do, but infinitely worse, God's wrath against our sins. Gratefully, with a **living hope**, we eat of the bread together remembering Him.

As we drink of the cup we remember Jesus' shed blood on our account. It was through His death that we were redeemed from our slavery to sin, forgiven of our sins, & given His righteousness. We remember also that He is alive & we will one day be with Him in person. He is our **living hope**.