

The Transforming Power of Living Hope

The Apostle Peter teaches that living hope radically transforms us in three ways.

1 Peter 1:13-2:3

13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **14** As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, **15** but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, **16** since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” **17** And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, **18** knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. **20** He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you **21** who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, **23** since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; **24** for

“All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. **2** Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—**3** if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Introduction

It has been said that “man can live about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air...but only for one second without hope.”

Hope is in short supply in our country right now during this election year. How easy it is to allow fear, anger, and despair to grip our hearts. In the midst of all this, it has become more difficult to live a distinctly Christian life in America. The hurricane force winds of opposition, intolerance and persecution are kicking up. Our supply of hope seems to be running low. Who can help to renew our hope?

If there is anyone who knew what it was like to be engulfed with fear and discouragement in a time of affliction, it would be the Apostle Peter. Years before writing this letter, he temporarily abandoned His Lord in order to save his own skin. He denied that he knew our Lord. However, his encounter with the risen Savior changed his life forever. He became what is known as the “Apostle of hope.” Now, he writes to a beleaguered church to call them and us to stand firm in the grace of God amidst suffering and hardship (see 1 Peter 5:12).

In our passage, he teaches us first of all what fuels this living hope. Secondly, he sets forth how this living hope transforms our lives.

I. Living hope is fueled by the promise of future grace (1 Peter 1:13)

A. Peter command us: “Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation (apocalypse) of Jesus Christ” (v.13). We are promised that suffering and affliction do not have the final word in our lives. We can endure suffering because Jesus is coming again to bring grace to us, to right every wrong, and to establish His peaceable Kingdom.

B. Therefore, to hope fully means to be fully confident that when Jesus Christ comes again, you will receive grace. What is this grace specifically? Let me highlight several things:

1. First of all, it is the beatific vision. The beatific vision is when we will see our Lord face to face. This sight will be so transforming that it will heal every ache, pain, and sorrow we have ever experienced.
2. Secondly, we will be made fully like our Lord when we see Him on that day. The Apostle John teaches that “when we see Him as He is, we will be like Him (1 John 3:2-3). You will not only see Christ’s glory, but you will share His glory (see 1 Peter 4:13; 5:1). This galvanized the Apostle Peter to face his own sufferings.
3. Thirdly, we will experience the grace of unending joy and exquisite delight and pleasure in God’s presence forever.

C. Living hope is living because it produces changes in our lives. This is what “living” means in 1:4 when Peter writes that “you have been born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” This living hope not only brings us the gift of eternal life and frees us from the penalty of sin, but it also rescues us from the seductive power of sin in our daily lives. So Christian hope is needed not only at the beginning of the Christian life but also all the way through to the end. Therefore,

II. Living hope leads to three radical changes in our lives: a holy life, a family love, and a spiritual hunger.

1. The Call to a Holy Life: 1 Peter 1:15... Peter’s second command is this: “Be holy in all your conduct.”

Since we are partakers of the divine nature through faith in the resurrected Jesus, we now have the Spirit living within us who is working to conform us more and more into the image of Jesus Christ. The passions, lusts or inordinate longings of our former ignorance threaten to short-circuit this process. Thus, we have to constantly be killing sinful thoughts, words, and attitudes (see 1 Peter 2:1).

A person who hopes intensely in Jesus and who longs to see Him and be with Him, will inevitably start to think and feel and act like his Lord. This is the essence of the holy life to

which we are called. The Apostle John succinctly states the power of this hope: “Everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure” (1 John 3:3).

2. The Motivation for a Holy Life

- A. We have a holy Father who deserve our full obedience (vv. 14-16).
- B. We have an impartial Judge to whom we owe reverential awe (v. 17). Our lifestyle is to be marked by fearing the Lord. It is the antidote to the fear of man and it is not slavish dread of the Lord, but the affectionate, reverential awe of the Lord that bends our wills to do God’s will.
- C. We enjoy full redemption at an immense cost to our Lord (18-21).

A suffering group of believers must not only live distinctive lives marked by holiness, but it must pull together as a cohesive unit and love one another. Therefore,

III. Living hope leads to a family love (1:22-2:1).

A. One distinguishing mark of those who are set apart for God is love for one another. Our living hope transforms our relationships in our spiritual family. The Gospel creates a nurturing community where love rules every relationship.

B. The nature of this love: What does it mean to love one another? Agape love is the commitment of the will to sacrificially serve the interests and needs of others. Peter saw this love modeled in the Upper Room as well as at the cross of Calvary. He heard the words of Jesus in John 13:34-35... “By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.”

C. The objects of this love: Who are we to love? One another. Namely, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Peter challenges us even further in 1 Peter 3:8-9 when he says that we are even to love those fellow believers who hurt us. This subject is so important to him that he goes on in 1 Peter 4:8 to challenge us to “keep fervent in our love for one another since love covers a multitude of sins.”

D. The power source of this love (23-25): How is it that we can love others? We have been permanently reborn into the family of heaven. Therefore, we now can love our new family. This spiritual regeneration took place by the imperishable seed of the Word of God (logos - written Word) and His proclaimed gospel (rhema - spoken Word).

E. The hindrances to this love (2:1)

1. Malice — The ill-will that is the force that destroys fellowship. It is frequently connected to grumbling and bitterness.
2. Deceit & hypocrisy — Speaking or acting with ulterior motives. Anything less than speaking the full and honest truth from the heart.
3. Envy — The inward attitude behind deceit and insincerity. It is often associated with community strife and a party spirit.

4. Slander — Speech that injures another’s reputation. The believers to whom Peter writes were victims of this type of slander (see 1 Peter 2:12; 3:16).

5. Why not ask the Lord to show us all of our unloving ways, attitudes, and actions? Then, turn from them and run again into the loving embrace of our Lord.

Francis Schaeffer emphatically declares: “I am convinced that people all over the world will not listen if we have the right doctrine, the right polity (type of church government), but **are not exhibiting community**. The church only has a future in our generation if it can show the form of Scripture at the point of proper community” (*Church at the End of the 20th Century*, p.73).

IV. Lastly, living hope leads to a spiritual hunger (2:2-3)

A. Our last command in this passage is to “long for (crave intensely) spiritual milk” (2:2). We are to crave to hear God speak in His Word the way babies crave their mother’s milk. You need God’s Word with as much regularity and frequency as babies need their mother’s milk. Nursing infants are not satisfied very long with one feeding.

B. What is this spiritual milk? Some claim that the milk is Jesus Christ Himself, not just His Word. But I think, based upon the context (see 1 Peter 1:23-25), that the milk is the Word of God broadly, and the Gospel specifically.

C. What will result from receiving spiritual nourishment from God’s Word?

1. You will grow up into salvation and become a mature man or woman of God. You will taste over and over again the goodness of the Lord which will give you fresh supplies of hope to persevere in difficulty.

2. You will taste the goodness and kindness of your Lord (v.3). Wayne Grudem comments on 1 Peter 2:3: “To drink the milk of the Word is to ‘taste’ again and again what our Lord is like, for in the hearing of the Lord’s words we experience the joy of personal fellowship with the Lord himself.” Have you tasted lately the Lord’s goodness in your life?

D. How would your life look different if you gave more thoughtful and undivided attention to God’s Word? The example of George Mueller at the age of 76 in his own reading of God’s Word: “The first and primary business to which I ought to attend daily is to make my soul happy in the Lord.”

Discussion Questions

1. In what do people tend to place their hope? How do they respond when their hopes are dashed?
2. To whom or what do you tend to look for security and hope? Where are you looking right now for hope for the future?

3. How would you articulate to a friend the Gospel hope that you presently enjoy? Remember that 1 Peter 3:15 calls you to “honor Christ the Lord in our hearts as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”
4. What difference would placing your hope “fully” in the future grace of our Lord make in your life right now?
5. Of the three transformations of this living hope (holiness, love, and growth), which one needs the most attention in your life right now? Why?
6. What will it look like for you to live a life more “set apart from sin to God”? Here is another way to pose the question: What particular sins do you need to start killing in your life? You might start with the sins listed in 1 Peter 2:1 that destroy love in relationships. On the other hand, what particular graces/virtues of Jesus Christ would you like to cultivate?
7. What is your plan to cultivate more of a hunger for God’s Word? Our appetites are cultivated by habits we form. What are the holy habits that the Lord might use to bring about spiritual growth and maturity in your life?
8. What one way have you tasted the Lord’s goodness in your life recently? Why not share that with your group and express your gratitude to God in prayer.

Going Deeper

1. Assess the quality of your relationships with others. What tends to rule your relationships? Envy, pride, bitterness, anger? Identify those unhealthy, sinful patterns and ask the Lord to change you.
2. 1 Peter 4:8 declares that “love covers a multitude of sins.” How are you doing in covering the sins of others? In your friendships, your marriage, your extended family, your work place, and/or your church? What sins are the hardest for you to overlook in the name of love? Whose sin is most challenging for you to cover and forgive?