

1 Peter 1:3-9

“Is your hope in good condition?”

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

“⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

What is state of your hope today?

How does it compare to the confidence in the future you felt two months ago?

Norma and I subscribe to a monthly newspaper published in the Los Angeles neighborhood where we lived nearly thirty years.

The March 2020 issue carried photos and responses by local residents to the question:

“What are your spring break plans?”

One family planned a trip to the San Diego Zoo and to SeaWorld.

A trio of young ladies expected friends to visit from New York and to “hang out with them.”

The reporter quizzed other people who wanted to visit places like Spain, Vegas, and Palm Springs.

Those various hopes seemed reasonable at the time of the interviews (February 2020).

Suppose now, late March 2020, someone could speak to those folks.¹

Would they all smile at the camera?

What hopes would they express?

Could any of the friends gather close now?

Would any of them say that they actually traveled where they planned in February?

Most of the folks shown in the photos looked under thirty.

A few of the places the photo-folks named suffered high Covid-19 mortality rates.

If you could interview all of those people, what would they say about the condition of their hope?

Would they express the same hopeful expectations they voiced a month ago?

Not everyone thinks positively of hope.

“The old (Greek) fable tells us that Zeus gave man a vessel full of all good things, but that man, full of curiosity, lifted the lid, so that all good things escaped to the gods and when the lid was put back, only ἐλπίς (hope) was trapped, man’s present comfort.²

That ancient tale shows that the Greeks did not regard hope very highly.

Dr. Ben Jonson³ caustically commented:
“No place affords a more striking conviction of the vanity of hopes than a public library.”

All authors, including yours truly, write with hopes that their books will become top sellers.

A very low percentage ever attains status.

Dr. Jonson could not have foreseen the U.S. Library of Congress which probably contains the greatest collection ever of vain hopes.

Lots of hope exists.

Little of it can be defined as “living hope.”

¹ The Larchmont Chronicle, March 2020

² Rudolf Bultmann, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. II, p. 519, William B. Erdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids

³ circa 1630

In the past month, all of us experienced radical change in our hopes and possibly the hopes we hold in others.

Somewhere years ago I came across some **OFRs**, which are officer fitness reports written by the British Military.

I understand that the Royal Navy and Marines write fitness reports on a form called the S206.

Let’s read some actual excerpts taken from these 206s:

“His men would follow him anywhere, but only out of curiosity.”

“I would not breed from this Officer.”

“This Officer is really not so much of a has-been, but more of a definitely won't-be.”

“When she opens her mouth, it seems that this is only to change whichever foot was previously in there.”

“He has carried out each and every one of his duties to his entire satisfaction.”



“He would be out of his depth in a car park puddle.”

“Technically sound, but socially impossible.”

“This Officer reminds me very much of a gyroscope—always spinning around at a frantic pace, but not really going anywhere.”

“This young lady has delusions of adequacy.”

“When he joined my ship, this officer was something of a granny; since then he has aged considerably.”

“Since my last report he has reached rock bottom, and has started to dig.”

“She sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them.”

“He has the wisdom of youth, and the energy of old age.”

“This Officer should go far and the sooner he starts the better.”

“In my opinion this pilot should not be authorized to fly below 250 feet.”

“The only ship I would recommend this man for is citizenship.”

“Works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a rat in a trap.”

“This man is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.”

“Only occasionally wets himself under pressure.” **These officers inspired little hope.**

Luke’s gospel tells of two disciples who hoped in Jesus, but were deeply disappointed.

“Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast.

¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” ¹⁹ “What things?” he asked. **“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in**

word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”

Cleopas and his friend hoped Jesus would create a political solution by driving the Romans from their homeland Israel.

But out of jealousy, the very religious people who would have taken charge crucified Jesus. **Hoping for a long term political solution is not a living hope—ever.**

That has never occurred in history.

Unfortunately, that’s where many Americans place their greatest hopes.



Even when leaders find peace, security, and unity, it never lasts.

Human jealousy, greed, lust, lack of insight, and selfishness doom all long term efforts.

The Old Testament clearly shows the truth that on our own, we human beings cannot sustain a lasting quality of life.

Today's text promises living hope.

What is living hope?

How do we obtain living hope?

Enduring in the Lord, faithfulness, and loving others bring hope in a risky world.

But each of us individuals must faithfully trust God and love others, following the guidance the Lord gives us in His word.

"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope."⁵ May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had,



so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."⁴

Years ago, Dr. Arthur Gossip preached a sermon titled, "When Life Tumbles In, What Then?" He preached it the day after his beloved wife suddenly died. No one could bring more powerfully than he the challenge of the closing lines:

"Our hearts are very frail, and there are places where the road is very steep and very lonely. Standing in the roaring Jordan, cold with its dreadful chill and very conscious of its terror, of its rushing, I ... call back to you who one day will have your turn to cross it, 'Be of

⁴ Romans 15: 4-6, 13 NIV

good cheer, my brother, for I feel the bottom and it is sound!" "

Hope breathes strongly in today's reading.

Recall Cleopas and his friend, who felt so disappointed by Jesus' death on the cross?

The other disciples felt equally disillusioned.

Peter felt that same great frustration.

One fact changed their let down to hope.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...”

The disciples watched Jesus die.

Three days later, they all saw him alive.

Last week we listed numerous scriptures showing that we die to the qualities that bring so much misery and division to the world.

We die with Christ in baptism and he raises us to a new lifestyle of love and trust.

Doing that constitutes our 1st death and resurrection.

Having this knowledge—that we die and are raised in Christ—we experience new birth:

“Into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

We complete our first resurrection by dying to our old selves and being raised fully united with Christ —this helps us understand Revelation 20, from which many people weirdly interpret the end-time.

(Rev 20:6 NIV) Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them . . .”

That’s precisely what Paul referred to in our Colossians 3:1-4 text last week.

In baptism, we’re raised—have our first resurrection and we’re reigning right now, “Where Christ is seated at the right hand of God,” and we look to God, not men for our hope.

Only God in Christ gives living hope.

Our present bodies become diseased, grow old and die, but just as Christ came out of the grave, so shall we—when he calls us on the last day.

Jesus will change these lowly bodies of ours to be like his glorious body.

That’ll happen in the second resurrection—our great living hope.

I pray that you believe this truth, live by it, and constantly tell others about it

God gives an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade... kept in heaven for you.”

See John 5: 28-30, Philippians 3:20, 21 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18,



Photo near Estacada, Oregon by Norma’s niece, Lillie.

Bob Blair
PO Box 176
Cleghorn, IA 51014

www.robertblairbooks.com