**A LIVING HOPE**

1 Peter 1:1-9 (key 3,4)

"3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,"

As the year begins, what kind of hopes do we have for year? One of my work colleagues while we were discussing his home country Zimbabwe, in the end he told me, we are slaves of hope. That they will keep hoping that their country one day runs well. We all need hope one way or another. Because when we have hope we can have strength and courage to live each day. When we look at the world and ourselves, we could be overcome by anxieties, depression and even suicidal thoughts. Feeling helpless and all sorts of things that take away our joy and strength. Worse part basing our hope in the things of this world or persons in this world results in despair because at some point, people pass away and things in this world have an expiry date, they don’t last forever. This passage reveals the kind of hope we really need. In this passage Peter speaks about a hope that is different from the worldly hope. There seems to be a hope that we are given by God. What hope has the Lord given us? Apostle Peter tells us it is a living hope. May we embrace this living hope and become victorious in this new year and plant hope in others. Amen!

Apostle Peter wrote this letter around A.D. 63 during the reign of the wicked Roman Emperor Nero. Scattered Christians, in the region we now know as Turkey, were going through fiery persecution. Peter encourages them to overcome their trials, to influence their societies, and advance the reign of Christ. In these opening verses, he reminded them that they were God’s chosen people, and that they have a living hope. Then he taught them how they should live.

Look at verse 1, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,” First, we are God’s chosen people. Peter introduces himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. This means that his message was not his own human idea; it was from Jesus Christ. He addresses believers as “God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia”. Peter’s words seem to be contradictory. His audience is both “God’s elect” and “exiles.” They were chosen by God, but outcasts in the world. They lived in tension. Some had left their nation Israel when persecution scattered the early church. Many had lost their jobs and left their homes. Verses 17 and 11 in chp 2 tells us that they had become strangers in foreign lands. We can imagine how difficult their lives were: missing their family members, working menial jobs to survive, confronting language and cultural barriers. Moreover, they were discriminated against and alienated.

Apostle Peter understood their situation well, but did not pity them. Rather, he reminded them that they were “God’s elect.” “Elect” means that God had chosen them. Verse 2 begins, “who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” God chose them before they made a choice to believe in him. God chose them by his unsearchable wisdom. It was God’s eternal choice, made with a clear purpose. It was not something they earned or deserved, but a gift of grace originating in God’s love. God had chosen them. The night before his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples, “You did not choose me, but I chose you…” (Jn 15:16). The disciples could overcome fiery trials by holding onto Jesus’ calling; they became new history makers. This grace of choosing is given to all who trust in Jesus. Knowing that God chose us gives us confidence in God and his grace rather than ourselves and our merit. How is God’s choosing expressed? Verse 2 says, “through the sanctifying work of the Spirit….” God sends the Holy Spirit to his chosen people. The Holy Spirit sets us apart from the corruption of the world; the Holy Spirit draws us to Christ; the Holy Spirit equips us to carry out his holy mission. As the Holy Spirit works in us, we are sure of God’s choosing.

Why does God choose people? Naturally, we think it is for us “to do” something. But here Peter says it is for us “to be” something. Verse 2 says, “...to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood….” Here the word “obedient” means to listen attentively to and follow. As we listen to Jesus’ words and follow him, our lives change. Our sinful desires subside, and holy desires grow in us. Selfish people become sacrificial. Sorrowful people become joyful. Fearful people become courageous. Angry people become peaceful. We grow in love, joy and peace. In a word, we become more like Jesus. This is God’s desire for us. This does not happen by our own effort. We are sinful. But as we repent and confess our sins each day, the Holy Spirit applies Jesus’ blood to us. He forgives our sins and cleanses us. Our changed lives reveal God’s goodness, power and love and bring glory to him.

After identifying himself and God’s chosen people, Peter begins his message to them, “Grace and peace be yours in abundance.” Even though they faced many hardships and difficulties, they could experience abundant grace and peace in their daily lives–not just drips and drops, but overflowing, abundant grace and peace. It comes from God and is given freely by his love.

However, the world does not honor the believers. Rather, they were regarded as strangers and weird. It is because their lifestyle and value system reveal God’s holy presence, exposes their unbelief, and warn of the coming judgment. We too can be overwhelmed by our own sins, faults and weaknesses. Then we begin to doubt that we are really God’s children. Becoming victims of spiritual identity theft. At such times we must listen to God’s words, “You are a chosen people” (1Pe 2:9) The living God has chosen us to be his children. The living God, the Creator of heaven and earth, is our Father. His love for us never fails; he hears our prayers; he protects and provides for us; he guides us in the best way. He gave us a great mission to share the gospel with those who are lost. We can offer hope to the nations. We are very precious in the sight of God. May we accept deeply accept that we are God’s chosen people.

Second, our living hope: an eternal inheritance (1:3-5). After reminding believers they are God’s chosen people, Peter proclaimed what our hope is. Hope is vital. Without hope, we despair. Despair is like cancer it eats us up while alive and before time we start loosing our abilities. It is the disease that leads to death. We end up with feelings of worthlessness. Because of this we end up wasting our time in trivial pursuits, and don’t value our own lives. People desperately need some kind of hope. Hope makes us feel alive and empowers us to do great things. However, our true hope is not in this world. The things of this world all perish, spoil and fade away. When they do, our hope in them turns to disappointment. Our ultimate hope must be eternal. While young, we may feel that we will live forever. As we age, we become more aware of our limits.

The truth is that inevitably, everyone dies. After death comes God’s judgment (Heb 9:27). Everything will be left behind: our achievements, possessions, even our families. Moreover, we also fail at being persons we desired to be, we fail at achieving our own set standards. We soon find out that we fall short of living for the glory of God. We end up chasing after the wind, going with the flow and living a meaningless routine life, simply living to survive. What can be our hope? Is there a hope that transcends death and this world? Is there a hope that can lead us into purpose driven lives?

Let us all read verse 3, “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…**.” God is so merciful to us. He has given us a living hope. We were helpless under the power of sin and death. We could do nothing to save ourselves because were slaves to sin. Money, education, science, technology, good deeds–none of these can save us from the power of sin and death. But in his great mercy, God sent Jesus into the world to die for our sins. Then God raised him from the dead. He gives eternal life to anyone who believes in him. This eternal life begins the moment we trust in Jesus. Though our bodies will die, our souls live forever. For us, death is now the entry into a glorious new life in the presence of Christ. We enter eternal glory in the presence of our Heavenly Father who loves us. Some years back two young brothers who had become born again through the risen Jesus. Moved by the Jesus commission to spread the gospel to all nations. Where moved by Jesus to sell themselves as slaves so that they could also share the gospel with slaves. Which later resulted Moravian movement. How could they do this, how could they give up their lives to be slaves? It is because they had living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

To be with the Lord in eternity seems to be reward enough. But the blessings that God has promised to his children are greater still. Look at verse 4. “...and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you….” The children of God receive an inheritance. It is his everlasting kingdom (Ro 8:17). Peter contrasts this inheritance with worldly ones. The inheritance God gives his children can never perish, spoil or fade. It cannot be stolen, ruined or lost.

This living hope and eternal inheritance is like an anchor for our souls (Heb 6:19). We are vulnerable to the devil’s temptations, health problems, financial issues, trials with our children, or tragedies, like the sudden death of a loved one. But with the living hope through the resurrection of Jesus as our anchor, we can pass through the stormy winds; instead of becoming weaker, we become stronger and stronger. This living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from dead, grows until it is fully realized in heaven. It makes us more and more hopeful as time goes by, no matter what happens around us. Apostle Paul said, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (2 Cor 4:16).

I want to hold this living hope in my heart, just this Saturday I was turning 41 and once you cross the age of 40 it become very clear that am now in the old age category of people. Then you really begin to wonder about life, some existential thoughts kick in. I started to realize the many things I had wanted to achieve but have not. When I also look at people I knew in the past who used to look young and vibrant but now look so old because of aging. Then it dawning on me that now in few years am also going to look old and weak. Am realizing also that over the years I have become more passive without much energy. Just living by going with the flow. At home not driven by a passionate vision for my family, in ministry doing what needs to be done not much energy to win our campus for Jesus and obey Jesus commission with energy to raise disciples. For my research, I would have some ideas but they quicky die down not much energy and vision. Am realizing deep down I have a sense of hopelessness a sense meaninglessness. Through this passage am realizing that seems I have been looking for source of hope and meaning through this world. I am realizing that, the source of the living hope, is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Verse 3 says, In his great mercy he has given us new birth **into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.** I should never stop to gaze at the risen Jesus, the risen Jesus from the dead is my living hope. I pray to hold this living hope in my heart in 2025 and to plant hope in the hearts of my family, God’s people and my work place.

**Third, our lifestyle** – how we should live? So far Peter has shared a heavenly perspective of our Christian lives. We are God’s elect! We have a living hope in Jesus! This empowers us to live a joyful Christian life. In the rest of his letter, Peter exhorts believers how we should live. Let’s consider some key teachings.

I) Rejoice in our sufferings (1:6-9). In the past, we tried to avoid suffering, regarding it as harmful and miserable. But with living hope in Jesus, we see that God uses suffering for our good. Through suffering, our false hopes are removed, and our faith is purified. Through suffering, we grow in perseverance and character (Ro 5:3-4). Through suffering, Christ’s glory is revealed in us (4:13). In Christ, suffering is for our good. Let’s arm ourselves with the right attitude toward suffering in the new year.

II) Be holy (1:15-16). 1:15-16 say: “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” The Lord wants us to be holy from the inside out, with a genuine quality of life that reflects his own holiness. This is what we desire most. Yet as we hear the words “be holy” we may cringe, knowing that we are sinners. But we can truly be holy by Jesus’ shed blood and the power of the Holy Spirit. Let’s accept God’s call to holiness and commit to growing in holiness.

III) Love one another deeply (1:22). Peter tells us to “love one another deeply from the heart.” As we grow in holiness, we can love one another with pure hearts. We can build up a community of love, respect, and trust. In such a community we can grow spiritually. The world sees that we are Jesus’ disciples. Let’s love one another deeply from the heart.

IV) Crave pure spiritual milk (1:23-2:3). To practice holy love, we need to grow spiritually. How? Peter encourages us: “...like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” Newborn babies crave milk desperately. Likewise, let’s crave God’s word so that we may grow spiritually.

Shepherds of God’s flock (5:1-4). The Apostle Peter exhorted believers: “be shepherds of God’s flock.” It is a charge to live sacrificially to take care of God’s sheep. There is a huge need for living hope. When we have the living hope in our hearts, we can plant hope in others no matter what circumstances or condition. Hope can transform anyone into mighty people of God who influence the world with the gospel. Let’s be good disciples of Jesus who plant hope in people by teaching the Bible and sharing our testimonies.

**In conclusion,** Peter wrote this letter to the early Christians with a great vision that they were a royal priesthood. Though they lived on the bottom of society, despised and persecuted, they had a clear identity as God’s chosen people and lived holy lives. Through the living hope in the resurrection of Jesus, they could overcome all hardships and testified to Christ. What happened? History attests that the Roman Empire became Christendom. They were indeed world changers! May we have living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from dead, so we can live with courage and strength to fulfill the purpose of God through our lives. May we live by God’s word and be sources of blessing by having and giving living hope in our hearts. Amen!