

Session 1

June 7, 2020

THE BASIS FOR OUR HOPE

1 Peter 1:1-9

In common usage, we tend to use *hope* as a verb. “I *hope* my team wins;” “We *hope* the weather is nice for the picnic;” “I *hope* you are feeling better.” Moreover, we tend to use the word to express more-or-less equal amounts of both desire and doubt. In popular usage, to *hope* for something is to want it, but with the reluctant knowledge that we might not get it.

In the New Testament, however, *hope* is turned into a noun; a certainty by its attachment to faith (see Heb. 11:1). It’s not that we believe something into existence; rather, its existence leads us to believe. The result? Christian hope is not a strong desire mixed with doubt, but a firm faith based on fact. In Peter’s first epistle, hope is depicted as the confidence believers have even in tumultuous times. God has secured our hope in at least four ways.

Our hope was decreed in the past (vv. 1-2). The apostle Peter begins his letter with two points of identification. First, he identifies himself. The title he used is both humble and bold. He need not present personal accolades and accomplishments, because everyone knows who he is. Yet the simple expression he used exalted the One whom he served. He was Peter, the apostle of the Lord. Second, he identifies his audience. He is writing to “temporary residents” of Asia Minor. These are displaced Christians or *sojourners*; those living among a people they are not a part of. The description is specific to the letter, but applicable to all believers. Are we not all part-time, temporary residents of this world? The remainder of the identification applies to all believers as well. While our location on earth is temporary, our position in Christ is permanent, having been established by God’s divine favor. Notice the work of the Trinity in our election. God chooses us, the Spirit separates us, and the blood of Christ saves us! Whatever circumstances we face, our position is secure in Christ. It was established “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4).

Our hope is displayed in the present (v. 3). Salvation is not reserved only for “the sweet by and by,” but is to be lived out in the “not-always-so-sweet” here and now! Notice the powerful punch of Peter’s words: God’s mercy is *great*; our birth is *new*; our hope is *living*. These are encouraging words for difficult days, based not on the believer’s own strength, but on the power that raised Christ from the dead.

Our hope is defended for the future (vv. 4-5). God’s salvation is marvelously complete. The clear promise of the Bible is abundant life here on earth, plus a glorious eternal life in heaven. Verse 4 describes our inheritance in heaven as *imperishable* (lasts forever); *uncorrupted* (pure and unstained); *unfading* (enduring forever) and *secured* (kept safe). What’s more, believers themselves are equally secure. The verb shows continuous action by God. *We are being protected* until our salvation is ultimate and complete, an event that will be “revealed in the last time” (v. 5).

Our hope is demonstrated by our faith (vv. 6-9). By and large, our faith in God is dependent upon His faithfulness to us. While God never wavers in His commitment to us, our faith is developed over time and circumstances (see James 1:2 ff; and Rom. 5: 1 ff). As our faith grows up, our hope firms up. Peter used two key modifiers in connection with our faith. The

genuineness of our faith (v. 7) refers to its purity under fire. The apostle suggests that faith that is *tried* is faith that is *true* (and he should know!). And faith that is tried and comes out pure, is more precious than gold. Second, Peter refers to the *goal* of our faith (v. 9), which he defined as “the salvation of your souls.” Hence, the basis of our hope is found in our faith. We trust that Christ came, died for our sins, rose again, and is coming back. For believers, that is not a “hope so” salvation, but a “know so” salvation!