

Our text is found in 1 Peter 1:3-9:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:3-9)

The key verse is verse three:

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Introduction

Before we look into the scripture itself, let us go back into the history of this passage. It has to do with Peter's relationship with Christ.

Neither Christ nor Peter were noblemen: Peter was a fisherman, and Jesus was a carpenter. Neither had formal learning. They were both Jews of the working class.

Peter heard about Jesus through Andrew, Peter's brother. Jesus called both Andrew and Peter as disciples.

Peter's Hope Reborn

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Peter later became a member of the "inner circle" of Jesus' disciples. He lived with Jesus and His disciples in intimate contact—the best way to learn what people are really like. He saw Jesus heal the sick, raise the dead, and do many miracles. He heard Jesus teach as no other man before had taught. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter confessed, **"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."**

(Matthew 16:16). He also witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus and walked on water.

Even though Peter had been exposed to this revelation of Christ, he failed to grasp the nature of Jesus' mission. Also Peter failed to understand Jesus' teaching of the nature of kingdom. The Jews expected their Messiah to overthrow Roman rule and set up a new Israel. That Peter's thoughts were still immature was shown in Jesus' reply to Peter's question of a simple parable:

"Are ye also yet without understanding?"

(MT 15:16).

Peter was not a coward. He demonstrated his willingness to fight in the Garden of Gethsemane when he cut off the right ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest (John 18:10; Luke 22:49-50). Peter must have become disheartened when his leader told him to put up the sword, for He had to drink some kind of cup from His Father. This no doubt took the fight out of Peter, and confused him.

Then during the trial, Peter denied being a follower of Christ in order to save himself. Remember that Peter had failed to pray in the garden. However, let us not be too critical of Peter—we may have done the same thing in his circumstance.

Then the rooster crowed. What Jesus had predicted had come true! Simon wept. He had betrayed a friend.

Simon must have been torn internally as never before! There were the Old Testament prophecies and His miracles that seemed to confirm Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. But could the prophecy just be coincidence? Could Peter's confession be his own wishful thinking expressed in the heat of emotion? Could it be that this Joshua of Nazareth was just a visionary? ("Jesus" is the Greek form of "Joshua" which did not have our special connotation then.)

Could it be that this peasant carpenter's son somehow was under delusions of grandeur in

claiming to be the Messiah? Would the real Messiah allow Himself to be crucified?

1. Peter's Confrontation with Death

Jesus was dead now, and there was no doubt about it. Joseph had taken the body and buried it. Peter was home, alone with his thoughts. He was probably thinking seriously about life; and even more about death: deeper than he ever had before. Everything that Peter had hoped and dreamed for had died. By committing himself to the one he thought was the Christ, Peter had identified himself with Jesus, and consequently with Jesus' death. A part of Peter died with Christ. Somehow his hope lay buried with the man called Christ.

Peter was a man with whom we could identify: a man with hopes, dreams, high moments of faith, failures.

It falls man's common lot to die. The Bible says that "**...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment...**" (Hebrews 9:27). Science has pushed aside great shrouds of darkness for the human race in the relatively few years it has been used. Philosophy has pondered, probing the recesses and exploiting the capabilities of the mind for answers to the problems of life. But neither the subjective investigation of philosophy nor the objective quest of science has discovered an answer to death.

Science has proposed an answer in its dogma of evolution: "Mankind is moving from a less perfect to a more perfect state as time passes." According to this theory, life began by a single cell or molecule able to reproduce itself. In this simple form of life we find perpetual life, i.e., the parent as well as the offspring would never die unless acted upon by some external force. Later on, as cells organized and specialized, an internal problem developed within the community of cells: *death*. Hence, what Du Nouy in his book, *Human Destiny*, calls "the evolution of death." There seems to be a contradiction!

Thank God for science! It has extended life-expectancy and given us more comfortable living (life is improved qualitatively and quantitatively). But we still suffer, and we still die! Even after death, mortuary science can then dress the body and preserve it by embalming so as to look almost alive—it makes death appear less repulsive, but death is still death.

Philosophy in either the secular or religious frame can help us accept death more easily by rationalizations. It can change the human outlook on death, but it cannot change death itself. It may be even possible to deceive someone concerning hell, so that he will welcome death as an escape to earthly suffering. This is unusual, however, for death is the unknown evil that every man dreads. It is the one enemy of which there is no way of escape to the natural philosopher. Atheist Bertrand Russell says concerning death,

Omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way. Brief and powerless is man's stay: on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls, pitiless and dark.

One may argue that the problem of eternal life and death is not a valid problem, but that death is all there is. One may say that it is merely to be accepted as part of reality, and that the fear of it is to be lived with until death. But there is a voice within the breast of man that cries out to live. This principle is the desire for continued life on an increasingly higher plane. The instinct of self-preservation, the auto-thrust for perpetual life is as old as life itself. Man has a desire deeply ingrained to live forever, but hope for realizing this end is not found in his own efforts. Our hearts tell us this is good and right; our minds say "Impossible!"

2. Peter's Confrontation with Life

Mary Magdalene brought the news to Peter and John. She had been to the tomb before daybreak and found the stone rolled away! Then running to them, she exclaimed **"They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."** (John 20:2).

Both Peter and John rushed to the tomb, John arriving first. He was looking in when Peter arrived and barged on inside. There were the burial wrappings, but the body was gone! Peter did not know what to make of it (Luke 24:12b), but John believed (John 20:8). Mary then arrived at the tomb. John and Peter went home, but Mary stayed (JN 20:10-11).

Jesus then appeared to Mary at the tomb (Mark 16:9, and John 20:14). Afterward, she went back to the disciples, who were still mourning and told them that she had seen and spoken with the Lord (Mark 16:10; John 20:18). John was the only one who believed her (Mark 16:10; John 20:8).

Then Jesus appeared to Peter (Luke 24:34, I Corinthians 15:5). We are not told in detail what happened in their conversation, but Jesus must have shown Peter from the Old Testament that He was the Messiah and then explained the nature of His Kingdom (2 Peter 1:19, Luke 24:13-49). Hope was reborn in Peter's heart!

This new and living hope was far superior to Peter's old hope of a mere temporal kingdom. Peter had been shown what every man longs for and seeks: eternal life or life on the highest plane forever. The old hope had died with Jesus but the new hope had been resurrected with Christ in the full blazing glory he describes in our text:

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4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

What a sunrise for Peter! What a wonderful, great, unimaginable hope that Peter received! *If Peter had not seen the true hopelessness that man in himself faces, he could not accurately tell us of this glorious hope in Christ.*

His intense sorrow, anguish, and disillusionment and despair dissolved with Jesus' explanation of the nature of the future resurrected life of the believer. Before, Peter only had a hope that the Messiah would overthrow Roman rule and set up the Davidic Kingdom-now he sees that he will be resurrected just as Jesus had been.

Is it all "pie in the sky by and by?" No! However, have an earnest of that inheritance now. Divine healing is an earnest of the perfect body we shall have in the resurrection. Cleansing from sin is the earnest of a perfect moral nature, when even sub-ethical sin will be done away. Christ's joy, love and peace of mind are ours when we accept Him. In short, brethren, we not only have the hope of "pie in the sky by and by," but Christ gives us a "slice of that pie" in the hand now! Already the resurrection power is at work in the Christian!

Paul says concerning the Christian hope:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,

the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.
But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

Some may believe any quest for perpetual life or eternal life vain (e.g.: Ponce de Leon's search for the fountain of youth; the pyramids; and other abortive attempts), but the Christian has a "living hope" that no cynic has ever experienced, because Christ has placed His Spirit within every Christian. This is the ineffable aspect that Paul gives.

Paul does not attempt to define the type body and mind we will have, but he draws analogies in I Corinthians 15. He uses grain, different animals' flesh, and the universe, to compare the present body with the resurrected body. He states that the new body will be real and superior to our present one. The superior body is perfect.

Paul then states concerning death:

Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting?

O grave, where is thy victory? (1 Corinthians 15:54c-55)

The massive, dark specter of death disintegrates completely in the saying of our Lord Jesus:

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? (John 11:25-26)

Christian, maybe this hope has been dimmed in your heart and mind. Allow the Holy Spirit to rekindle the hope of the resurrection in your heart this Easter!

Sinner, you have never had this hope. Death to you has held nothing but dread. Won't you accept God's gift of eternal life and have this hope born in your heart by the Holy Spirit?

Friend, no one can claim the title of being *The Life* or *The Resurrection* except the one who died and rose from the grave: The Lord Jesus Christ.

John says of Christ:

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 John 5:12)

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)

The Bible says, "**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**" (Romans 3:23) and you and I are no exceptions. Without turning to Christ from our sin there is no hope for us.
The LORD says,

Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. (Ezekiel 18:4)

God's will is that we should turn to His Son now and not that we should die. Do it now.

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In Essentials: Unity; In non-essentials: Liberty; In all things
—Peter Meiderlin 1626.