

Our Victorious Hope

Series: Victorious #3

1 Peter 1:3-4

Introduction: I read about a second-grade teacher who was teaching her class some vocabulary. She said, 'What is the definition of hope?' One of her students said, 'Hope is wishing for something you know ain't going to happen.'

The U.S. Airforce trains its team to memorize two numbers so they can survive during a time of crisis. The first number is 98.6. That is our optimum core body temperature. When it gets below 88 you can't think clearly. When it drops below 82, you're toast. So, do everything you can to stay warm.

The other number is called the Rule of 3. You can survive:

3 weeks without food

3 days without water

3 hours without shelter in extreme conditions

3 minutes without air

3 seconds without hope

Hope is the belief that things can and will get better. It is the desire for positive things to happen, for dreams to become reality. Hope is important. It is necessary not just for thriving but surviving.

Tali Sharot, a professor of cognitive neuroscience in the department of Experimental Psychology at University College London, argues that hope is hardwired into our brains and can be the difference between living a healthier life as opposed to one trapped in despair.

What is hope? Wishful thinking? Naïve optimism? "Hope it don't rain," we say. "Hope gas prices go down." "Hope the sermon doesn't go too long." (That is wishful thinking!)

The dictionary tells us that hope is "a desire with the expectation of fulfillment." So, hope begins with a desire for something good but then adds the element of expectation. Without expectation, it's just a wish.

But hope is more than a word. Hope is to the spirit what oxygen is to the body. Without it, we die. When a team loses hope, the game is over. When investors lose hope, the stock market tumbles. When a patient loses hope, death is crouching at the door.

Viktor Frankl survived years in Nazi concentration camps in WW2. He noticed that prisoners died just after Christmas. They were hoping they'd be free by then. When they weren't, they gave up. He learned that as long as prisoners had something to live for, a reason to press on, they could endure just about anything. But once they lost hope, they quickly died.

Humans seek after hope like moths seek after light. It's intrinsic to who we are. Studies show hopeful college kids get higher GPAs and are more likely to graduate. Hopeful athletes perform better on the field, cope better with injuries, and have greater mental adjustment when situations change. In one study of the elderly, those who said they felt hopeless were more than twice as likely to die during the study follow-up period as those who were hopeful.

No matter the reason, it's easy to get to a place where joy feels in short supply and pain and anxiety come by the truckload. It all feels so hopeless.

Some fear loneliness, so they place their hope in the idea of marriage and having a spouse—and kids.

Others fear being destitute, so they place their hope in money and they work, work, work. But how many times have you seen someone who has made their bank account their hope do so at the expense of their family or their health?

Still others fear getting sick, so they're fanatical about eating well, exercising as much as they can, and taking their vitamins as their hope is their health. But, well, some of us hate to break it to you, but you're still going to get old.

My message today is about **Our Victorious Hope**.

This is the sixth message of our 2026 Vision Series called **Victorious**. Our theme verse came from the first sermon in 2 Chronicles 20, verse 15 where the Lord says to King Jehoshaphat, ***“The battle belongs to the Lord.”*** Since that time, we’ve looked at The Victory of Love, The Victory of Faith, Victorious Prayer, and last week Pastor Jon talked about Victory in Baptism.

No writer in the New Testament captures so fully, in one short sentence, the hope we have in Christ, than the Apostle Peter. In fact, First Peter is called the letter of hope. It’s a small book at the end of the New Testament that Peter wrote to Christians who were suffering persecution in the Roman Empire.

1 Peter 1:3-4

“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, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you...” [NIV] **PRAYER**

Life has a way of killing dreams, doesn't it? You set out with high hopes—for your schooling, your career, your family, and your golden years. You have plans, aspirations, and expectations. But things don't always turn out the way you expect. Plans fall through. People let you down. You let yourself down. Suddenly the life you're living isn't the life you dreamed of at all; or you find yourself in a place you never expected to be.

Fantine, a young woman from Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*, sings a powerful song (in the musical version) as she finds herself in a hopeless place. A summer lover has left her alone with a child. She finds work in a factory, but must place her daughter, Cosette, in the keeping of some cruel and crooked innkeepers. When it is discovered that she has a child out of wedlock, she's thrown out of the factory and into the streets. She's forced to sell her hair, then her teeth, then her body, to pay for Cosette's care. She's falsely accused of a crime and placed under arrest. And moreover, she's desperately ill. And out of that dark place, she sings, *“I dreamed a dream in days gone by ... now life has killed the dream I dreamed.”*

Hopefully none of us are in that desperate of a place, but we all have dreams that haven't come true. We all find ourselves in places we never expected to be. We know how it feels to be disappointed, discouraged, it feels as though all hope is gone. If it's not true for you right now, it's probably true for someone you know, and maybe for someone you love.

The question isn't "Do you need hope?" or even "Do you have hope?" The question is "What or who is your hope in?"

Bobby Knight has a different take on it. Bobby Knight, of course, is the legendary basketball coach who led the Indiana Hoosiers to three NCAA tournament finals, while boasting one of the highest graduation rates for his players. He was also famous for throwing chairs and chewing out officials, players, fans, and anyone in the vicinity. He wrote a book entitled, *The Power of Negative Thinking*. According to Bobby Knight, "hope" is the worst word in the English language. He says it's foolish and lazy to tell yourself that "things are going to be all right." They'll only be all right if somebody steps up and does something.

I don't usually agree with Bobby Knight, but this time he's on to something. Hope needs a reason. Something, or someone, that can change the trajectory; that can get us to a better place. Without a reason, hope is just wishful thinking.

There's a lesson there for those of us who want to share hope with people. Don't rush to good news. When someone is hurting, discouraged, or grieving, they don't need happy talk. And they certainly don't need religious clichés. "Everything happens for a reason." "They're in a better place." "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." Don't say it and definitely don't sing it.

Grief is real. Loss is painful. Unemployment stinks. Broken relationships can break your heart. If someone in your world is hurting, if you want to share hope with them, the best thing to do is meet them in that moment. Ask them to tell you about it and then sit still long enough to really listen.

Notice in our passage, Peter starts with praise. He's praising God because he knows our hope is "***a living hope.***" Peter had experienced that in his own life. No

one felt the death of Jesus more agonizingly than Peter. He'd boasted he wouldn't leave or forsake Jesus. He meant well, but he failed miserably.

There may be some here who feel like Peter. Your hopes have been crushed. Maybe just a few years ago you had glorious dreams of what you'd like to be, or what you'd like to do, and now they've all collapsed. Maybe you feel like you've failed the Lord miserably. You meant to do well, but you ended up wrong.

After the Resurrection, Jesus sought Peter out, and there's a wonderful scene by the shores of Galilee in John 21, where Jesus appears to his disciples and prepares a meal for them. Around the fire, Jesus asks Peter three times: "Do you love me?" Three times Peter affirms his love, and three times Jesus gives him back his ministry. From that point on, Peter knew that no situation was hopeless. If Jesus is alive, if He really conquered death, there's nothing you will face that Jesus can't overcome.

I. Our hope is a CONFIDENT EXPECTATION because it is a LIVING hope.

The Greek term for hope as used in the NT is *elpis*. Its meaning can be summarized as A CONFIDENT EXPECTATION OF A FUTURE GOOD.

This means simply that our hope is not in vain and will not be disappointed. It is a living hope because of the foundation upon which it is grounded.

- A. Our living hope is grounded first on the one true and living God. He is called the living God at least fifteen times in Scripture.
- B. The second reason why our hope is a LIVING hope is because it is grounded upon a living SAVIOR whose resurrection from the dead guarantees that he will keep his promises to us. Peter says we are born again to a living hope specifically through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (V.3).

He declares, "I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades," (Rev.1:18). Whatever promises He makes to us, we can cling to them with absolute confidence and joyful expectation because He is the LIVING Savior who has overcome all His and our enemies, including death.

II. Our hope is based on the historical fact of the Resurrection.

The Resurrection is based on historical facts. Jesus really is alive. Peter says this living hope came ***“through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*** That’s a concrete event in history.

III. **Our hope is fixed on an inheritance that can never perish.**

On earth, everything perishes, spoils, or fades, but not this. 1 Cor. 2:9 says, ***“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.”*** That sounds good to me. I’ll take that!

The most complete portrait of heaven in the Bible is found in the book of Revelation, chapters 21-22. The apostle John pulls back the curtain and stretches the limits of language and tells us 5 things about Heaven.

A. **Heaven is a REAL PLACE.**

It’s not some esoteric, undefined existence. John describes something material. He writes, ***“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”***

Our vision of the future is not other worldly; it’s new worldly. We will not be freed from our bodies; we’ll get new bodies, like the one Jesus had after he was raised up.

B. **Heaven is a HOLY PLACE.**

The thing that dominates John’s description of heaven is the presence of God. The whole Bible stresses no one can see God’s face and live. But here, in that very real place we call heaven, we’ll see his face.

C. **Heaven is a SAFE PLACE.**

Each of us lives with a certain amount of fear. Anything can happen to us. The world is full of things that threaten. But John says in heaven, ***“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*** Why is that? Because there’ll be no

more sin or crime, no sickness or disease, no betrayal or bickering. Think of all the folks who will need to find new jobs: exterminators, counselors, insurance adjustors, doctors, mechanics, policemen, health inspectors, maybe even pastors!

D. Heaven is a BIG PLACE.

“This city will be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.” That’s 1,400 square miles, the distance from Mexico to Canada or from the Appalachians to California. Heaven is big enough for the full range of the world’s ethnic and cultural diversity. John says, “The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.” All the different groups of people in the world will be represented there.

E. Heaven is a SERVING PLACE.

John says in heaven, “his servants will serve him ... they will reign forever and ever.” He’s hinting at the fact heaven won’t be like an eternal day off. We’ll serve him. He’ll give us assignments. We know in the first Eden there was work to do. Work was a part of paradise. God told Adam to care for the earth and to cultivate it. In the new Eden there’ll be work as well. It will be joyful, creative and productive work.

Do you know what’s great? This hope we have of heaven is secure. Peter says this inheritance **“is kept in heaven for you.”**

IV. Our hope is given to us through His great mercy and the New Birth.

The question is, how do we obtain this living hope? If what I’ve said is even close to true, that’s the most important question in the world. Here’s Peter’s answer: “In his great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope.”

“A new birth,” what does that mean? How does that happen to us? It simply means there comes a time when, in our emptiness, in our loneliness or despair or guilt and shame, or hopelessness, we respond to the invitation of Jesus to come into our lives; we put our trust in him as our Lord and Savior. The Bible says, **“But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God,**

even to those who believe in his name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

When we receive Jesus, we're spiritually reborn and He begins to make changes. That doesn't happen because we're good or try really hard to change our ways. You see, none of us are good enough. We all fall short of God's glory. So this becomes true for us because of "His great mercy."

God loves you; he cares about you. That's why he sent his Son to die in your place. He wants to spend eternity with you in that place I described. But you can't earn this New Birth any more than you earned your physical birth. It's a gift and you must receive it as such by simply saying "yes" to Jesus.

V. Our hope is a Who.

Hope is not a what, a when, or a why. Hope is a "who." Things don't get better just because we want them to. They get better because somebody does something. Hope is always embodied in a person. Shareholders hope the new CEO can turn the company around. Citizens hope a new leader can get their country back on track. A sports team hopes a new manager, player or coach can propel their team to a championship. Hope is a "who." Somebody wise enough, strong enough, good enough, that can get us to a better place.

And Jesus Christ is that someone. His resurrection proves that he is stronger than any setback, any failure, any loss, any disappointment that comes. If life has a way of killing dreams, Jesus has a way of bringing them back to life.

That's not to say we always get what we want, or that every bad thing can be un-done. Life doesn't work that way. But it is to say that God can and will do something good with our future.

I want to encourage you to take a 360-degree approach to finding your hope in God. To anchor your hope in God, you must look:

Back in the past

Around in the present

Forward in the future

We're looking at who God is and what he's done for us *in Christ* in the past, we look at who God is and what he's doing for us *in Christ* in the present, and we look at who God is and what he's going to do for us *in Christ* in the future.

VI. Hope isn't wishful thinking for the future; it's confident living for today.

That's why the call for followers of Jesus is to find our hope anchored in God and him alone. This call is repeatedly echoed in the Psalms:

-Psalm 42:5, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation."

-Psalm 39:7, "And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you."

-Psalm 71:5, "For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth."

-And Psalm 131:3 where the call goes out to all God's people: "O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore."

Turn with me to Psalm 46

1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

We see from the outset, the declaration of Israel: "God is the One in whom we find our protection and sustenance, and this isn't because we're looking back to his great deeds. This is all about who God is in our here and now. He is our very PRESENT help in trouble."

This is instructive because it's easy to think of God's work in our life as only past tense. God sent us Jesus to live the life we were to live, die on the Cross in our place, and rise from the grave to show his victory over sin, death, and hell—what we know as the gospel, the Good News of Jesus. And that's true. It all happened in the past. But it's not an action that only impacts our past, it thrusts us into a new reality in the present.

2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. 6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Do you hear their confidence? "As long as God stays right here with us, we shall not be moved and though the nations around us fight and kingdoms fall, God will help us for he is with us! He is our fortress!"

They can't stop bragging on him:

8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire.

They recognize that God is so powerful that he will stop the wars around them and tell those outside of Israel:

10 "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

No wonder Israel concludes by declaring in verse 11, ***The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.***

Here is our hope: the God who hasn't just performed for us in our past but is present in our present. He "is with us."

The Key to Finding Hope in the Present

You want to know how to find hope in the world today? Realize that in the gospel God has given us his presence for our present. He "is with us." Let me offer a few ways that is true.

A. First, God gives us his Word

The Scriptures give us guidance to show us not only the story of the kingdom but the character of the King and the role that we, as its citizens, are to play under his rule.

Scripture is the primary way we hear God's voice in our lives. When we open our Bibles, God opens his mouth.

No wonder saints of old said things like,

-Psalm 119:114, "You are my hiding place and my shield; I in your word."

-Psalm 119:147, "I rise before dawn and cry for help; I in your words."

-Psalm 130:5, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his I hope;"

-And why Paul could say to Christians in Romans 15:4, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

God not only gives us his Word but...

B. God gives us his Holy Spirit.

More than that, his Spirit empowers us to believe the truths we discover about Christ, so that our hope doesn't hinge on how strong we believe but upon the strength of the One in whom we believe.

It's why Paul can say in Romans 15:13, "***May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.***" Want to grow in hope? Spend time in the Scriptures asking God's Spirit not only to help you understand what you read but to believe and live it.

C. thirdly, God gives us his people, the church, for our support and care.

I pity followers of Jesus who try to live in this world outside of the grace God gives through the community of faith. There's a reason 1 Corinthians 12 calls the church the "body of Christ"—because it's a very real way God ministers his presence to us in our present.

He gives us to each other, filled with his Spirit, equipped with gifts, and hearts to bear each other up in hope. It is to this community God says:

-Galatians 6:2, "***Bear one another's burdens ...***"

-1 Thessalonians 5:11, ***“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”***

-Romans 12:10, ***“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”***

Christ’s body, the church is the way He cares for us and gives us hope in Him.

The Bible goes on to say in 1 Peter 3 “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...”

These three gifts God gives us by the Cross. Three ways he is present in our present: his Word, his Spirit, and his people.

All the gifts of his presence (Word, Spirit, church) are testimony to probably the greatest gift he gives us in Jesus: his never-failing, everlasting love!

This means God loves you as much as he loves Jesus. And no matter what trials or struggles you’re going through—or maybe what sins and screwups you’ve committed—**God has put his love on you not because you’ve been good enough for it, but because Jesus has been good enough for you.**

And that truth alone can lift your head and fill your heart with hope in a world full of darkness. That’s why Israel would sing ...

-Psalm 147:11, ***“But the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, those who hope in his steadfast love.”***

-Psalm 33:18–22, ***“Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.”***

We have this hope for our past, for our present, and for our future only because of a risen lord. There are two places in the universe where there is no hope. One is hell, because if you go to hell there is no hope. The other is heaven, because in heaven there is no need for hope. In the here-and-now we need hope. The

beautiful thing is when you know that your tomorrow is taken care of you can handle the troubles of today.

He is present in your present. Look around and find your hope in him. Whatever circumstance you may find yourself in this morning, whatever pain, loss, or disappointment you may be dealing with, God can do something good with it, or in it. That doesn't minimize the pain or loss or evil of it. It simply means the story isn't over yet. God can and will meet you in that place, in that moment—And he is strong enough and wise enough to do something good, something meaningful, something eternally significant.

Conclusion

A few minutes ago, we left poor Fantine dying in the street. Victor Hugo wrote *Les Misérables* to expose what he called three great evils of his time—poverty, the exploitation of women and children, and spiritual darkness. He pulls no punches. Fantine ends up dying of her illness. But somebody is there. Jean Valjean takes Cosette into his protection; he raises her, and years later delivers her into the arms of a fine young man. And Valjean dies at the end of a long and good life.

After losing a loved one, Stephen Curtis Chapman wrote the words to this song called ***“With Hope.”***

If you cry with hope, we can say goodbye with hope because we know our goodbye is not the end.

We grieve with hope because we believe with hope there's a place where we will see your face again.

We have this hope as an anchor because we believe everything God promised is true.

So, we can cry with hope, we can say goodbye with hope, because we know that our goodbye is not the end.

We grieve with hope because we believe with hope, there is a place by God's grace. There is a place where we will see your face again.”

Victor Hugo had a hard time with the church of his day, but he believed in God, and that gave him reason to believe that good would triumph over evil, that justice would be done, and that there was life and love beyond the grave. **For 200 years, his story has given the world hope, but for over 2000 years Jesus has been offering all humanity a *Living Hope*, through Christ, our risen Savior.**

If you should find yourself in a tough place right now, have the courage and honesty to stay in that place and invite Christ to meet you there. If you should know someone in such a place right now, someone who's dealing with pain, disappointment, hopelessness, or loss; share living hope with them. Listen to them. Be with them. Pray for them. And when the time is right, point them toward Jesus. Because life has a way of killing dreams, but Jesus has a way of bringing them, and us, back to life!