



Biblical Text: I Peter 1:3-5:

Celebrate with praises the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us his extravagant mercy. For his *fountain of* mercy has given us a new life—we are reborn<sup>[a]</sup> to experience a living, energetic hope<sup>[b]</sup> through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>4</sup> We are reborn into a perfect inheritance<sup>[d]</sup> that can never perish, never be defiled, and never diminish. It is promised and preserved forever in the heavenly realm for you!<sup>[e]</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Through our faith, the mighty power of God constantly guards<sup>[f]</sup> us until our *full* salvation<sup>[g]</sup> is ready to be revealed<sup>[h]</sup> in the last time. (Passion Translation)

Introduction:

As I have counseled with several people over zoom, what's app or we-chat these past week, the issue of hope and the struggle to maintain it keeps surfacing. So, these past 2 weeks every Scattered Flock devotion centered around Bible passages on hope. They have strengthened my focus and resolve so I want to make that our focus in the sermon this week.

Let me start with a familiar call-to-worship song we sang at church:

We enter your courts, Lord, with praise and thanksgiving,  
with hands lifted up and hearts open wide.  
Lord of Glory, work a miracle of love in gift and giving  
that the world may know that's hope's alive and holy faith is living.  
We enter Your courts, Lord, with praise and thanksgiving, with hands lifted up and hearts open wide.

Hope is built when we come together in worship in praise with our whole selves – hands lifted up and hearts opened wide. Without hands and hearts involved, worship can be no more than a clanging symbol and noisy gong in God's ears. And it will not give birth to a living hope.

God wants our full-hearted devotion SO THAT our lives will reflect him in our gift and giving to each other and to all those the Lord puts in our path. Then the world will know that hope's alive and holy faith is living.

There is a global purpose for our living hope that transcends how it affects our individual lives!

We started in the Passion translation of I Peter 1:3-4, so, let's look at some of the other Passion Translation passages on hope that are particularly important in defining it:

Ps. 33:20 - The Lord alone is our radiant hope and we trust in him with all our hearts.  
His wrap-around presence will strengthen us. (Passion Translation)

A radiant hope that is strengthened by his wrap around presence.

Ps. 131:1-2 - Lord, my heart is meek before you. I don't consider myself better than others.  
I'm content to not pursue matters that are over my head— such as your complex mysteries and wonders—  
that I'm not yet ready to understand. <sup>2</sup> I am humbled and quieted in your presence. Like a contented child who  
rests on its mother's lap, <sup>[a]</sup> I'm your resting child and my soul is content in you.

A quiet and contented hope that is resting in the Lord

Heb. 6:19 - We have this certain hope like a strong, unbreakable anchor holding our souls to God himself. Our  
anchor of hope is fastened *to the mercy seat* <sup>[a]</sup> which sits in the heavenly realm beyond the sacred threshold, <sup>[b]</sup>

An anchor that holds our souls to God Himself and is fastened to the mercy seat.

I Thes. 5:8 - But since we belong to the day, we must stay alert and clearheaded by placing the breastplate of faith  
and love *over our hearts*, and a helmet of the hope of salvation (*this same reference to the helmet of salvation in  
Eph.6:17 adds 'to protect our minds from lies'*).

A helmet to protect our minds

I John 33:3 - And all who focus their hope on him will always be purifying <sup>[a]</sup> themselves, <sup>[b]</sup> just as Jesus is pure. <sup>[c]</sup>

A purifying work in our lives

Ps. 25:5 - Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. NIV

A constant hope

To summarize and rephrase these in one word each:

- Hope radiates,
- hope anchors,
- hope rests,
- hope purifies,
- hope protects,
- hope guides.

So, clearly, we all need an abundance of this gift from the Spirit every day. That's why Paul makes it a prayer for  
the Roman Christians. Rom. 15:13 –

Now may God, the inspiration and fountain of hope, fill you to overflowing with uncontainable  
joy and perfect peace as you trust in him. And may the power of the Holy Spirit continually  
surround your life with his super-abundance until you radiate with hope! (Passion)

I think that "super-abundance" is what Paul means when he also told the Romans what should characterize their  
life:

Be devoted to tenderly loving your fellow believers *as members of one family*. Try to  
outdo yourselves in respect and honor of one another. <sup>11</sup> Be enthusiastic to serve the Lord,  
keeping your passion toward him boiling hot! Radiate with the glow of the Holy Spirit and let him  
fill you with excitement as you serve him.

<sup>12</sup> Let this hope burst forth within you, releasing a continual joy. Don't give up in a time of  
trouble, <sup>[a]</sup> but commune with God at all times. <sup>13</sup> Take a constant interest in the needs of God's  
beloved people and respond by helping them. And eagerly welcome people as guests into your  
home. (Passion)

Hope that bursts forth; hope that releases a continual joy.

So, beloved, let me ask 3 simple questions:

1. How do you respond to these passages?
2. How living is your hope?
3. On what is your hope based?

The old hymn answers those questions for me:

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus's blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus's name.

Refrain: On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand,  
all other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace.

In every high and stormy gale, my anchors holds within the veil.

Refrain.

That anchor is attached to the mercy seat, so the Lord knows all the times our hope seems to grow thin or only hold on weakly. But the Spirit will hold us – the Spirit will secure us with his wrap-around shield and the Spirit will so pour our consciousness of God's unfailing love into our hearts that we can know His joy and His peace and His blessings. Our part is to "keep a grip on hope" (Lam.3:21, the Message), holding onto the Lord as He holds onto us. That's what the Bible calls "a fixed heart." (Ps. 57:7).

Let's pray this for one another, beloved, that it will be so, by His grace, in His name and for His glory.

Amen.

**Dr. Mary Lou Codman-Wilson 8/28/20**