

Reason for Hope

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 May 2012

Preacher: Jonathan Worthington

[0 : 0 0] If you could turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter, 1 Peter chapter 3. Excuse me.

Many of you will be participating in the neighborhood fellowships that our church does. It's a great opportunity to get to know each other better, to explore God's word in a more personal way, and to begin to minister to people within your own neighborhood.

A few weeks ago, more for some, we looked at a chapter called Mission for Everyone. It's chapter 2 in this book. And we had a very rich discussion about this at our neighborhood fellowship, and I've been thinking about it quite a bit.

I wanted to explore some thoughts in it, and the passage that it's based on a bit more. Let me read to you the introduction in this book, in this chapter.

The principle of this chapter is that all believers are witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ. That's the principle. All believers are witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ.

[1 : 2 1] And then they give this scenario. The train was pulling out of the station, and Robert sat looking at a couple sitting opposite him. He knew they were going all the way to London, and that meant they had about three hours together.

He smiled, and they both gave him a reluctant acknowledgement. Oh no, he thought to himself. What on earth am I going to say? Hey, he decided to carry on reading his newspaper, or at least look as if he was.

It soon became obvious that they were not going to strike up a conversation, but he knew he just had to. At least, that's what the visiting preacher had said the night before. He had made it all sound so easy, and so exciting.

Robert really did want to talk to them, and explain the gospel to them. After all, it might be the only chance they had of hearing it. The weight of their eternal destiny pressed down on him, and he tried desperately to think of a way in.

Maybe he should offer to get them something from the buffet car. But as he looked at them, his resolve quickly evaporated. In what seemed no time at all, Robert heard the voice of the train manager informing passengers that the train was due to arrive at their destination in under ten minutes.

[2 : 3 7] He just sank into his seat, despairing at his inadequacy. What should Robert have done? Was he right to try to talk to his fellow travelers?

Was he wrong to have made such a big thing out of it? That scenario might resonate with many of you. It certainly does with me, talking to people about Christ.

Then this book turns us to 1 Peter, chapter 3. So let me read to you again a portion of what George read earlier. 1 Peter 3, 13-16.

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear. Do not be frightened.

But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

- [3 : 43] But do this with gentleness and respect. Then the book asks these questions. In that passage, who initiates the gospel conversation?
- Look at verse 15. Who initiates the gospel conversation? Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope that you have.
- In that passage, it's actually the unbeliever who initiates the conversation. They ask. Why do they ask? Why do they initiate this conversation?
- Well, again, verse 15. They're asking for the reason for the hope that you have. I hope we can explore that for a few moments right now.
- Hope. The reason for hope. Some of you might have a handout. I hope that'll be helpful. Some of you, I know, find it helpful. I'll explain a bit more as we move on.
- [4 : 49] The passage in 1 Peter is at the top. The reason for hope. At university, when I was, I think, a freshman in the first year, a Muslim friend asked me a random question.
- We had been friends for most of that year. We had had conversations about Jesus and Muhammad. Some really good conversations. And at one point, she asked randomly, Jonathan, why are you so happy all the time?
- You can't ask for a better setup for the gospel than that. I mean, that's sort of what Peter is talking about. Be ready to give an answer for anyone who asks you for the reason for hope that you have.
- Or in that case, for the joy that I had. She saw it. And she asked about it. Why are you so happy all the time? And in my head, I was screaming, it's because of Jesus.
- And what came out was, I don't know. And then it was over. And she left. And I completely botched it. I mean, it was there on a platter, you could say.
- [6 : 00] I was wrestling with that the entire day. Just mulling over in my head, what happened and why, when it was right there, did I not say something, even something simple, about Jesus.
- He's the reason. And that evening at Bible study, this verse was, not the verse we're looking at, but a verse in 1 Peter, was brought up.
- 1 Peter 1, 8-9. Though you have not seen Jesus, you love Him. And even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him, and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.
- For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. I wish I had seen that that morning. But anyway, I'm sure some of you will resonate with that example as well, where it's right in front of you, and for some reason, you don't mention this Jesus, who gives you joy and hope.
- This book, it takes care. It seems to let us off the hook, doesn't it?
- [7 : 14] It seems to suggest that, just wait until other people initiate conversation to talk about Jesus. But then it does, it does carefully go against that.
- And it says this challenging thing to us. A balanced statement, I think. We are not all gifted, eloquent, vivacious, engaging, personal evangelists.
- But we are all children of God, saved by grace, and heading for glory. Commending the one who has adopted, rescued, and enriched us is an enormous privilege.
- This is at the heart of the principle that every believer is a witness of the good news of Jesus. The source of this constant and believable witness is the sense of being awestruck by grace.
- So this particular verse, always be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have. Do this with gentleness and respect.

[8 : 20] I thought we could explore a little bit. Because although in this instance it is an unbeliever who prompts the question, like my Muslim friend did with me, they do it for a reason.

It's because you have hope in you. But it's not just a hope that is inside of you. It's a hope they can see. They see it, and that's why they ask.

So in a sense, you are initiating the conversation. You're living a life that has hope, that is visible. And that's what prompts them to ask, what's the reason for that hope?

I see that you live a life of hope. Why? Why do you hope? So let's explore these few things. Why we have hope. What's the ground of our hope?

But then also, how can this be visible to others? Not in the sense of showing off, but in a sense of us living a life in hope in such a way, such a practical way, that people do take notice.

[9 : 22] That something is different. That we have hope. So how can we do that? How can we have visible hope? Why do we have it at all? What's the ground of our hope? And how can we live it out visibly?

So to do that, we're first going to explore the ground of our hope. Why it is there. So that we can be ready to give an answer when they ask why it's there.

Then we're going to look at a few examples of people who do express their hope in some practical ways. They have hope, and it comes out in very practical ways.

Visible ways. And then we're going to look specifically at that happening in suffering. As C.S. Lewis put it, in *The Problem of Pain*, he says that pain is like God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

Pain is like God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world. They can see our hope, but it's in suffering especially that they see it or hear it loud and clear.

[10 : 31] So, we're going to explore the ground of our hope, examples of visible hope, and specifically hope in suffering.

Those three things. However, if you're looking at the paper in front of you, you'll see that we're going to do that twice. Over here on the left-hand side of the page, we're going to look at some statements that Paul makes, because he gives a lot more.

Peter's is just a short letter. Paul gives a lot more about the ground of hope. Why do you have it? He gives a number more examples of visible hope, and then he goes into a bit more detail about hope in suffering as God's megaphone to a deaf world.

So, we're going to look at some examples of these three things, and then with that picture of Christian hope in our minds, we're going to focus on Peter's shorter letter and look at those same three things.

So, what does Peter say? It's the ground of our hope. Are some examples of living this hope out so others can see, and then hope in suffering in particular.

[11 : 38] So, I just have the verses written down for you, and I'm just going to read the verses mainly, an occasional comment. So, if you have a pen, you can jot down right next to the verse something that leaps out at you of the ground of hope.

Jot it down as we read the verse, or examples of hope. Excuse me. So, in Paul, why does Paul have hope?

What's the ground of this hope? I'm going to start reading some passages, and you'll begin to see a pattern of what his hope is based on. Acts chapter 23, verse 6 to 9.

Paul is standing before the Jewish council. Now, when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees, and the other part were Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Brothers, I'm a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees.

It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I'm on trial. And when he said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

[12 : 48] For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledged them all. Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended sharply, We find nothing wrong with this man.

What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him? That's cheeky, isn't it? They're really picking on the Sadducees. And he gets out of it for the moment. But did you notice what the hope is connected to?

What is the ground of Paul's hope? I'm not going to tell you, because I'm just going to read the next one, and you'll see the same pattern. Paul is moved. Now he's before the Roman governor Felix.

Paul says this in Acts 24, 14-16. But this I confess to you, that according to the way which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law and written in the prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. What is the ground of Paul's hope? What is his hope based on? Again, in Acts 26, verses 4-8, now he's before King Herod.

[14 : 12] And Paul says this, verses 6-8, And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain as they earnestly worship night and day.

And for this hope, I am accused by Jews, O King. Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? Do you see the connection there?

It's for this hope that I am accused. Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? What is the ground of Paul's hope?

What's it based on? Time and time again, he's saying the same thing. Let's read a part of one of his letters to Christians. 1 Corinthians 15, 17-20.

Listen carefully for hope and what it's based on. What is the reason for his hope? If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you're still in your sins.

[15 : 23] And then also, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But, in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. What's the reason for his hope? Again, in another letter to the Thessalonian Christians, 1 Thessalonians 4, 13-14, Paul says, We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep.

Those who believe in Jesus but who have died. Those who are asleep. So that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. Pause right there for a moment.

He does not say, We don't want you to grieve when your loved ones die. But he does say, We don't want you to grieve like others grieve who have no hope. That reminds me of Jesus himself.

Do you remember? His friend, Lazarus, died. And Jesus is standing at the tomb knowing that he is about to raise Lazarus from the dead.

[16 : 35] In a matter of seconds, he's going to bring Lazarus back to life. But Jesus still weeps. I think that the weight of death was so real to Jesus.

And losing a friend, so real to Jesus. He wept. He grieved. But not as one who didn't have hope. He was about to raise him from the dead. It's okay to grieve.

But, as Paul says, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For, since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

Okay, that's just a list of some things that Paul has said. What's the reason for his hope? It's probably loud and clear. The resurrection. It's not avoiding death, but it's being raised back to life bodily.

And there are actually two parts to this. You might have picked up on this. One is the great resurrection at the end. That we have a promise that we are going to be raised by Jesus when he comes back.

[17 : 44] That's the hope that looks forward to what's going to happen. We are going to be raised by Jesus when he returns in glory. But that hope is not just pie in the sky or wishful thinking of what might happen in the future.

It's based on the fact that Jesus has already risen from the dead and been glorified. It's based on a fact that was seen, witnessed, tangible.

We're promised something in the future. Our hope is for the future, but it's based on something that's already a reality. It's already true. It's therefore certain. That's the ground of Paul's hope.

Time and again, no matter what circumstances he was in, he talks about the Christian hope being when Jesus comes back, we get to be raised and glorified with him.

And we know this because he's already been raised and glorified. It's a sure thing. And that's our hope. So what about you?

[18 : 45] What is the reason for your hope that you have? But like Peter says, people are hopefully going to see this hope in you and ask, what's the reason for this?

And hopefully you can now begin to share what is the reason for your hope? But how do you show it? How do we live out hope? Practically, so that others can see, can take note.

Paul mentions a few different types of people who have Christian hope and who live in a certain way that marks them as different. I'm going to read three passages.

There are three types of people mentioned. And this is mainly to stimulate us to think creatively. To think creatively about how can we live practically in a manner that is hopeful in Christ's resurrection.

So first, in Titus, chapter 2, verses 11 to 14. Examples of visible hope. Titus 2, 11.

[19 : 51] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.

Did you catch the hope? And it's related to when Jesus comes back, but it works out practically in their lives, in these people's lives.

We're waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus, waiting for that by doing what? Well, we're being trained to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives now, waiting for what's coming.

I think that's important. This life of hope is one that acts differently now because of what it's waiting for. And there are some examples of how it is a different type of life.

People will take note of that. Another example about a widow, 1 Timothy. 5, verses 5 to 6. Again, these are Paul's statements.

[21 : 23] We're going to turn in a few moments to Peter's. Paul gives another example of somebody with hope that is shown in their life. 1 Timothy 5, 5 and 6.

She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God, and continues in supplications and prayers, night and day.

But she who is self-indulgent is dead, even though she lives. So this widow, left on her own, has set her hope on God, and therefore she continues day and night, praying.

And she is very different from another lady who is self-indulgent. So it seems that she's not only praying, but is living a self-controlled life as well.

But this is because her hope is on God. Her life looks different. So again, these are just to stimulate you to think creatively about how we could each live a life of hope.

[22 : 26] A third example. In 1 Timothy 6, so just a few, a little bit later, 1 Timothy 6, 17 to 19. As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God.

Set their hopes on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Again, their hope is not in their riches, which are uncertain, but their hope is set on God, and that affects how they live, and it's very different than what most of the world is like.

So in Paul, we've looked at the reason for his hope, the resurrection in the future because of Jesus' resurrection in the past. That's the reason for his hope.

We've looked at a few examples of how to show this hope visibly, and let me read now a few passages about hope in suffering in particular, because that's one of the main ways that God voices his triumphant hope to the world is through his people suffering.

[24 : 01] In Romans 5, 1-5, Romans 5, 3-5, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Now, that's interesting. We're not just challenged to live a life of hope in suffering. Suffering actually helps produce more hope in us, and it's specifically by the Holy Spirit.

As Romans 15, 13 says, May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust him, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Another passage in Paul about hope in suffering is Romans 8, 18-24. For I consider that the sufferings of this present age are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God, that great resurrection in the end. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

[25 : 50] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies, that great resurrection.

For in this hope we were saved. It's in suffering that our hope is seen most clearly, the hope of the redemption of our bodies in the end.

And the last passage from Paul about hope in suffering, 2 Corinthians 1, 8-11. I read this this morning. We do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction that we experienced in Asia.

For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death.

But that was to make us rely on, not ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril and He will deliver us.

[27 : 06] On Him we have set our hope and He will deliver us again. So, before turning to Peter and what he says about hope, let's summarize for just a moment.

Are you ready to explain why you have hope? If someone were to ask you, could you give the ground of your hope, the reason for your hope?

For Paul, it was two things. It was hope in the future that we will be redeemed fully, our bodies raised from the dead and we will be glorified and all the wrongs will be righted, that hope for the future.

But that's based on something that's already happened and is sure because Jesus has risen from the dead and has been glorified. That's the reason for Paul's hope. Also, are you ready to show your hope in practical ways?

To live a life so that others see your hope and then ask about it and then you can give them the reason for this hope. Well, to help solidify some of this, let us walk through much more briefly because Peter is more brief, walk through these three things in Peter's letter, 1 Peter.

[28 : 25] We'll end at this verse that is the theme for tonight. So let's see what Peter says about the reason for our hope and then we'll look at one example of how somebody with hope has lived it out to help us think about how we can and then finally look at hope in suffering.

1 Peter 1.3, 1.3-5. 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, kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God, by God's power, until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

We have been granted a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus, looking forward to the coming salvation that will be revealed. In 1 Peter 1.13, again He talks about the ground or the reason for our hope.

He says, Therefore, prepare your minds for action. Be self-controlled. Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Set your hope fully on that grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. So there's that future part. He's coming back. Jesus is coming.

[30 : 06] Set your hope on that. But that's sure because He's already risen in the past. Third passage, Peter's reason for our hope.

1 Peter 1.18-21. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but rather with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

He was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through Him, you believe in God who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him and so your faith and your hope is in God, are in God.

Through Jesus, you believe in God who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him and so your faith and your hope are in God. So, what does Peter say?

What's the reason for our hope? If somebody were to ask you, you seem like you have hope in your life and so many people don't. What's your reason? Why do you have hope? Can you give an answer?

[31 : 22] The resurrection of Jesus gives us hope and it promises us our own resurrection. Focus on the glory of Christ in His resurrection. One example of somebody with hope that lives it out so others can see it and then ask.

in 1 Peter 3, 1-5. Again, this is just one example to help us all think creatively about we in our own circumstances, how we can live hope out.

1 Peter 3, 1-5. Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives.

When they see the purity and reverence of your lives, your beauty should not come from outward adornment such as braided hair or wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes.

Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.

[32 : 36] those ladies had hope in God and it affected how they lived. People saw it. Their husbands and were challenged to come to Christ by their wives' hope.

It's an example of visible hope. And the last thing, what does Peter say about hope in suffering in particular? In God's providence, His people suffer sometimes, often, and it's in those moments that His power in our lives, our hope in His power is proclaimed as with a megaphone to a deaf world.

1 Peter 3, 13-15, the passage that we're ultimately thinking about. Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But, even if you should suffer for what is right, you're blessed.

Do not fear what they fear. Do not be frightened. But, in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

But do this with gentleness and respect. This very passage is in the context of suffering. When we suffer, people see our hope. So what is your reason for hope?

[34 : 04] Do you live it out in a way that people see a difference and want to talk to you about it? Can you give the reason? Christian hope is unique hope.

Hope has to do with the future. You hope in something to come. We hope in Jesus coming back, glorified and resurrecting us in glory.

That's what we hope for in the future. But Christian hope is unique because the future has already started. It's not just in the future. It has begun when Jesus raised from the dead.

Glorious. It's a reality that is tangible and we get to wait for it with eager expectation. So now, let's go and be ready to give an answer for our hope.

And let's live it out in such a way that people see it and take notice. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray.