

**Christianityworks**  
**A Confident Life in Uncertain Times**  
**0056-2**  
**A Living Hope**

Praise God, because in the midst of your exile, in the midst of your trials, the heaviness, the burden of these trials that you're going through, there is a purpose in your suffering.

**Life Without Hope**

It is just great to be with you again today. We're on the second program in a series that I've called A Confident Life in Uncertain Times. As we live life day to day we need to have confidence in our lives, not a cockiness, not an arrogance, that's not what I'm talking about. Just a quiet, gentle confidence that we can expect good things to happen in our lives, that we can know that we're in the right place, walking in God's will and we can rest in that and we can have a blessed and peaceful life.

Last week we had the first message in the series where we saw, as we went through 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 1-3, that we were chosen with a purpose and that gives you confidence. When we know that God has chosen us with a purpose that's an awesome thing. And this letter in the New Testament, 1 Peter, is written by Peter to a bunch of Christians who are suffering terrible persecution. And this week we're going to move on a little bit from there and look at hope because hope is such an important element of confidence.

So many people these days live their life like a candle in the wind, as the song goes. Instead of that quiet confidence and assurance, real sense of optimism and hope for the future, they're like a cork you know bobbing around in an ocean in a storm and that's a terrible way to live. This nagging uncertainty about life today and the future, so many people feel that their circumstances, the big picture things and the little picture things, are out of control.

You look around the world today, the big picture, we've got terrorism, we've got the war on terror, we've got global warming, we've got terrible poverty, we've got all of those things happening, things that you and I as little people, have absolutely no influence in. People say well, "Sponsor a child." And I've heard people say, "Okay, so I sponsor a child but 25,000 other kids die every day from starvation so what's the point?"

You see that reflects that sense that the big picture of the world is so out of control so we retreat to the little picture, the local picture, the 'me' picture. And I talk to a lot of people, people who are living unsatisfying lives, in the grind and we try and shop our way out of it. People have a sense that there must be something more. And you know, this is true of people no matter what their circumstances, no matter what their socio-economic situation or their culture or their faith.

Our lives can be dry like a drought. Around where I live we've been going through one of the worst droughts on record, farmers have been selling down their livestock, so of them have even sold their farms that have been in their families for generations, suicide rates are up, it must be so incredibly tough for them. Every day the same thing, bright clear skies, not a rain cloud in sight, standing in the dust bowl thinking and yearning in their hearts, 'I hope it rains soon'. A funny thing hope, 'I hope it rains' but what does that exactly mean?

I mean what is hope? Hope is like a joyful and confident expectation that something good is going to happen and you know, when we lose hope, when we stop believing that good things in fact are going to happen in our lives, it becomes a bleak dark place. Job, if you know the story of Job in the Old Testament, you have a look at chapter 7, verse 6.

Job was a good man, you know he honoured God and the devil came against him and ended up taking almost everything away from him. Job went through such a difficult time and in Job, chapter 7, verse 6 he says this, "*My days are swifter than the weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope.*" That's about as low as you can get. The days are slipping by, day after day after day and there's no hope, there's no 'looking forward to something', there's no sense of confidence about the future.

And it's easy for the farmer whose property has turned into a dust bowl to lose hope. It's easy for someone like you and me to look around and think back to what we had and see what's going on in our lives at the moment and think, 'I hope it rains tomorrow, I hope something changes, I hope it gets better tomorrow.' It's devastating to lose hope, you see, hope is the opposite of uncertainty.

We're going through a series called Living A Confident Life in Uncertain Times and as we are going to see today as we get into God's word, we do live amidst uncertainty. That's the reality of life. We'd like to run away from it but it's just not the way it's going to be. And so God wants us to have that quiet confidence and peace

amidst all this uncertainty that's going on. At least that's the way it should be.

But for so many people, hope is mixed up with uncertainty, it's kind of a hopeless plea almost, 'I hope it's going to rain tomorrow.' Hope becomes a desperate thing rather than a certain thing, hope is a fading thing rather than something that shines brightly.

I remember a time in my life when I lost all hope that something good would happen and it was such an incredibly dark time. Hope's like a light in the storm, uncertainty is this nagging sick feeling in the pit of your stomach that drains the life out of you and we all hope in something, without hope we can't keep going. Without hope there's no tomorrow.

So Peter, the apostle, writes this letter to the exiles of the dispersion, these exiles who were under persecution, who were living in uncertain times. They were tough times, incredibly tough. There was brutal persecution, torture, we talked about that last week and this is what he writes in the first chapter of his first letter, 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 3-5, let's have a listen.

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish or spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you. You who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time even though for a little while you've had to suffer some trials."*

He talks about hope, there's a lot in this, it's real 'rubber hits the road' stuff and we're going to unpack that into our hearts and our lives.

## **A Certain Hope**

Well let's take a look at what Peter is saying to these suffering, persecuted exiles about hope,

*"Praise be to the God and the 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 or spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you. You who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to*

*be revealed in the last time even though for a little while you've had to suffer various trials."*

He starts off here talking to these persecuted believers about doing something that they mustn't have felt very much like doing - praise! And when life's tough, when I'm down, when the drought continues, when we sink into this thing that goes down and down and down the decision to praise God in the middle of it, why? Well, he gives us an answer, because we have a 'new birth into a living hope.'

Can I encourage you? If you are in the middle of an exile, of trials, of difficult times, now is the time to decide to praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you know why? Because He's up to something good! Maybe we can't see it but actually it's got nothing to do with whether or not the drought breaks, it's something much bigger. It's the new birth we have into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I have a small bundle of shares in a company listed on the stock exchange and I can watch the share price go up and down, by the minute, on the internet. It's lovely to see the price up and it's a little bit disappointing when the price goes down. But if I put my hope into those shares, my whole sense of security, I'd go nuts because they go up and down, like our circumstances, like people's moods, like friendships, like anything. There could be a stock market crash tomorrow.

Who or what do we put our hope in? And Peter is saying here that God, in His great mercy, has given us a new birth, a new start into a living hope. Out of the goodness of God, a new birth, a new start. Do you feel like a new start today? Do you feel that you just need your slate wiped clean so you can go forward? Praise God because in His great mercy He has given us a new birth into a living hope.

Not some flaky uncertain hope. It literally means, this 'living hope' thing, to enjoy real life, to have true life, a vital power, you know exerting the same influence on the soul as life itself. To be full of vigour, to be fresh, strong, active, powerful, to have an impact, the sort of life we all want to lead. That's what Peter is talking about here in terms of a living hope, a hope that brings us to life.

It's such a sharp contrast to the sort of hope that says, 'oh you know, I hope it rains tomorrow', because the hope that God gives us, through Jesus Christ, through His resurrection makes a difference. It's based on something certain, it's based on the resurrection of Jesus, a historical fact and reality and that's going to

happen to me one day, one day you and I are going to cast off our body.

And if we believe in Jesus Christ, whether or not the drought in this life breaks; you know whether or not our circumstances in this life change; whether or not God chooses to make some things in my life, here and now, better or not; one day we are going to have a resurrection day, when we stand before God in glory, with no more sickness or pain or health problems or tears, to walk into an inheritance that is completely untouchable. Look at what Peter writes here in chapter 1, verse 4, *"Into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you."*

This hope in Jesus is a new birth for a living hope into what? Into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you. Literally, Peter writes here that God is guarding it for us, keeping it safe for us. Not like the stock prices, not like wealth, it's not subject to thieves or stock market crashes or moths eating it or it tarnishing. It's not like waiting for the rain to break from the drought, who knows whether that will happen? It's not like waiting for whatever it is in our life that causes us uncertainty and fear to change, who knows whether that's going to happen? Nothing like those things.

It's absolutely certain, being kept rock solid and safe in heaven. Something that we can put our confidence in, based on what Jesus has done, based on his resurrection, on a fact. That's what makes it lively and real and compelling and vibrant and alive. That's the sort of life we have when we live in the full knowledge of that new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And not only do we have a new birth into a living hope, not only is it based on the resurrection of Jesus, not only into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade but also look at verse 5, if you have a Bible, *"We who through faith are shielded by Gods power until the coming of that salvation."*

So not only is our inheritance being protected but we, through faith, are shielded by Gods power. So everything we go through, every hurt and pain and fear, everything, God is guarding our inheritance in heaven but God is shielding us here on earth through his power. You, if you believe in Jesus, are being protected by the power of God, that's a promise and we acquire that through faith.

## **Where the Rubber Hits the Road**

We're looking at this wonderful letter of Peter the Apostle to these Christians who had been dispersed from Jerusalem and Judea right across the known world, right into every part of Asia Minor through persecution. And they were living uncertain lives, they were living lives of fear. And this is the second message in a series that I've called Living A Confident Life In Uncertain Times. And there can be no confidence without hope, a certain hope for the future. This beautiful letter written by Peter, written to these exiles under persecution. Let's just look at the passage we're going through today again, 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 3-9.

*"Praise be to the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ because in his great mercy he's given us a 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 guarded in heaven for you. You, who through faith are being shielded by Gods power until the coming of that salvation, the salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time even though we have to suffer some trials. So that the genuineness of our faith being more precious than gold maybe found to result in the praise and the glory and the honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you've not seen him you love him and even though you can't see him now you believe in him and you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy because you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*

He's writing here to these exiles in these confusing, fearful times. They weren't where they were meant to be, they weren't in their comfort zone. They were being killed and tortured and they were dying and what does Peter write about? Does he write about the problems that they were facing? Does he give a list of ten steps on how to deal with persecution? Does he teach them to rebuke the devil? No!

He is saying listen to me; praise God because in the midst of your exile, in the midst of your trials, look at it from a different perspective. The heaviness, the burden of these trials that your going through, there is a purpose in your suffering even though, for a little while, you have to suffer these trials. It's happening to you so the genuineness of your faith, which is more precious than gold, will be found to result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ returns.

There's purpose to our suffering, he is saying, 'set your hope, your faith on the end game'. When people are under pressure they often run around like chooks with their heads cut off. As soon as pressure

comes against us we want to run around and flap and carry on but Peter is saying, 'just get a grip; get your mind around the end game. Just look at what is set before you, an eternity of glory. And you're suffering at the moment to purify your faith, there's purpose in your suffering.'

Paul, in Colossians, chapter 3, writes, "*Set your mind on heavenly things.*" That's what Peter is saying here, 'Yes you are suffering trials but get an eternal perspective, eagerly long for Jesus in the midst of your exile. Look forward to what is set before you'. And what happens when we do that here in our everyday lives, here in the midst of our trials and our sufferings is we discover what it means to have a new birth into a living hope.

Because that hope is based on the knowledge that Jesus was raised from the dead and that we, one day too, will have an eternal life, we will have that resurrection. It doesn't finish at the grave, the grave is just the beginning. And that inheritance, that glory, that eternity is being kept for you, guarded by God in heaven so it won't disappear, it won't evaporate. We won't get there and discover it's not there anymore.

And right now as we go through those sufferings and trials so that the genuineness of our faith is being proven, we love Him, we desire Him, we adore Him, we believe in Him and we set our hearts on Him. And then we discover that the reward isn't just then but right here, right now, there's a reward. "*Although you haven't seen Him you love Him and even though you don't see Him now you believe in Him and you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy because you are receiving ...*" See the present tense, "*... you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*"

In the middle of suffering, in the middle of exile, when we live in this new birth of the living hope, we experience an indescribable and glorious joy. The words that Peter used here mean, 'completely over the top', he can't find enough superlatives to describe the joy that we experience amidst the trials and suffering when we let the Holy Spirit do his work in our hearts and minister to us what lies ahead.

You have been born into a living and vibrant and powerful hope that has fruit in us. I don't know about you but I want that. I want to live my life like that. It's not some fools gold, it's not some fairy floss kind of life. Peter's not trying to dress it up into some unreality. he's making it very plain. You guys are going through some suffering and trials and that's going to happen in life and

that's just the way it is but here is where the rubber hits the road, here is crunch time, here is decision time.

In the middle of my trials am I going to believe in God with my life? Not from a distance, not pay him some half attention, come on, no half measures, no 'not taking this seriously'. God wants for you today and tomorrow and next week and next month and next year until the moment that you stand before him in glory, God wants you to experience an indescribable and glorious joy. The sort of thing that wells up inside you because of what lies ahead, through his spirit, not through anything else, not through us concocting anything but because when we rest our hearts and souls on this wonder of our future.

The Holy Spirit puts in us an indescribable and glorious joy even though we have to suffer various trials at the moment. So set your mind on things that are above, do you want that? A living hope, the new birth, a fresh start here and now through the resurrection of Jesus. Go on, wrap your heart and mind around that, day by day, around the imperishable inheritance being guarded by God. His present protection right now that we acquire by faith. Go on; just believe no matter what comes along.

Do you want a confident life in uncertain times? Well, this is where the rubber hits the road.