

# DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

JUNE 2023 | 1 PETER 3:1-9

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...*

1 Peter 1:3-4 (NRSV)

## *AN IMPERISHABLE HOPE*

Everyone who is alert to the mood of today's society is aware and concerned about the rising hopelessness that is engulfing us. Almost every week a new poll reveals the alarming escalation of drugs, suicide, frustration, and fear. I think it is laughable that the federal government is now attempting to address the symptoms of alienation, isolation, and loneliness thus adding another aspect of our dependence on civil government to meet our every need. Suffice it to say that the civil government was never designed or assigned to be the solution to the desires and diseases of the human heart. God has anointed His church to give the answer to such issues, and we will not get better by further

trusting an idol to fill the vacuum that was created by trusting the idol in the first place. With that in mind, we shall look to Holy Scripture for God's approach to addressing this life-stealing pandemic.

Peter's first letter to the scattered believers of the early church is about the nature of the life they have been given through their faith in Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises and predictions. They are experiencing the persecution Jesus had foretold, and some are wavering under the pressure. The unbelieving Jews of that time were attacking the new group of believers with satanic hatred. In fact, the apostle John in his Revelation of

Jesus Christ says that such Jews are from the synagogue of Satan (see Revelation 2:9). The Romans were also beginning to persecute them for fear that their belief in a Lord other than Caesar would lead to revolution. The early church dared not put their trust in Rome, and the temple representing the era of Jewish religion was about to be totally demolished. Their hope was anchored in a higher and safer place than anything earth could provide.

Peter rehearses what has happened to them and what that means:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found*

*to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

- 1 Peter 1:3-9 (NRSV)

God in mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus, to an inheritance that is imperishable. It is kept in heaven, which means the powers of heaven protect it. It is for now and is sure for the future. What God started, He will finish. Everything He paid for will be claimed. All that sin perverted will be purified. All that is sad now will be glad for eternity. Since He is the one who acted out of His own mercy caused our new birth, and He is the one who defeated sin and death, He will see to it that the purpose He has always had for the earth will be fulfilled. In the meantime He is purifying our faith, which is much more precious than gold and will be even more precious as it is tested by fire.

It is God's desire that His people live with as much hope as Jesus had when He lived as a human on the earth. However, there is an enemy whose plan is to

diminish the hope of the believer thus paralyzing faith and destroying joy. Hell's strategy is to: (1) Erase the edginess of the gospel. The radical nature of a Savior who died to pay for the sins of others and His miraculous resurrection is dangerous to the status quo of this world's order. Hell has aimed at reducing the white hot passion of the newly born again person to a mundane moral existence, finding morsels of joy along the way, but making few jealous of their other-worldly faith. (2) Diminish the severity of sin. Though the horrors of the cross reveal to us the true nature of sin, we are encouraged by the propaganda of Hell to excuse our own sins. After all, we haven't been as bad as some. We excuse our actions by reminding others that we are only human. We do regret the pain we caused, but seldom realize that our choices detonated a nuclear bomb in the lives of those who trusted us and the effects of such an explosion affect everything and everyone. Our sin is so black and destructive that Jesus, even though He knew He came to die, prayed before the cross that some other way might be found. It cost Him that which was and is most precious to Him: conscious fellowship with the Father. Sin is bigger than we can imagine, worse than we feared, and costs more than any of us can pay. Jesus' death and the ramifications of it tell us the nature

of sin. It is not a casual misstep that can be overlooked. It can be forgiven! But only by the One who paid the price to do so. If sin is frivolous, forgiveness is cheap and love is weak. Remember that Jesus associated the extravagant love of the forgiven prostitute with her sense of forgiveness (see Matthew 7:36ff). She couldn't help it. She was compelled by love to wash His feet with her hair and anoint Him with expensive perfume. Embarrassingly extravagant. Edgy! Forgiven sinners are the saints to whom God has granted His inheritance. Of course Hell would like to diminish such bold believers. (3) Devalue the treasure found in the kingdom of God. In two of His parables of the kingdom, Jesus speaks about the joy of discovering a treasure that is worth selling everything to get. It is a given that people are grateful for the invitation to heaven when we die, but if that is all, the time in between conversion and death can be pretty mundane. We just try to be moral and hope for the best. The man who found the treasure and with joy sold everything was motivated by his discovery. He did not see giving up everything as a surrender, but an investment in a treasure house that is eternal. He rejoiced in his new state of being.

Peter speaks of a living hope. It is not a wish or a preference. Biblical hope

is confidence. It is foundational. It has a basis, and it affects everything in our lives. It gives meaning to the present and confidence for the future. Peter incorporates the concept of salvation to explain this living hope. It is a big salvation. It is more than a ticket to heaven when we die. It is more than a new chance to do better. It is more than a series of rituals that make a religious ceremony. It is the completion of what God began in the creation. He desired and designed for humans to be His co-workers in discovery and development of creation. Salvation is full restoration. There is a new earth coming that is restored to its original intent. It has been guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. We are assured that everything the blood of Jesus purchased will be redeemed and restored. It is an earth-oriented restoration. For now, the Holy Spirit is unpacking and unveiling the inheritance to us as we embrace the victory of Jesus, confident that what is not yet manifest is as sure as the resurrection. The implications of this are huge. Rather than waiting for an escape from the turbulence of this shakable world, we are engaged as God's co-workers. In fact, in the conclusion of Paul's in-depth explanation of the resurrection, he says, "Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast,

immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:58 NRSV) He is agreeing with Peter who says, "as each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 4:10-11) Both are saying that our hope is not just in the distant future, but in the now that reaches into the future. The great salvation that comes from God through faith in Jesus enlists us in the great mission of stewarding the earth in fellowship with our Father. Our work is holy because it is work done in His name to His glory. Most of the work will not be done in the church houses. Everything we do has an impact with eternal ramifications. We are doing the work of God. In overalls or in robes, we work in His name with His strength for His glory. There is hope in that kind of work. We are not biding our time waiting for rapture or heaven. We are captured by a living hope.



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