A Living Hope

(by Ray Ferris)

In **1 Peter 1:3** we read of a hope that lives for the faithful child of God. In the old KJV it is called a lively hope, and in later versions it is referred to as a living hope. ***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*** Perhaps we should note that the word hope is one that many use carelessly. People use it to express desire for anything that would be a pleasant experience. It is never used that way in Scripture. The correct meaning of the word is: *“1. a feeling that what is wanted will happen; desire accompanied by anticipation or expectation. 2. the object of this.”* That defines the word as a noun. As a transitive verb the meaning is: *“to expect, look for.”* Webster suggests one check for synonyms under *“expect.”* When we do so we find these words: expect, hope, and await. All of these stress the idea of confidence in what is desired.

Let me illustrate the very epitome of hope with a biblical text that does not even use the word. Read **Colossians 3:1-4**. Did you notice the words seek and set (or fix) in those verses? Now think about the overall context (back to **2:10-13**). Dead people are alive again, and are forgiven. Baptism is paralleled with circumcision, but one that is without hands. Old Testament circumcision indicated a Jew was part of the covenant. As a result of baptism into Christ (**Galatians 3:27**), into the death of Christ (**Romans 6:3**), and into the body of Christ (**1 Corinthians 12:13**) we are part of the adopted family of God. When we have been ***“buried with Him in baptism,”*** we are ***“risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.”*** Now, in our text (**Colossians 3:1-4**) we read, ***“If ye then be risen with Christ,”*** here is what you can expect, anticipate, await and hope for: ***“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”***

But why would Peter speak of this hope as something that is lively, or living? I believe three primary reasons can be seen: First, it is living because it is actively involved in the lives and efforts of Christians. In **1 Corinthian 13:1-7** we read about how love acts in

one’s life. Do you remember how the chapter ends? ***“And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”*** Why is it the greatest? Because it never fails (ends), extending into eternity. We will no longer have to walk by faith (**2 Corinthians 5:7**), nor will we have to hope because we will have seen what we had hoped for. ***“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it”*** (**Romans 8:24-25**). Thus, the reason for our hope is because it is an active (living) involvement in our pursuit of eternal life with God.

Second, it is a living hope because it must be alive in order to act. What is dead is not able to engage in action. Peter challenges us to act: ***“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”*** (**1 Peter 3:15**). That is impossible if hope is dead! In **Hebrews 6:10-12** the writer mentions the diligence of his readers that God would not forget. Then he says, ***“And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful (lazy, sluggish), but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”*** That hope is illustrated in the life of Abraham, who ***“after he had patiently endured, obtained the promise”*** (**vs. 15**).

The immutable counsel of God to us as *“heirs of His promise”* is guaranteed by His oath and His promise so that ***“we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus...”*** (**Hebrews 6:18-20**). This is obviously an active living thing in the lives of the faithful. If our hope dies we have no basis for living.

The third reason it must be thought of as a *“living hope”* may be the most significant of all. It is based on the resurrection of Jesus. The text says our God and Father ***“hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*** It is impossible to over-emphasize the significance of that resurrection. I have preached entire sermons that were designed to stress, from statements in Scripture, the significance of Jesus’ resurrection. Paul shows indisputable proof of that resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:1-8**), and then makes repeated arguments why we must believe in it, and in our own resurrection.

The peak of his argument is found in these words: ***“For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firsfruits of them that slept”*** (**1 Corinthians 15:16-20**). My hope lives because Christ lives!! If that hope dies our reason for living dies. Truly, that hope is the anchor of the soul, and is both sure and steadfast. Consider your own hope. Is it alive and active—and what is the basis for it?