



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 03.03.2024

“Hope Refined”

Preacher

Ps. Andy Mac

Scripture

“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, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 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. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, 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, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

1 Peter 1:3-9

Thought

In 1 Peter, Peter is speaking to the concept of hope - yet it is not a hope based on good times or good circumstances, rather it is a hope that exists in the midst of whatever life brings, even in the midst of pain and difficulty.



The way we engage in hope has a direct correlation in how our lives will be lived. When our hope is in the past, in the glory days, we find only frustration and disappointment in the present. When our hope is in the present and living for the moment, we find that our hope in ourselves and our own abilities is limited by our own shortcomings. When we hope in the future, in the 'one day' dreams of success or leisure or relationship, we often find ourselves disappointed when they fall short of their promise.

It's ok to have hopes and aspirations in family, in things - yet our ultimate hope, our core hope when all else falls and fails, must be in something more solid, more eternal. The world is in a decline of entropy, and yet, our hope is built in a God who can change the story, change the rules, bring light where there is darkness and order in the midst of chaos. It's only in Christ that we can find a future hope, available today, anchored in the past.

In Christ, our suffering does not need to be hidden. We can feel the pain of suffering and loss, we can experience disappointment and hurt. The Bible does not flee from the concept of struggle, and Jesus Himself was well acquainted with the reality of what it is to be human. He understands.

Everything in life trends downwards. We can try to rearrange the chaos, but we are merely shuffling chairs on the titanic. Yet Christ, who sits outside of our chaos, who is outside of time, stepped into the decline, stepped into the mess, and He is the one who does not succumb to the downward pull of entropy.

Christ promises us an inheritance that does not perish, spoil or fade. He 'keeps' it for us, he shields it. Nothing in this decaying world can take it. Our salvation is not in our hands - it is in the hands of our heavenly father who holds it ready for us.

And so, let us not place our ultimate hope in anything that fades away, or to anchor our hope and joy in things that will ultimately sink beneath the churning tide of this world. Rather, let us take His hand, and let go of that which is temporal. Let us look to his face, to journey with him through grief, through trials, knowing that He is the only hope that never fades. In Him we truly find an inexpressible hope and joy, in every season, both now and in eternity. In Him, we find our hope refined.



Discussion Points

1. Peter speaks of being 'refined' through life's struggles. What do you think this means?
2. As I think about God, what part of his Character makes me most willing to place my trust and hope in Him?

Personal application + Prayer

Dear Lord,

Search my heart and reveal to me where my hope is. Let that which is not eternal fade away, and show me what it means to truly place my hope and trust in You in all circumstances. May I not be crushed by life's circumstances, but may my hope truly increase in the midst of all seasons. Let today's difficulties refine me, Lord, and may your hope rise in my heart, even now, like the dawn of a new day.

Amen.

Becoming Christlike in our BEING, **THINKING**, AND DOING

THEME

Secure in our Identity in Christ:

Becoming confident in the sufficiency of God's grace/gift to us.

THOUGHT

As we continue to surrender to being formed into Christ's likeness, we have to come to terms with all of the pseudo-hopes in which we have placed our confidence. Our journey of spiritual formation will always lead us from control to trust and from despair over our own failures to a deep hope in Christ - in the victory of his death and the power of his resurrection. Not only resurrection at one time in history but as an ongoing pattern that becomes true in my life and in the world around me.

PRACTICE

Find one area in your life this week where you find suffering or despair and actively surrender it to God. Begin to imagine how this area of difficulty can be reframed through the truth of the resurrection and the living hope we have in Jesus.