LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for September 2: Living with hope

August 21, 2012

Watch the news coverage following a natural disaster and you will see it. It is not in the footage of the destruction or the expert explanations and maps of the event. You see it in the eyes of many of the victims. It often is there despite their brave words and is mixed with their sense of shock.

It is the look of a loss of hope. Having spent years building a comfortable and mostly predictable life, they find much of their sense of security is gone, and they are lost in a flood of questions and fears about the future.

Of course, you do not have to be the victim of a natural disaster to experience that feeling of hopelessness. The economic struggles and high unemployment rates of the past few years have instilled those feelings in many. At other times, an unexpected word from a doctor, or the constant reports of war and violence can rob us of our hope for the future.

Hope is indeed a vital part of life. It has been said “man can live about 40 days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air, but only one second without hope.”

The problem is many people put their hope in winning the lottery or being discovered for a life of celebrity. But God has designed us to live life far beyond the wishful thinking the world calls “hope.” God desires we experience real hope that drives away all fear, knowing the future is secure regardless of what the world throws at us.

In his first letter, Peter sought to encourage persecuted believers by

reminding them of this hope available to them. Today, we can tap into that same infinite supply and find a living hope for our lives.

The source of hope (1 Peter 1:1-5)

In light of the theme of hope found in this letter, there is great significance in the identity of the author and audience. Consider the author, Peter. This was the man who, despite his proclamation of loyalty, had denied knowing Jesus and then had watched him die. Peter certainly knew the feeling of hopelessness brought on by his betrayal.

The original readers were believers living in exile away from their homes. Many were experiencing extreme persecution and martyrdom for their faith at the hands of the Roman government. Certainly they also had difficulty feeling hopeful about their future.

Yet for Peter, his original audience and us today, God offers a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus (v. 3). For Peter, it was the resurrected Jesus that met him on a beach and restored his hope by renewing his commission (John 21:15-19). For the first readers as well as anyone who reads Peter's words, the resurrection is the source of real hope by proclaiming Jesus has defeated humanity's greatest enemy, the grave. There is no trial or circumstance he cannot help us overcome.

This hope is a living hope because it has its source in a living Lord who conquered death. It also is living because, even if the world should kill us, we will receive our inheritance of eternal life in heaven.

The logistics of hope (1 Peter 1:6-9)

That thought alone is enough to lead us into continual rejoicing, but we live our daily lives in a world that wants to tear us down so that such rejoicing often is far from what we feel. Yet God has so designed things that the trials of life become the fertile ground out of which our hope grows. As

testing comes into our life, we find new depths of hope as God proves faithful in bearing us up.

The hope Peter wrote about was not found with the removal of the hope-robbing circumstances. It was found in the midst of the trials (see also Romans 5:3-5). This living hope always is there. We simply need to look beyond what our eyes see and find it.

This hope is a part of the very nature and presence of God. Just as we know God is there without seeing, so we can know hope is there even in the midst of what appears to be hopelessness. We simply know that whatever the physical situation may be, God will save us (v. 9).

So when flood waters rise and threaten to overwhelm us, when the bank account is empty, when unexpected bad news comes, we keep believing and praising God and find our faith is stronger and our hope is deeper.

The quality of hope (1 Peter 1:10-12)

This news certainly is not new. It has been God's intention from the beginning that we should live in hope. God proclaimed this message through the prophets who preached a message of hope to their own people while also looking forward to a day when God would more fully reveal this hope.

That hope is a gift from a loving God who could not allow us to wander in the darkness we had brought upon ourselves. Hope is a result of the grace God showed through Christ. The hope proclaimed by the prophets now has been fully revealed in the gift of God's Son; the Son who endured all the persecution and trials the world can throw at us.

Because he has been through it all, he alone can offer real hope to anyone who has lost hope. And because it is a gift from God, it is certain and secure; a wonder of grace even the angels long to understand.