

Lie to Me? **The Truth Doesn't Have to Hurt**

Lie: My Life is Hopeless

Truth: We Have a New Hope

Pastor Garth Leno March 27-28 2010

One of the prominent lies that is repeated over and over in our culture is that life is hopeless. *There's nothing I can do to change my circumstances. My life is meaningless. My life is hopeless. And there's no way out.*

But you could never convince Ernest Gordon that was true.

Gordon spent time in a Japanese concentration camp during World War II. He and his fellow prisoners were used as slave labor to build the Thailand-Burma Railroad, and hundreds of them perished from mistreatment.

At one point he became deathly ill himself, and was spared only by the care of a Chaplain named Dusty Miller, who shared his own food rations with Gordon. As Chaplain Miller nursed Gordon's broken body back to health, he spoke the words that would nurse Gordon's broken spirit back to health as well. Miller told him: "A man can experience an incredible amount of pain and suffering if he has hope. When he loses his hope, that's when he dies."

The world may tell you that your life is hopeless. But that's a lie. That's not what the Bible says.

The apostle Peter wrote to believers who were being persecuted for their faith and scattered throughout much of Asia Minor. And in the opening paragraph of 1 Peter 1, he writes

1 Peter 1:1-2 NIV

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

He affirms each one of them by saying they had been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God Almighty. What a privilege it is to be chosen by God! Yes, they were chosen by God, but they had been singed by the hot flames of persecution. What should Peter tell them?

How does he address their needs? How does he comfort God's people? He does not suggest they simply suck it up. He does not recommend meditation or yoga or crystal therapy. Instead, he simply presents the truth about the God of hope. The only thing that will dispel this sense of hopelessness that was creeping into the church is the truth.

At least 15 times in this letter, Peter refers to suffering; and he used 8 different Greek words to do so. He's personally and intimately knowledgeable about suffering. So he understands that life can be tough. Yet he offers hope to his readers.

And while most of us are not afflicted by horrible persecution for our faith – none of us are in danger of being burned at the stake for what we believe – but we do know what it means to face the challenges of suffering, pain, disappointment, unemployment, or grief.

We know about that stuff, don't we?

The world says your life is hopeless. But God's word says there is new hope available. Fresh hope is accessible. And that's the truth.

Have a look at verse 3 in 1 Pet. 1.

1 Pet 1:3 NIV 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.

There are several sources of hope uncovered by this verse.

First of all:

1. The mercy of God

Our hope flows out of the mercy of God.

Just ask Gloria.

What should have been a tragedy for Gloria Jummati turned out quite different. While cleaning the balcony of her 9th-floor condominium, the 70-year-old woman toppled over the railing. Gloria had little time to think as she hurtled toward the ground. The 100-foot fall lasted less than three seconds.

But Gloria never actually hit the ground. A small, forest-green, door canopy broke her fall. Gloria landed in an ideal spot, right in the middle of the canvas and aluminum pipe construction. A couple of inches in any direction, and the accident could have proven

fatal. Instead, "her landing was perfect. The pipes bent and cradled her body, stopping her just feet from the ground."

The senior citizen walked away with only a shoulder injury. Not even the canvas canopy was torn.

*source: "Woman Survives 9th-floor Fall at Her Fort Lauderdale Condo,"
South Florida Sun Sentinel (5-12-05)*

I would say that Gloria experienced mercy!

Theologically speaking, God's *mercy* refers to God's goodness toward those living in misery and distress. Just the fact that you are here today, and you have air in your lungs, means that you have experienced a degree or measure of God's mercy. And out of that extension of mercy flows hope.

In Scripture God's mercy is often emphasized when people are in danger or difficulty.

David says, for example, "I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his *mercy* is great" (2 Sam. 24:14 NIV).

The two blind men who wish Jesus to see their plight and heal them cry, "Have *mercy* on us, Son of David" (Matt. 9:27 NIV).

When Paul speaks of the fact that God comforts us in affliction, he calls God "the Father of *mercies* and God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3 ESV).

In time of need, we are to draw near to God's throne so that we might receive both grace and *mercy* (Heb. 4:16).

Therefore, when Peter says, in 1 Pet 1:3 NIV that *In his great mercy (God) has given us new birth into a living hope ...* he is telling us that God saw our misery and our distress and he sent his son to comfort us and redeem us.

How can anyone say that life is hopeless when you know that God sent his Son to rescue us?

My life is not hopeless!

I have a new hope in Christ!

And that same hope is available to you, today!

2. The new birth

This great hope arises out of the new birth. Its foundation or basis is the new birth through faith in Christ. When a person who is not a believer becomes a Christian

through her personal faith in Jesus Christ, she is born again. That's the term the Bible uses.

Jesus and Nicodemus had this night time conversation in John 3.... Jesus said,

John 3:3-9 NIV

"...no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "... You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

If it's not physical rebirth, then are we talking about some sort of psychological regeneration, or emotional renaissance? No. We're talking about simple faith in the Creator of the Universe, the Saviour of the world, the Resurrected Jesus Christ.

And when we have that kind of faith, says Peter, when we express genuine trust grounded in the historical person of Jesus who died on the cross and came out of the grave alive, then we can also enjoy a living hope.

When Steve Henning was two years old, he contracted spinal meningitis. It was the winter of 1943, and because of World War II, doctors had a shortage of penicillin and could not provide Steve the treatment he needed. Sadly, he lost his hearing. For 57 years, Steve could not hear music, laughter, or human speech. Even though he lived a full life, he still longed to hear the voices of those he loved.

Then, a few years ago, he learned of a surgical procedure that would allow sound waves to bypass the non-functioning part of his ear and travel directly to the auditory nerve. So he signed up for the operation.

Because the implanted device could not be activated until the swelling in the ear decreased, doctors and Steve didn't know if the operation was successful for six weeks.

The day of reckoning came on a blustery spring day. As the doctor programmed the cochlear implant, he invited Steve's wife to say something. She leaned toward her husband and gently said, "I love you." Able to hear for the first time in six decades, Steve's face broke into a smile. The first words he heard were words of love.

*Adapted by Garth Leno from
Greg Asimakopoulos; source: The Daily Herald (9-29-01)*

Every time someone turns to the Lord and places his or her faith in Jesus Christ, the Lord opens their spiritual ears. And the first words they hear are words of love and hope. Love and hope come to us through the new birth wrought by God.

Last, but certainly not least, we must say that the Resurrection of Jesus is a source of hope as well.

3. The resurrection of Jesus

Peter ties it all together in the opening verses of his letter: the mercy of God, the new birth, the resurrection of Jesus... “In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope,” how? *Through the resurrection of Jesus!*

Good Friday is the commemoration of the death of Christ on the Cross for all mankind. And Easter is the celebration of the resurrection of Christ.

Good Friday and Easter. The death of Christ and the Resurrection of Christ. They go hand in hand! And without the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, we have no hope!

That’s precisely the point the apostle Paul is driving home in 1 Corinthians 15....

1 Corinthians 15:17-20 NIV *If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.... But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead . . .*

Buddha is dead. Confucius is dead. Joseph Smith is dead. Jerry Garcia is dead. But Jesus Christ came out of the grave and he’s alive today. He’s in this place right now! He is among us. That explains why Peter explodes in the opening paragraph of his letter:

1 Peter 1:3 NIV *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.*

He’s excited about the truth because the truth dispels the myth that life is hopeless. Jesus came out of the grave alive. He’s alive today. And that gives us hope for today and every day that follows!

So what would it take to restore *your* hope today? What do you need to reenergize *your* journey? Your walk with God?

The answers could be many. But three in particular come to mind.

The first would be a *person*. Not just any person. You don’t need someone who feels equally hopeless or confused. You need someone who knows the way out – out of the fog, out of the shadows.

And from him you need some *vision*. You need someone to lift your spirits. You need someone to look you in the face and say, “This isn’t the end. Don’t give up. There is a better place than this. And I’m going to take you there.”

And, perhaps most important, you need *direction*. Because if you follow a person with direction—who can take you from this place to the right place—ah, then you have one who can restore your hope.

Do you know someone who can do that?

I’ll use David’s words to describe him:

Psalm 23:2-3 NIV

He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he restores my soul.

Our Great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus, majors in restoring hope to the soul. Whether you are a lamb lost on a craggy ledge or a city slicker alone in a deep jungle, everything changes when The Rescuer appears.

- Your loneliness diminishes, because you have fellowship.
- Your despair decreases, because you have vision.
- Your confusion begins to lift, because you have direction.

And please note: None of us have left the jungle yet. The trees still hide the sky. Thorns still cut the skin. Animals lurk and rodents scurry. The jungle is still a jungle, folks! It hasn’t changed, but you have. You have changed because you now have hope. And you have hope because you have met someone who can lead you out.

Jesus knows that you were not made for this place. He understands that you are longing for a better place. So he has come to guide you out.

Out of darkness into light.
Out of danger into shelter.
Out of despair into hope.

He has come to guide you out....