

The Living Hope

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being born again by the Spirit of God to have a living hope through Jesus Christ.

Duration: 33:22

Scripture: Matthew 28:1

Topics: "Resurrection Power", "Salvation Assurance"

Description

This sermon focuses on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, highlighting the events surrounding His resurrection, the importance of being born again spiritually, and the living hope we have through His victory over death. It emphasizes the need for a personal relationship with God and the assurance of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Matthew, chapter 28, for our scripture reading today. I'll read the first, the outnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the reading of the even-numbered verses, and let's stand as we read the Word of God.

In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.

And for fear of him, the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not, for I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said.

Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead. And behold, he goeth before you into Galilee, and there shall you see him.

Lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail! And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid, go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and they showed unto the chief priest all of the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye that his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and they did as they were taught. And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubted.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you.

And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Let's pray.

Father, we are so thankful that we can gather together today and celebrate this wonderful day. The day that you conquered over death. The day that you gave to us living hope by your resurrection from the dead.

Lord, we thank you for this opportunity of this day proclaiming again the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us, Lord, that we might indeed take this message to the whole world. That all may know the possibility of our sins being forgiven through Jesus Christ who died for us.

Bless us now, we pray, Lord, as we meditate upon your word this day. In Jesus name, Amen. You may be seated.

And over in 1 Peter chapter 1, Peter wrote, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Peter is declaring his love for Jesus Christ as thanksgiving to God through which we have been born again. The only hope you will ever have of getting into heaven is by being born again.

Having a spiritual birth. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus at night and he said, Good master, we know that you are from God. No man can do the things that you are doing unless God was with him.

And Jesus responded and said to him, You have to be born again if you hope to see the kingdom of God. And then Jesus sort of explained to him that unless a man is born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Nicodemus was curious as to just what Jesus was talking about being born again.

Having a spiritual birth. And so he said, I want to be born again so Jesus said, unless a man is born of the water and of the spirit, he cannot see or enter the kingdom of heaven. So Jesus made it quite clear, quite plain.

If you hope to enter the kingdom of heaven, you have to be born again or you have to have a spiritual birth. The birth of the spirit of God within us. When Jesus and the Father created man, placed him there in the Garden of Eden, gave to him all kinds of liberty, saying to him, you can eat of all of the trees of the garden freely except the one tree that is in the middle of the garden.

And in the day that you eat of that tree, you will surely die. And the day that Adam ate of that tree, his spirit died. When God made man, he made him an inferior trinity.

God, you might say, is a superior trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit. Man is an inferior trinity. He was spirit, mind, and body.

When first created spirit, mind, and body, the mind was subject to the spirit and thus man thought on the things of the spirit. His thoughts were upon God, upon his fellowship with God. And it is in the realm of the spirit that man connects with God.

Jesus said, God is a spirit. They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The Bible tells us that God's spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God.

So it is in the realm of the spirit where we connect with God, where God connects with man, where I can know God, where I understand with God, and can have a meaningful communion and relationship with God. That's the realm of the spirit. And when man was created, he was created an inferior trinity of spirit, mind, and body.

But when man sinned in eating of the tree that God commanded him, he was not to eat of it. At that day, man's spirit died. And man's connection with God was broken.

And we see the resultant calamities that have happened to our earth because man was out of touch with God and in rebellion against God. And we see the result of that rebellion around us in our world today as man still rebels against him. Before Jesus Christ came, in the Old Testament, the spirit of God did rest upon certain individuals.

Men who in their heart by faith believed God and were trusting in God, and God would speak to them of a day that was coming, a day in which God's spirit would again be put upon all flesh, a day when there would be a spiritual birth again in man, and the door would be open for man to come and connect with God and have communion with God. The prophet Joel said, and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord, I'll pour out my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy.

Your young men shall see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. And upon my servants and my handmaidens will I pour out my spirit in that day, saith the Lord.

The prophet Haggai wrote, and I will shake all nations and the desire of all nations shall come. And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. Paul tells us in Galatians 4, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his son made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Therefore, you're no longer a servant, but a son. And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

So the spiritual birth brings us into relationship again with God as sons of God, and thus heirs, joint heirs through Christ. So through Jesus came, first of all, regeneration. The possibility of having a birth of our spirit.

When Nicodemus was questioning, how can you have this new birth, being born again, Jesus said, for God so loved the world, that he would give you his only begotten son, that whosoever believed in him

would not perish, but have everlasting life. That is the answer of Jesus to the question, how can I have this new birth? The answer is by believing in Jesus Christ, a person is born again. But through Jesus came redemption.

He paid the price to deliver us from the bondage to our flesh. You see, once man's spirit died, man is now like an animal, a dichotomy of mind and body. But the mind is now controlled by the body appetites.

A man who is not born again, he is constantly thinking of the needs of his body. The needs of his body control him. And as you look at the world in which you live today, we do realize that the majority of people in the world today have that body consciousness.

They live only to satisfy the desires of their body. Whereas those who are born again with a new spirit, the mind of the spirit, they are concerned with, how can I please God? How can I do the work of God? And that fellowship with God. Now, the Bible says that the mind that is controlled by our body is death.

But the mind that is after the spirit, it is life. It is peace. It is joy.

Jesus came to restore relationship. Through our spirits being born, I can connect again with the spirit of God. And His spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a son of God.

Relationship with God has been restored. I can now fellowship with God. I can now spend time, special time, enjoyable time, just connecting with God.

Peter said, Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have been born again unto a living hope. It's possible for people to hope for things that are totally impractical. Things that perhaps will never come to pass.

It's possible for people to hope for things that will never happen. In the early years of our ministry, when we were going through severe financial crunch, I used to hope that I would win the Reader's Digest sweepstakes. I figured that would solve my financial problems.

And I would get excited when I would be notified that I was among the finalists of the Reader's digest drawing, but it never happened. It was a hope that was never fulfilled. In Proverbs it says, hope that is deferred makes the heart sick.

And every year when the date would pass and they wouldn't notify me, my heart was sick. But it's interesting how even the slightest hope can keep us going. And there are those charlatans that are aware of this fact.

And when a person has come to a hopeless condition, perhaps physically, they promise them this particular diet or this particular substance and all, this will relieve you from pain. And you know, when you get my age, the computers, how they work, every day I'm getting this stuff from, you know, all of these pill pushers and all of these snake oil specialists and everything else, because they know that I'm in pain. They know that, you know, I'm deteriorating.

And so all of these promises and, you know, you think, wow, maybe, you know, perhaps. And they take advantage of the fact that a person is oftentimes looking for just anyone who will give a word of hope to them. There was an interesting study done on the subject of hope by psychologists.

They were using Norwegian wharf rats for the experiment to discover the place of hope in a person's life. They put them in these vats of water, and then they sprayed water on them so that they couldn't roll on their backs and float. And they tested to see how long the rats could stay alive without drowning in these vats of water.

And I think the average was about 37 minutes until they drowned. In the special group, the experimental group, as the rats were beginning to drown, they pulled them out of the vat, they dried them off, they put them back in their cages, and a week later they put them in the very same condition in these vats of water. Again, the spraying of the water.

And they found now that those rats that had been saved from drowning were able to survive some 37 hours in these vats. And they attributed the longer time survival to the fact that they had once been saved. And having been saved, they were kept, they would keep going in hopes of that salvation again.

And it kept them going. The importance of hope. That hope of being rescued, being saved.

It's always a tragic day when a person loses all hope. I can remember when my father and brother were flying up from San Diego in my brother's plane on a stormy night in November. Now when they didn't show up at Orange County, where we had gone out to meet them, we went home.

We waited through that dark night. We had called the civilian air patrol. In the morning, when the phone rang, we were hoping that perhaps somehow they had landed in an obscure airport.

Maybe they are all right. But when the person introduced themselves as one of the personnel at the CAP, he said, we found the plane. It crashed at San Jose.

There were no survivors. And the hope was gone. And I remember the despair when there's hopelessness.

No hope. Somewhat was, was the emotion of the disciples when they saw Jesus die. They had hoped that he was going to establish the kingdom.

They had hoped that he was the Messiah. They had hoped for a better world. And while he was on the cross, I believe they were still hoping.

Hoping for a last minute miracle. When the high priest said, if he is the Messiah, the Son of God, let him come down from the cross and we will believe him. I think the disciples were saying, do it, Lord.

Come down. Show them, Lord. But instead, they watched him as his head went limp on his shoulders and he died.

And their hope died with him. That horrible despair when hope is gone. On that Easter Sunday morning, in the afternoon of that day, two of the disciples were walking on the way to Emmaus.

And Jesus incognito joined them. He said, fellows, what's wrong? You look so sad. They said, you must be a stranger if you don't know the things that have been happening around Jerusalem the last few days.

He said, what things? They said, oh, there was this man, Jesus, he was from Nazareth. He was mighty in deeds and his words. He went around doing good.

But yet the chief priests and the elders, they arrested him. They put him to death. We had hoped that he was the Redeemer of Israel, but this is the third day.

Their hope was gone. Jesus began to quote scriptures to them from the Old Testament. The prophecies that dealt with the fact that the Messiah would be despised and rejected by men, that the stone would be set of naught by the builders, that the Messiah would be crucified, that on the third day he would rise again.

And as Jesus began to quote the passages from the Old Testament that prophesied of the death of the Messiah and the resurrection, their hearts began to burn within them, the rekindling of a hope. And of course when Jesus then revealed himself to them, they were so excited they ran all the way back to Jerusalem to let the other disciples know that Jesus is risen. And they responded, he is risen indeed.

He's appeared to some of the women. He's appeared to Peter. And there was that great and glorious celebration of the rekindled hope through the resurrection.

It is more than just a hope now. It is a living hope. And that's exactly what Peter is writing about.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have been born again to a living hope by his resurrection from the dead. A great difference between hope, no hope, and a living hope. Certain hopes are totally impractical and never to be realized.

No hope is when I recognize that they will never be realized. Living hope is that assurance and guarantee that they are realized. And that's exactly what we have today as a result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our hope is more than just hope. Ours is a living hope. There's the hope that says, well I sure hope so.

And then there is that assurance that says, I know so. And thank God we have that living hope where we say, I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep me and that which I've committed unto Him against that day. The question.

Jesus talking about the birth of the Spirit. Saying that you'll never make it into heaven unless you've had a spiritual birth. Question.

Have you had a spiritual birth? Have you been born again by the Spirit of God? If you have any hope at all of going to heaven when you die, you can't have a living hope unless you are born again. You can't be sure. It will always be, well I sure hope so.

But those who have had a spiritual birth, it's more than a hope so. I know so. I know I will be with my Lord world without end in the glorious kingdom of God when Jesus shall come again and establish that kingdom even here on earth.

Is your mind alive to God? Have you connected with God? Or is your mind more absorbed with the things of this world? Jesus describes the mind of that person who's never had a spiritual birth as always concerned with what I'm going to eat, what I'm going to drink, what I'm going to wear. He said you shouldn't really be concerned with these things. You just seek first the kingdom of God.

All these other things will be taken care of. John talks about the mind of the flesh and he tells us that it's filled with just the desires of the flesh. The desires of our eyes and the pride of life.

Paul said the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit, it's life, it's peace, it's joy. Today having been born again by the Spirit of God, a living hope. Our minds attuned to God.

Our lives connected with God. Looking forward to that day when our Lord shall come and our hopes will be totally realized with Him. Father we thank you for the living hope that we have today through Jesus Christ and through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

Father we realize that so many people really do not have a living hope. Some of them have a hope. With others there's really no hope.

But we thank you Lord that you have given to us something that transcends both hope. You've given us a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus. We know Lord that because He lives we too shall live.

I pray Father for those that have not yet had a spiritual birth what an appropriate day to come into this new life. The life of the Spirit that is promised to those who would believe on Jesus Christ. We thank you Lord that you've told us that if we would just confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that you have risen from the dead we would be saved.

And so Lord we pray for many today that this Easter Sunday would be the great day of their lives. The lives when they connected with God through a spiritual birth. In Jesus name, Amen.

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