

“Building the Body Through Hope!”

1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Peter 3:13-16

Intro. – When Alexander the Great set forth to conquer the world, history records some amazing actions on his part. For instance, before leaving Macedonia, Alexander divided amongst his captains and nobles all of his possessions. Being rebuked by a friend for having acted so foolishly in reserving nothing for himself, Alexander gave this reply: “I have reserved for myself much more than I have given away. I have reserved for myself the hope of universal monarchy and when, by the valor and help of these my captains and nobles, I shall be monarch of the world. The gifts I have parted with will come back to me with an increase of a thousand fold.”

Alexander the Great was filled with hope. History records for us that this was the determining factor in his conquest of the world. He had such “hope” and he instilled this same hope into his men by training and discipling them. Thus, with one hope filled leader and 40,000 hope filled men, Alexander proceeded to conquer the world. You know what happens. With this hope filled army, Alexander had no real challenge. Even Darius III (king of Persia) and his army of 1 million was no match for Alexander the Great!

With this illustration in mind, let me present to you one of the main reasons why so many churches are stagnant. Too many people cannot give a reason for their hope in Christ. Too many are not instilled, captivated and motivated by the greatest hope ever known!

Purpose: to see the need to build up the Body of Christ through hope

To do this, we’ll focus in on 1 Peter 3:15 where we find these three important principles concerning the greatest hope in the world:

- I Hope’s Reason
- II Hope’s Messengers
- III Hope’s Examples

I HOPE’S REASON

- our text states we are to be ready to give an answer to those who ask for the reason of our hope. What then is the *reason* for your hope?
- hope’s reason centers in Jesus Christ! It centers around these facts concerning Him!

A. He has Come

1. Entered this life in the only manner consistent with His nature – He was conceived/born of virgin
2. He lived a sinless life – though tempted in all ways as we are tempted; yet, He was without sin! – Hebrew 4:15 *“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”*
3. Fulfilling a specific mission
 - a. Luke 19:10 *“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*
 - b. i.e. to deal with sin “in person” – God came in the flesh to deal with the problem in which all of us have had a part!

B. He has Died

1. Forsaken by all (friends, family etc.) Jesus was betrayed and denied by those closest to Him!
2. Being made sin – though personally free from sin, Jesus was made sin on our behalf – 2 Corinthians 5:21 *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*
3. Suffering on our behalf, Jesus’ death is described as “atoning” and “redeeming” i.e. He paid the penalty for our sins to provide a means of reconciliation with God!

C. He has Risen

1. Bodily from the grave – in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 we are told *“...and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain... we of all men would most to be pitied.”*

2. He has declared the victory -- We win!!

D. He Will Come Again

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 *“Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”*

2. Thus, we must sing:

My hope is built on nothing less,
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name

On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand!

3. Hope has been said to be made up of two parts – *desire* and *expectation*. Without both of these there is no hope!

What then is your desire, your expectation?! Is it Jesus?! If it is, the church here will grow!

II HOPE'S MESSENGERS

- who are they – this can be found in answering the following:

A. Who Should Give Hope's Reason?

1. Leaders of the church (elders, deacons, preachers)... If preacher doesn't preach the truth and doesn't set the church in order... if leaders not qualified... no way the local church will grow – there's no hope in such a situation. No church will ever rise above its leadership...

2. All Christians ought to give hope's reason

a. note, there are no qualifications in our text = all are included

b. early church is a prime example of this...

c. Jesus makes clear we all are to “make disciples” as we go...

3. Illus. – a newspaper several years ago had a story of a lawsuit brought against a medical doctor who had passed the scene of an accident without stopping to render medical assistance. The driver of one car involved in the accident had died from bleeding to death. The dead man's family sued this doctor having seen him drive past the scene of the accident. The court ruled against the doctor saying, “The doctor's knowledge of medicine automatically made him responsible to assist in the saving of life under all circumstances.”

B. Why Should We be Ready?

1. It's a command from God – our text amongst many....

2. It's a great means of spreading the Gospel – If Christians would live and talk more about their relationship with Christ, questions concerning this hope would come!

C. When Should We be Ready?

1. At all times our text says = *always*

2. Every Christian assembled here should be able to lead someone through the Bible to show anyone how to become a Christian...

D. To Whom Should We Give the Answer?

1. *To everyone who asks as to the reason of the hope within you.*

2. Do so in the proper spirit = text says *with gentleness and reverence* – i.e. not to be given in a spirit of ridicule, sarcasm, scorn, egotism or an arrogant manner...

2 Corinthians 5 speaks of all Christians being in the *ministry of reconciliation* = hope's messengers!

III HOPE'S EXAMPLES

- we readily acknowledge Christ first as Redeemer, then as example
- we too are to be examples – we say we possess the world's greatest hope... our lives must harmonize with this claim...

A. Jesus Must be Lord

1. *But sanctify Christ as Lord...* literally means set Him aside as Lord of all... above everyone/thing!
2. We must act accordingly toward Him = in all things He must be given the preeminence!
3. Brethren, are we living the life that shows the world around us that Christ is Lord of our lives?!
 - a. from our actions and attitudes, people ought to know without being told that Christ reigns and rules over our lives, that He alone is LORD!
 - b. the joy in hearing how committed people are to Christ and His Church...

B. Resulting in a Pure Life

1. A pure heart/life excites admiration – Acts 5:13 *“But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem.”*
2. Produces shame – Titus 2:7-8 *“In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.”*

How we need to be captivating this community with Christ like lives and at the same time shaming them rather than giving them excuses!...

Conclusion: The Duke of Wellington sent two men on a dangerous mission. As they rode to their rendezvous, one man noticed the other's lips were quivering, his cheeks were pale, and beads of sweat stood out on his forehead. “Why, you're afraid. You're scared to death. I won't work on a mission with a coward!” With that he returned to headquarters and reported his charges to Wellington.

“Coward?!” shouted Wellington. “Let me tell you, that man knows how dangerous the mission is, and he has the sense enough to be afraid. But, he loves his country enough to lay his life on the line in spite of his fears. That's real courage. I'd give my right arm for a regiment like him. Now get back to the mission before that 'coward' has it completed without you.”

The Bible records for us similar “cowards.” Church history gives us several more “cowards” – those who knew the dangers and were afraid; yet, because they loved the Lord and the great hope He alone gives, they willingly laid their life on the line!

How about you? Are you willing to “lay your life on the line?” Are you willing to let the world know the reason of the hope within you? Do you see the need and possibility of building up the Body through hope?!