

**SERIES: YOUR BREAKTHROUGH TO HOPE
PART 1: RADICAL HOPE**

Happy New Year, everyone. 2017 is THE YEAR OF HOPE. I am very excited about our first series of this fantastic year entitle YOUR BREAKTHROUGH TO HOPE.

At the end of World War II there was a United States submarine coming back from the war, and as it was coming into harbor to dock at Newport News, Virginia, something went terribly wrong with the submarine, and it sunk to the bottom of the ocean in the harbor. It hadn't been touched at all during the war but it sunk in the harbor. The coastguard dispatched divers to go down and survey the hull to see if it had been compromised or what had happened. The divers heard a sailor tapping on the wall from the inside of the sub the words in mores code, **"Is there any hope?"**

Loved ones, this is one of the most important questions you and others can ask. Why? Because we live in a broken world, and thing don't go right, and so, hope is essential. The question "Is there hope? is being asked by a lot of people especially after last year. As we start this New Year millions of people are asking this question today.

- They may be sitting in front of a pile of bills saying, "Is there hope?"
- They may be standing at the side of a fresh grave saying, "Is there hope?"
- They may be sitting in a doctor's office reviewing tests and saying, "Is there hope?"
- They may be waiting for a job offer after having been laid off, and they're asking, "Is there hope?"

They may be wondering, am I ever going to get married? Am I ever going to have a child? Am I ever going to have a family? Loved ones, this question of hope is an essential question of life. Why is this true? Because as human beings we're hungry for hope, and, often times, we go after all kinds of crazy ideas,

gimmicks, get rich quick schemes, fads and therapies simply grasping for straws. When you think you're dying you'll try anything to stay alive. When you think you're going under financially you'll try anything to stay afloat. We often are gullible and are scammed by false hopes.

Please listen to me, dear friends. All discouragement and all disappointments come from putting our hope in something we should not have put our hope in. The Bible says there's only one person who can give you hope that is eternal, lasting and permanent. That is a relationship with Jesus Christ who is our Eternal King. When you hope in your money, you're going to be disappointed. When you put your hope in the economy, your investments, you're going to be disappointed. When you put your hope in the government, you're going to be severely disappointed. When you put your hope in other people or even in yourself, you're going to let yourself down because you're not perfect. There is no one person who could possibly meet all the needs in your life. There is only one reliable source who will never let you down. Please read out loud with me Isaiah 40:31 **“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”** Isaiah 40:31 Loved ones, this is my goal for my life, my family's lives and for you my CVCHURCH FAMILY'S LIVES. That as we face this new year and the remainder of this decade that we will run headlong into the presence of Jesus and not be weary, and that you will walk and not faint, and that you will have the spiritual strength and energy you need and we all need to pursue God's purposes for our lives and the lives of our culture.

To understand hope you have to understand what hope is not. Hope is not wishful thinking. Hope is not daydreaming. Hope is not positive thinking. Hope is not optimism. I'm not ridiculing these things because they are important. Positive thinking is better than negative thinking. And optimism is certainly better than pessimism and despair. But those things can't change your environment. They can change you. They can change your attitude. But they're not going to change your circumstances. They're not going to change your problems. You need something much stronger for this new year than simply positive thinking and optimism. What you need is genuine hope.

What's the difference between optimism and hope? Optimism is psychological. It's based on the way you think, and you know that is incredibly important. But genuine hope is Spiritual. Hope is theological at its core. It's based on facts concerning the reality of God and about His relationship with you. That's a big difference. **Optimism is positive thinking. Hope is passionate trusting. Hope is about trusting the only person who can truly make a difference in your life. That is Jesus Christ.**

Optimism says, it's not so bad. Optimism can actually be a denial of reality. Optimism can be playing Pollyanna. Where you look at the world through rose-colored glasses and say it's not so bad, when it is bad. But hope says, it's bad. Hope never denies reality. Hope says I'm in a really bad situation but I still believe in God and trust in a Savior who is greater than how bad this situation is. Hope is not faking it. It's not pretending. It's not psyching yourself up. True hope is based in you having a deep hope in the reality of God and what He has promised to you in His Word.

I want to look at 1 Peter 1:1-7 because 1st Peter is called the letter of hope. Peter wrote to Christians who were suffering persecution in the Roman Empire. At the time he wrote this book Nero was the Caesar of Rome. He fed Christians to the lions in the coliseum. He was nailing them to crosses up and down the Appian Way. He was tarring them and then lighting them on fire as torches. To be a Christians at that time could mean death to you and your loved ones. The statement to all Christians then was if you follow Jesus you're going to die. They were hounded, hunted and horrified. Peter is writing to people who are suffering. If you're ever going through suffering you need to read the book of 1 Peter over and over and over. Please follow along with me as I read the 1st seven verse of 1 Peter. Then we will look at the five roots of Radical Hope and the five reasons why we can hope when other people feel hopeless as we live out our hope together this New Year. Peter tells us that our Hope is rooted in five unchangeable theological facts.

1st Peter 1:2-7 **“God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and His Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed Him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. May God give you more and more grace and peace. 3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by His great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, 4 and we have a priceless inheritance--an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. 5 And through your faith, God is protecting you by His power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. 6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold--though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.”**

FIVE REASONS FOR ME TO HAVE RADICAL HOPE:

I. GOD CHOSE ME BEFORE I CHOSE HIM

Peter writes and says, **“God the Father knew you and chose you long ago.”** The rest of the verse says you were cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. You see the picture of the Trinity in this verse. God the Father chose you. The Holy Spirit has made you holy, which means He has set you apart to be loved by God and fulfill His purposes for your life. You have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Wow. That is powerful. This verse tells us that your salvation is no accident. Way before you chose God, He chose you. You were His idea. He took the initiative. Before God created the world He decided to create you because He loves you, and He wanted to reveal you to the world. Please hear me. You're not an accident regardless of the facts that surround your birth. God chose you because He has a purpose for your life. What is that purpose? According to this verse one of His purposes is to make you holy, which means He has set you apart for His purposes. You are not your own; you belong to

Him. As you surrender your life to His choice for you He is working on your character so that you can become more like Jesus Christ. His purpose as you choose His purposes for your life is to make you whole in every area of your life. God is working on your heart, and, as you continue to be transformed by the renewing of your mind by God's Word, He is preparing you to live eternally with Him. As you understand and embrace this profound truth that God chose you before you chose Him gives you a great sense of confidence because you know He chose you, because He loves you, values you and believes in you and wanted you on this planet to walk with you and in you and to use you to impact and transform other people's lives with His love and truth. We all can grasp how it feels to be chosen. When you were chosen to be on someone's team do you remember in grade school and beyond when you hated to be the last person chosen for the team, or you weren't chosen at all? You loved it when someone included you in what they were doing because they liked you. It built your confidence. It increased your self-esteem. We love to be chosen to be in the inner circle, on the team or asked to be their friend. We love to be chosen to receive recognition. We love to be chosen to be singled out. We love to be chosen to be proposed to. When Kathe said yes to my invitation to become my wife, my self-esteem soared through the roof. Kathe actually said yes to me. The highest honor you will ever receive is this love, friends. God has chosen you to spend eternity with Him. That is the greatest truth there is. God loves you. He has chosen you. Just let that sink into your soul. Whatever you're going through you belong to Him if you have surrendered your life to Him. If you haven't done that you can do that right now. The first reason that you can have a radical hope is that God chose you before you chose Him.

II. GOD ALWAYS TREATS ME WITH MERCY

For those of us who have given our lives to Jesus, Peter says in vs. 3, **"It is by His great mercy we have been born again."** Friends, the more you understand God's grace, forgiveness and love the more you're going to be amazed by it. Because it's completely underserved. It's totally unmerited. God's mercy and grace is not something you and I can earn, work for or deserve. It's just a free gift of God's mercy and choice. The Bible says in Titus 3:4-5, **"When**

God our Savior revealed His kindness and love, 5 He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.”

This is a very important truth to understand, and, for some of us, it is hard because of the families we grew up in and how people have treated us. As a believer when you sin or you blow it God doesn't get mad at you. God doesn't want to get even with you. God doesn't start planning to mess up your life. God always acts in mercy towards you. Why? Peter says, because you are covered in the blood and salvation of Jesus Christ when you've accepted Him. To be covered in His blood means your sins and flaws and failures have been cleansed through His blood. What can wash away my sins, the song says, **“Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”** Regardless of how you act and the poor decisions you make and all of the pain that you might experience in the coming year, the reason 2017 is THE YEAR OF HOPE is because God says to you, “No matter how deplorable you might act, I will always respond to you with My mercy.” Loved ones, please know that He always acts towards us with love, compassion, kindness and mercy. God has no desire or need to be angry with you or to scold you or punish you. Life will do that all by itself. But through God's mercy towards you He will lead you and teach you what you need to know and how to respond to the difficulties, disappointments and depressive episodes of life with mercy, tenderness, sweetness and friendship. If you didn't get to hear my teaching from last week, please go to our website and you can watch the video or listen to the audio free. You can also print out my script and notes. We're here to help you become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. This gives me hope, friends. It gives me hope that no matter how bad, how many mistakes I make, God is still going to be merciful to me. And it is by God's mercy that I have been spiritually born into His family. I have been born again. You were born into the universal family, the human race, when you were physically born. And when you surrender your life to Jesus Christ, and you repent of your sins and you confess Him as your Lord and Savior, you are born again and you become a member of God's family. There are privileges in becoming part of God's Family. The first one is you get to call your God, Daddy God. If you've

accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord you're in His family, too. Another privilege is we get to call each other brothers and sisters. God uses His family to give us strength and support, both here on this planet and in eternity. Another privilege of being part of God's family is that you can ask Him for whatever you need, and God says, "I'm going to help you." Father God takes care of His children. Over 22 times in the N.T. Gods says "ask and it shall be given, seek and you'll find, knock and the door will be open. Ask anything in My name and I will do it for you because I love you." In 2017 I want you to ask God to intervene in your life more than you ever have. Ask in all 7 categories of SERFVIP. That means ask God to meet your needs Spiritually, Emotionally, Relationally, Financially, Vocationally, Intellectually and Physically. God always treats you with Mercy. God chose you before you chose Him. God always treats you with mercy. This causes a secure hope to grow up in you.

III. GOD HAS SECURED MY FUTURE.

Peter writes, in vs. 4 "...we have a **priceless inheritance--an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.**" 1 Peter 1:4. In verse 3, Peter says "...we are birthed into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." This is incredible, friends. Peter uses 5 words to describe your eternal inheritance. 1) **You have a priceless inheritance kept (reserved) in heaven for you.** You must have a reservation to get to heaven. Your reservation is that you must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, because He died for you to cleanse you and present you as holy to the Father. 2) **It's a pure inheritance.** The Greek Word for Pure means it's not fake. It's genuine. Remember Bernard Madoff. He scammed people for millions of dollars. The inheritance God has for you is real, it is not a fake, and God proved it by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. 3) **It's undefiled.** That means it cannot be corrupted. If you use a computer, no doubt you have had a file or files corrupted. A corrupted file is a lost file. Peter is saying as long as you stay faithful to Jesus Christ and you remain in a submitted relationship with Him your inheritance that He has kept for you is pure and cannot ever be corrupted. Your salvation is secure as long as you stay committed and connected to Jesus who is your Savior. 4) **It's beyond**

change and decay. Your spiritual inheritance is like a flower that will never lose its bloom. It will never wither or die. Your inheritance is eternal. 5) **It is priceless.** Can you just see a Mastercard commercial that says, “Eternal life in heaven—priceless,” and that is because it’s true. When you know these 5 things about the security of your future, it develops width and depth to your hope. God has secured my future, and that gives me a profound sense of security and confidence in this life.

IV. GOD’S POWER WILL PROTECT ME.

Peter writes in vs. 5 **“And through your faith, God is protecting you by His power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.” 1 Peter 1:5** Peter says our hope is bolstered and strengthened by knowing that whatever I go through I can count on God’s power to help me out if I’ll just look to Him. The word protect is the Greek word for garrison. It means I am continuously guarded by a heavenly sentry. Nothing can come into the life of a believer without the Heavenly Father’s permission. Everything in life is Father-filtered. God does let bad things happen in your life because He will use them to continue to shape and mold your character and deepen your trust in Him, but He says, “I will protect you until the day of your Salvation that will be demonstrated to everyone when Jesus comes back for you if you surrender your life to Him now in this life.” I can lose my investments, health, loved ones and even my mind but not my salvation when I continue steadfast in Jesus Christ. This is why I started our year out with how to become God’s best friend. Next week we’re going to dig into the subject of hope by learning **HOW TO PRAY IN A CRISIS.** On the 22nd we will look at together **“PRAYING AND FASTING FOR A BREAKTHROUGH.** On the 29th **HOW TO PRAY A BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER.** Then on February 5th **TALKING TO YOUR FATHER,** and then we will close this series with a very important subject: **WHY MUST I KEEP ON PRAYING PERSISTENTLY?** God’s love is secure but we have a part to play in growing in our love, maturity, faithfulness and consistency. This series will plumb what our responsibilities are.

V. GOD IS PREPARING ME FOR ETERNITY.

God uses everything in my life--the good, the bad and the ugly--every part of it, big and little to prepare me for eternity. When you understand this truth your life begins to make sense and you stop saying, "Lord, why is this happening?," because you realize all of the pain you experience is preparing your character to spend eternity with God. Vv. 6-7 have some real meaty substance in them. **"So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold--though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world."** God says to us, "Don't expect your life to be easy simply because you have surrendered your life to Me". **Trials have 3 characteristics to them.**

1) **They're necessary.** This means that problems are an essential and indispensable part of maturing your character and preparation for eternity. They're not just optional. 2) **They're varied.** This means they are many and they come in all kinds of shapes, sizes, colors and levels of intensity. 3) **They are temporary.** Peter says "for a little while."

Peter says that God uses the trials you go through in 3 ways: 1) **To test my faith.** These faith tests are meant to strengthen us. The way you build your muscles in your body is to test them. When you exercise, you're testing the limits of your muscles, but you're also strengthening them. 2) **To purify my motives.** Peter says your faith **"...is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold--though your faith is far more precious than mere gold."** He is talking about the refining process. Metals are refined then they're put in a big container and they heat up the heat to hundreds of degrees, and the metal melts, and then it burns off all the impurities. God is much more interested in your character than your comfort. He's much more interested in preparing your heart for heaven than providing temporary comfort right now. The heat you're now experiencing in every area of you life is for the purpose of burning off the impurities. Where are you feeling the heat these days? God is up to purifying and refining your character, but you must yield to the process. If you simply are going to blame

and judge every person in your life, God will have to turn up the heat in your life until you're willing to submit to His purposes and plans for your life. It is your choice. 3) **To prepare me for rewards.** God says the problems we face now in life are for our eternal rewards in heaven. Peter writes, **“So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.”** (1 Peter 1:7b) God is saying to us all of the problems you're going through right now are ultimately for your benefit. As you see His provision and protection in all of the difficulties you face it strengthens your hope and resolve to trust Him for your life.

If you've never opened your life to Jesus, and you want His indescribable hope, ask Him to come into your life right now. If you've never been baptized, an expression of your faith in Christ is to get baptized. We will baptize on Sunday the 22nd. Let's pray. Father, only You are the source of real hope. All other false hope inevitably disappoints us. Forgive us for all the times we've put our hope in money. Or the economy. Or luck. Or our secret or special plans for some business scheme. Forgive us for the times when we look to other people to meet our needs that only You can meet. Help us to always put our hope and trust in You. As we face this New Year help us to grow in putting our trust in You so our hope will grow deep roots. We pray this in Jesus' name.