

# BRIGHT HOPE for DARK DAYS

## 2008 California Mission Offering Sermon Outline

*"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)*

**Introduction:** A man approached a little league baseball game one afternoon. He asked a boy in the dugout what the score was. The boy responded, "Eighteen to nothing – we're behind." "Wow," said the spectator, "I'll bet you're discouraged." "Why should I be discouraged?" the little boy replied. "We haven't even gotten up to bat yet!"

The ultimate cure for discouragement is hope. When any situation is placed in the proper perspective discouragement gives way to hope. The team may be losing but there's hope for a comeback. You may be overwhelmed by life's difficulties but there's hope as we trust in the Lord.

An ancient Roman saying reminds us, "While there's life, there's hope." Bible teacher Warren Wiersbe says, "It is not the fact of life that determines hope, but the faith of life."

The people to whom the Apostle Peter wrote his epistle needed hope. They were discouraged. Because of their faith they were being persecuted. As a result of persecution they scattered to five different parts of the Roman Empire. At least 15 times in this epistle Peter refers to their suffering. Peter was writing to offer them bright hope for their dark days. In fact, 1 Peter 1:3 says, "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."

Bright hope is the major theme of 1 Peter. As Paul is the apostle of faith and John the apostle of love, Peter is the apostle of hope.

Our nation, and particularly California, needs hope. It's easy to be discouraged as we look at our situation. But God wants to bring a bright hope for dark days.

Today, just like the day in which Peter wrote, a bright hope will come as believers are reminded of who they are, where they are and Whose they are.

### 1. The Different People Offering Bright Hope

*"... you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him ... " (1 Peter 2:9).*

God desires to use you, and every believer, as an instrument to offer hope to others. Our passage reminds us that we have been "chosen" for this very purpose. It is important for believers to understand that our choosing is a matter of God's grace and not our merit (see John 15:16). God did choose us but He did not choose us because of anything we have done – from His mercy and grace He set us apart to be different. Because of our faith in Him He made us to be a different kind of person.

#### a. Believers are different because of a relationship

The Bible tells us we are a people "belonging to God." Before a person is saved he does not belong to God. In Ephesians 2:1-19 the Bible reminds us, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ... Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ ... without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ."

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When a person accepts Jesus Christ as his or her personal Lord and Savior they enter a new relationship and become a new person. From the moment we accept Christ we are different. We belong exclusively to God. Our citizenship is now in a different place – Heaven.

**b. Believers are different for a purpose**

The Bible is not silent about what God's people are to do. Our passage explicitly says that our mandate is to "declare the praises of him... ." We have not been chosen to do as we please but we have been chosen to do what pleases God. Notice how Peter illustrates the purpose of every believer. He says we are priests. This draws us a picture from the Old Testament. A priest had two main responsibilities. First, he was a man who had access to God and whose task was to bring others to God. I like the Latin word used for priest: *pontifex*, meaning "bridge-builder." The priest was a man who builds a bridge for others to come to God. Secondly, the priest was the man who brings an offering to God.

God wants to use you, and every believer, to declare His praises by building bridges to others who need hope. The Greek verb translated "declare" could be rendered, "to tell out, to advertise." As believers we declare His praise by our worship, our work and our witnessing. The purpose of the Church and every believer is to tell the good news of hope to everyone everywhere.

As believers, our lives should radiate the "marvelous light" by offering bright hope to California and our world. Our passage reminds us that we were called out of darkness. Peter is reminding us that some are still in the dark. Consider ...

**2. The Dark Place Needing Bright Hope**

The Bible often portrays the unsaved person as someone walking in darkness. Jesus said in John 12:46, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." In Acts 26:18, Paul was witnessing to King Agrippa. As he was explaining his special call to the king, he said that the Lord had sent him "to open their (other peoples') eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

Darkness is an apt illustration of people who do not know the Lord. The darkness of the world can keep people from finding the right path. The darkness will keep people uncertain about what lies ahead of them and fearful of what is around them. In the verse preceding our passage Peter talks about people stumbling and falling. That sounds like what happens when you are in the dark. Have you considered what makes our world a place of darkness?

**a. Our world is a place of moral darkness**

When we talk about morals we are actually speaking about proper behavior or character. Morality refers to a code of conduct and, according to the Wikipedia online encyclopedia, it is synonymous with ethics. Today people are confused – in the dark, if you will – about what is right and wrong. We live in a day of moral relativism. But when a person accepts Jesus as his or her Lord they no longer live in the dark. The Bible sheds light on the believer's proper behavior. We no longer have to live in darkness. We know what is right and wrong because we have the authoritative teachings of God's word to enlighten us. Jesus said in John 3:19, "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."

**b. Our world is a place of spiritual darkness**

Most of the people of the world are spiritually confused. They are in the dark as to the truth. Jesus said in John 12:46, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."

The real tragedy for billions of people is that they will remain in the dark for all of eternity. It is no wonder that when Jesus spoke of the eternal consequence or punishment for anyone who has not accepted Jesus as his or her personal Lord and Savior He declared, "... throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 22:13).

Those who remain in spiritual darkness in this world, blinded from the truth, will be there forever. The Italian poet, Dante, in his Divine Comedy, put this inscription over the world of the dead: "Abandon all hope, you who enter here!"

We must not let that happen. Christians alone have the true message of hope. That hope must be shared in our dark world. Offering bright hope to a world of moral and spiritual darkness requires every Christian to be bold and busy for the Lord. Complacency is not an option for any obedient believer. God's promise to every believer is that he or she will receive the power to be His witnesses (see Acts 1:8).

**3. The Divine Power Bringing Bright Hope**

Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ believers have a hope to share. Sharing the Good News to people who walk in darkness ought to be every believer's magnificent obsession. As you share you can be assured of God's power to help bring hope.

**a. God's power brings hope through His calling**

One of my favorite scriptures is II Thessalonians 1:11 (CEV) which says, "God chose you, and we keep praying that God will make you worthy of being his people. We pray for God's power to help you do all the good things that you hope to do and that your faith makes you want to do." When you rely on the power of God in you, you can boldly share the gospel – you can be a witness. As a priest you can build a bridge to someone you know who is lost, without Christ, in order to share a bright hope. This is what God has called you to do. Have you considered that the only time in the New Testament where it gives the promise of God's power is in reference to being a witness – to sharing the hope we have in Jesus? This is God's only plan to bring bright hope to the world. He has called every believer to be His witness and He supplies the power for every believer to boldly share.

If you feel weak, don't be alarmed. Remember, it is God's power that brings hope and not yours. Paul understood this. He felt ill-prepared to accomplish what God had called him to do. He even felt hindered in his weakness. Then he came to accept this truth which he shares in II Corinthians 12:9: "But he (God) said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"

**b. God's power brings hope through His provision**

When God tells us He has called us out of darkness and into His wonderful light, He is saying that we are better off than we were before. In fact, verse 9 of I Peter 2 begins with the word "but." That small conjunction connects what has just been revealed about those who reject Jesus. Peter is saying we are much better living in the light than we were living in the darkness. In verse 10 Peter says, "Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." This is Peter's way of drawing a contrast between those who do not know the Lord and those who do. Believers, he says, are a different people living in a dark place. But, he adds, there is Divine provision for the task. God will give you everything you need to accomplish your mission. II Peter 1:3 says, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

There is a famous story from Sparta. A Spartan king boasted to a visiting monarch about the walls of Sparta. The visiting monarch looked around and could see no walls. He said to the Spartan king, "Where are these walls about which you boast so much?" The king pointed at his bodyguard of magnificent troops. "These," he said, "are the walls of Sparta, every man a brick."

It is true that God will provide everything needed to bring bright hope to a dark world but it is also true that God intended every believer to do his or her part to dispel the darkness. In I Peter 2:5, Peter refers to believers as "living stones" and says we are "being built into a spiritual house." Every believer is a brick in God's spiritual house. Everyone is needed during these dark days to share the bright hope. Every church needed. Obedience to God and cooperation with each other ought to be our sacred motto.

There is bright hope for this dark day but some may never know about it. There is bright hope for this dark day but it will take every believer and every church boldly declaring the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into the wonderful light.

**Note:** As you lead in a time of decision clearly offer an opportunity to:

- accept Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior.
- join the church and become another "brick on the wall" that will help fulfill the Great Commission.
- become a bold witness by sharing the gospel with friends, neighbors and associates.
- pray for other believers and churches as they seek to reach people for the Lord.
- give generously to the California Mission Offering that will help Southern Baptists bring hope to millions of people in California.



The California Mission Offering is inspired by S.G. Posey, a CSBC missionary pioneer.