



REFLECTIONS

September 24, 2017

In his great mercy [God] has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. ...though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith... may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 Peter 1:3, 6-7

Living Hope

Things are looking up. It's going to be okay now. Tomorrow will be a better day. Words of optimism like these provide reasons to expect tomorrow to be better than they are today. After all, better days ahead are what we work for every day, not something we wish will happen. We want more certainty than that. But optimism comes and goes. Mood swings happen every day. Just watch the daily Dow Jones averages.

The "Bulls" and the "Bears" wage war daily—one expects a better tomorrow and the other, like Chicken Little, believes the sky is falling. Both likely hope for a better tomorrow, but one believes it will be, while the other is skeptical of the prospects.

Still, there is at least a touch of uncertainty even in the most optimistic of minds. Experience tells that things can go wrong even when success looks sure. Trouble is always near enough to raise doubts like threats of war, economic downturns, or natural disasters. But hope—well that's a different matter; living hope brings liberating power to look beyond the near-term obstacles, the price to be paid, and the endurance of pain to see the benefits of a greater good.

When Jesus faced the realities of the cross, his heart filled with living hope, not optimism that his death would be pain free. He knew he had come into this world to suffer. The anticipation of it brought him to his knees in prayer, "*Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.*" (Mark 14:36) Jesus wasn't optimistic; but he did have hope—living hope shining beyond present reality into God's future.

Living hope is rooted in faith; *sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.* (Hebrews 11:1) It shines light into dark places. It makes powerlessness and suffering bearable. Living hope sees beyond present reality into God's future. It is liberating. Living hope alters life now. We may experience torment and pain, but living hope rests in the comfort that God means it for good.

Though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials; but through your living hope today, for someone, tomorrow will be a better day.

Your faith may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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