

# A Living Hope Through the Resurrection

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April 12, 2020

**1 Peter 1:3-9**

**3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

**4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,**

**5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

**6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,**

**7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;**

**8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,**

**9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.**

To the Glory of God

Now we are gathered here today under difficult circumstances. At this very moment- the earth is reeling underneath the weight of a global pandemic- of which (of this date) there is no cure. And because of that- life in American and around the world has radically changed. Many Americans; maybe even some of you- have lost your jobs and have no idea how you're going to make it. We are hunkered down in our homes while scientists and doctors and some of the smartest people who live in over 175 nations are feverishly working to find a vaccine that will help us to recover.

And yet you are here- separated by over 6 feet- to celebrate the physical and the literal and the bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead- some 2,020 years ago. And by your presence- you are giving public testimony that you believe the Biblical Record that after three days of being dead- that the Spirit of Life entered into Jesus' stone cold dead Body and He

opened His Eyes and He rose from the dead by the Glory of the Father!  
That's *why* you're here and that's *why* I am here.

And on this Resurrection Morning the Question that God the Holy Spirit has prompted me to ask you might seem strange. Because I am *not* led to ask whether you are practicing "Social Distancing"; or "*How long do you think this Virus will keep us separated?*"; or "*Who is it that bought all the toilet paper?*". No, the Question I am compelled to ask on this Resurrection Morning is this,

***What do you do to keep from sinning?***

... because I want to remind all of us that Sinning is *worse* than Suffering. Hear me, dear friends, because this Question is so important right now- as we are faced with this global pandemic where really none of us knows what might happen. So, I repeat: Sinning against God is *infinitely* worse than any suffering from any persecution; or any trial; or any virus. So, as a believer in the risen Christ- I am compelled to proclaim to you that Dying is NOT the worst thing that could happen to any of us. Now, I'm not advocating for anybody to be foolish or for anyone to die- but the Bible clearly and repeatedly tells me that the death of a genuine saint of God is cause for great rejoicing; while the birth of another child into this sin-cursed, fallen world- is cause for weeping. Listen to the Word of God:

**Psalm 116:15**

**Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His godly ones.**

**Ecclesiastes 7:1**

**A good name is better than a good ointment, And the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth.**

**Psalm 30:5**

**For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime;  
Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.**

**2 Corinthians 5:6-10**

**Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight— we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the**

**body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

**Matthew 5:4**

**Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

**Romans 14:8b**

**... for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.**

... and that is a strange logic- unlike anything you will hear on Fox News. But it is an *eternal* logic and a *biblical* logic. So, I say again: Sinning against God is *much* worse than suffering as a Christian. And when God the Holy Spirit carried the Apostle Peter “along” to write a letter to the scattered aliens of his day- he said this in Chapter 1:3:

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**

... and as you do what your eighth grade English teacher taught you; and you diagram verse 3 of Chapter 1 of **1Peter**- you see that the Apostle was “carried along” to say, God the Father has “**caused us to be born again**”.

So, as Peter was “carried along” to write this inspired Book- he was suddenly moved to shout out, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!**” But *why* was Peter compelled to bless God? Well, he goes on to tell us,

**... who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again...**

Peter says here that God *caused* us; He *made* us; He *forced* us: He *initiated* our new birth. Peter said that us being born again was NOT our decision. It was NOT due to our choice; or our determination; or an act of our free will; or our ability; or our action; or even our prayer; or *anything* that we said or did that brought about the Miracle of the New Birth. Peter said God caused it.

And that means that God sovereignly CAUSED unworthy wicked sinners to be born again. God solely- all by Himself- *caused* us to experience the miracle of the New Birth. So, God Himself- all by Himself- opened our blind eyes; and unstopped our deaf ears; and took out of us a stony heart and gave us a heart of flesh that could believe! That's the way the Old Testament Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel said it. But the Apostle Paul said it like this:

### **2Corinthians 4:6**

**For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

So, Paul says here that in the very same way that God created Light in the beginning- *that* is the same way we were born again. So, at Creation, God the Father spoke and said, “**Let there be Light!**” and God the Holy Spirit took the spoken Word of God (Jesus) and instantly created Reality. And Paul says here that this is the way lost people experience the Miracle of the New Birth. The Gospel is spoken; and God the Holy Spirit takes the foolishness of the Word preached and creates new spiritual Life in those God the Father has chosen to save.

But look at how Paul phrases the New Birth. He called it,

**... the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

... and back in verse 4- he said the same thing- only he used different words:

**... the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

So, Paul says that being lost is:

### **2Corinthians 4:3b&4a**

**...those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see ...**

God the Holy Spirit “carried along” Paul to teach that being lost is NOT being able to see. See what? The Glory of Jesus Christ (Who is the express Image of God). Or in verse 6 he said that satan has blinded the

minds of the perishing so they cannot see the

**Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

Now tie that back in with **Romans 3:23**:

**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

So, *part* of what it means then to “fall short” of God’s Glory is to NOT see God’s Glory for what it really is. It is to NOT love what is most loveable. It is to NOT value what is most valuable. It is NOT to admire what is infinitely admirable. Sin is to NOT love the Glory of God; or to not be convinced that the Glory of God is the greatest thing anyone can see.

So, to be blinded by satan- so that you cannot see the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in, by, and through Jesus- is what it means to be lost. And, therefore, to have God sovereignly “unveil” the eyes of your mind- so that you can see Jesus Christ- as Who He really is- the Treasure of the Universe- is what it means to experience the Miracle of the New Birth.

And God did that! You did NOT bring about your own new Birth- by *any* decision or act on your part. Peter says here that God did that for you. And He did it *powerfully*; and *miraculously*; and *supernaturally* and *eternally*! And God did that- all by Himself! But what was the motivating factor; what was the catalyst that moved God to give us that new Birth? Look again at what Peter says,

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again...**

The Bible says that the one Issue that motivated God to *cause* us to be born again was,

**His great Mercy**

So, contrary to what many in the modern church teach today- God did NOT look deep inside you and found something worth saving. The Bible does not teach that. Now pagan Humanism teaches that. And New Age paganism teaches that. The Babylonian mystery religions teach that- but Christianity has never taught that. And the reason that God didn’t look

deeply inside you and found something worth saving- is because there isn't anything inside you that is worth saving. We are sinners- by nature- and no one is Good; no one is Righteous (**Romans 3:9-18**). And so, the deeper God looks- the worse we look. In **Romans 7:18**, the Apostle Paul said,

**For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh...**

So, God was the sole Cause of us being born again. And He was NOT moved by our need or our prayer or our plight. But what moved God to cause us to be born again was His Own Great Mercy.

Okay- but what does the Bible teach is our new Birth "Through"? What is the "means" or the "vehicle" by which the New Birth comes to us? Peter said,

**... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**

So, the Bible teaches that it was the physical, literal, and bodily Resurrection of Jesus from the dead that our New Birth is THROUGH. So, *through* the Resurrection- motivated by His Own great mercy- God sovereignly caused this new Birth comes to us. Now let me tell you just how important that is. If Jesus did everything the Bible says He did; and if He said everything the Bible says He said- including dying on the Cross- and yet if Jesus did NOT rise from the dead- we would yet be in our sins; and we would NOT be born again. That is how important the Resurrection is to our Salvation. In **1Corinthians 15:17-19**, Paul said:

**... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.**

That is how *important*, how *vital*; and how *strategic* the Resurrection of Jesus is to our Salvation. And that means that the Resurrection is NOT merely a historical fact. It is paramount to us being saved and what our new Birth is through! Okay- but what does Peter teach is the "End Result" of God sovereignly *causing* us to be born again- "by" His Own great Mercy; and "through" the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? Peter says,

**... to a living hope**

... not merely Hope- but a *living* Hope. A Hope that is alive and breathing and functioning both now and in the future. Now look what Peter said in verse 4:

**to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,**

Now the English word, "Inheritance" comes from a Greek word (*kleeronomia*; Strongs #2817) that has to do with: *property or other valuable commodity that comes to an individual by the purposeful decree of another through death. This Inheritance makes the one receiving it- an "Heir". The value of the Inheritance does not illustrate the worthiness of the Heir but the benevolence of the Testator.*

Now look at the four characteristics of the Inheritance of which Peter speaks. This Inheritance is:

- **Imperishable** (eternal, everlasting)
- **Undefiled** (clean; flawless; immaculate)
- **Will not fade away** (does not lessen in value over time)
- **Reserved** (pre-arranged)

Now most people agree with that. But they then mistakenly *reduce* the impact of this statement by attaching the Inheritance with Heaven. And they do this because of what Peter says at the end here:

**... reserved in heaven for you**

But Peter did NOT say that the Inheritance *is* Heaven. Peter said that the Inheritance is reserved **IN** Heaven for us. So, Heaven is NOT the Inheritance itself- but rather merely the *location* of the Inheritance. And so, I would tell you that our Inheritance is Jesus- in His fullness. Heaven is great- but Jesus is better than Heaven. So, we are going to inherit God in His triune perfection- in the Person of Jesus- as He is right now- in Heaven- in His risen Magnificence- to marvel at and rejoice over- throughout all Eternity!

But Sin stops that from happening. And so, Peter is telling us that the

Inheritance that comes *through* the Resurrection of Jesus; by way of His Own great Mercy; by sovereignly *causing* us to be born again- is NOT found anywhere on this earth or in this life. And that goes back to God's Glory and the importance of understanding this dynamic.

So, I ask again: "*What do you do to keep from sinning?*" What's your "game plan"; your "strategy" to make war against your own sinful heart? How do you go about "killing sin?" Or to put it positively- what's your strategy for day by day maintaining this "beholding"; this "seeing" of the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in Jesus Christ? What is your plan to maintain a living Hope for Jesus?

I know that at the age of 65- which makes my Journey with Jesus and my experience with Sanctification to be going on 49 years now- I know that I need the Word of God in my mind and in my heart now- more than I ever have. After travelling with Jesus now for almost half a century- I know that I need to behold the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus more now- than when I was 25 or 35 or 55. But how do I know that? Because **Psalm 119:9-16** says:

**How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. Blessed are You, O Lord; Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have told of All the ordinances of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.**

Here's one biblical strategy. **2Corinthians 3:18** says,

**But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.**

The Bible teaches that born again believers are changed into sin-fighting, Christlike people- by "beholding the Glory of the Lord". And the Promise is that we are transformed "*from* Glory" and "*to* Glory". And the way the original Greek is structured here gives the impression of steps of a ladder. Always ascending; always going up; higher and closer and nearer to Jesus.

So, if that is the strategy- then *where* do we go to “behold” the Glory of the Lord? *How* do we fix your gaze on God’s Glory? If that’s the strategy, if that’s the way our war with Sin works most effectively- if we are actually *transformed* by “seeing” His Glory- so that it starts to go in us; and change us- “where” do we see Him? There is only one answer:

### **1Samuel 3:21**

**And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, because the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.**

Now that’s an amazing statement! The Lord “appeared” to Samuel “by” or “through” the Word of the Lord! So, we actually “see” or “behold” the Glory of God in, by, and through Jesus- in or by the Scriptures.

I know of no other way to live the Christian Life and pursue Holiness on purpose and fight against sin in my own life- than to store up God’s Word so that all day long, every day, the Holy Spirit has something to set on fire when He touches it. The Word blazes with Christ and in the sight of His Glory. And the result is that you see Jesus as preferable to pornography. You behold Jesus as preferable to money and power and fame. You see Jesus and He’s preferable. He’s infinitely valuable. And He becomes the Treasure of Heaven to us. Why? Because part of the infallible Word of God that you have put in your heart and mind and life has been touched by the Holy Spirit.

And that Word has flamed with the appearance of Jesus in His Glory- in your mind and in your heart. And what is the result? We are changed from one realm of Glory to the next. And we become a little more like Jesus!

So, if that’s one of the keys to my own Sanctification and me living the Christian life and me fighting against inward Sin and winning; if that is one of the “means” of having a genuine hunger and thirst for Righteousness; of panting after God like the deer pants after the water-brooks; if that is one of the best ways to become like the man in the **Song of Solomon**, who searched through the city to find “Him whom my souls loves”- then I need the Word of God. Now remember what Peter said,

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is**

**imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.**

Peter assumes that every Christian has been born again- and so should we. Because nobody is “saved” until and unless he *first* has been given new spiritual Life. And so, *before* we are forgiven and made Righteous- we must be born again. And God is the One Who must CAUSE us to be born again. Why? Because we can’t cause ourselves to be born again any more than we could cause our natural birth. Why? Because, as fallen humans- we are conceived in Sin in our mother’s womb. We are “spiritually dead” (Ephesians 2:1). And as spiritually dead people- what we need is NOT more Rules; or more Commandments; or more things to do or not do. We had all that under the Law. And all that came from that- was more and more Condemnation. Why? Because lost people CANNOT keep God’s Law.

So, as lost people- what we need is a new heart that can gladly believe. What we need is a new mind that can joyfully perceive and understand Divine Truth. What we need is new power to “see” or “behold” Jesus in His risen Glory- and to love what we see. And if that happens- nobody will have to wonder or guess if we are saved. If that truly happens to the worst sinner in town- everyone will know. So, if we are so blessed to have God sovereignly unveil our eyes so we can behold Jesus in His magnificence- the Bible promises that we will then be progressively *changed* into what we see!

The reality is that nobody knows they are alive simply because they have a Birth Certificate. The Certificate itself does not have the power to give life to anyone. No, you have the Certificate because you are already alive. So, the Certificate only verifies what is already true. It can’t make it to be true. Our living- the way we live our daily lives- must already be godly- and the Certificate- our public profession in baptism; and our attendance in

Church; and our prayer life; and our time in God's Word- all that- simply verifies what actually is.

Nobody knows that I am alive right now because 65 years ago- my mother gave birth to me. What happened to me 65 years ago is NOT the *basis* by which somebody can tell if I am alive today. No, you know I am alive right now- because I am breathing; I am speaking; my heart is beating; my brain has electrical impulses; and I am moving around. This is what Peter is talking about when he calls our Hope a "living" Hope. It isn't merely a Truth that we are to believe. It is a Reality that we must experience.

So, my Hope is NOT "living" this morning because on June 25, 1971- I believed the Gospel; repented of my sins; and trusted in Jesus and in His finished Work. No, my Hope is "living" right now- because *right now- right now* as I am preaching this Message- God the Holy Spirit is convicting me of Sin- *right now*; I am beholding the Glory of God in the Person of Jesus through His Word- *right now*; I love what I see- *right now*; and I am being changed into what I see- *right now!* That is how I know my Hope is *living*.

So, how do I know that I have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth? Because I believe- *right now*. How do I know that God *caused* me to be born again? Because I can behold the Glory of God in Jesus- through the Bible. How do I know that my Inheritance is certain? Because I *keep on* believing; I *keep on* trusting; I *keep on* confessing; I *keep on* repenting; I *keep on* seeing; and I *keep on* changing.

Jesus is *infinitely* more precious to me now than He was the night I was born again. Now He's NOT more precious. He has *always* been infinitely precious. But satan had blinded my mind and I couldn't see or understand the *preciousness* of Jesus until God sovereignly unveiled my eyes. And when God did that- all by Himself- I saw. And when I was blessed to be able to "see" or "behold" the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus- through the preaching of God's Word- I was immediately conscious of two things:

- The horror of my own sin
- The Worth and Beauty of Jesus

.. and even though it was very basic and simple and clumsy and vague- it was real. And from that initial unveiling of my eyes- the process of *loving* what I saw; and being *changed* into what I saw that night- from one realm of Glory to the next- began. But what has happened to me since that night- is

that- *from the Scriptures*- I now “see” Jesus as being even *more* glorious than before. Now again, Jesus is NOT more glorious than He used to be. Jesus has *always* been *infinitely* glorious. But I see Him as being more glorious- because I have spent nearly a half-century in the Word of God. So, Jesus hasn’t changed from what He always was. I have changed. But the Bible says that I changed because I see; and I *keep on* seeing. And I see because God sovereignly unveiled my eyes. He caused it. And Peter says that God did all that through the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And that is simply a different way of understanding what it means to be born again.

So, if you’re a Christian- it’s only because you’ve been born again. And if you have been born again- you have a living Hope. And I have three Questions about this living Hope that I think this Passage in **1Peter** answers.

- What is the *Basis* of your living Hope?
- What is the *future* Experience of this living Hope that we are hoping for?
- What is the *present* Experience of having a living Hope?

## 1. What Is the *Basis* of Your Living Hope?

Now Peter wants us to know what the Basis of our living Hope is- because he gave us three Answers to that Question in verse 3. But the other reason is that in **1Peter 3:15**- Peter said,

**... always be [ing] ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you,**

... so, can you do that? If you left this Service this morning and somebody walked up to you and stuck a microphone in your face and said that the Interview would be broadcast on 60 Minutes- and they asked you, “*Why do you have Hope?*” Could you give a true, biblical Answer? And would you tie your Hope in with God *causing* you to be born again? And would you tie your Hope in with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? My Goal this morning is that after this Sermon- you WILL be able to give an answer like that.

Because that’s *why* Peter brings up the subject. That’s what he is asking us, “*What is the Basis of your Hope?*” And Peter wants you to know

for your own soul's sake; and he wants you then to be able to talk about it with other people- who are still lost. So, what's the Answer to the Question, "What is the *Basis* or the *Foundation* of your Hope?"

- **The Basis of your Hope is the Miracle of the New Birth.** Peter says we were **born again to a living hope**. And that means that our Hope came with the New Birth. And that means that this Hope was NOT ours *before* the New Birth. So, this isn't about being upbeat or optimistic. This Event, called the "New Birth" gave rise to your living Hope.
- **The Basis of your Hope is God's great Mercy.** Peter said, "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope**"
- **The Basis of your Hope is Christ's Resurrection.** Notice the word "through." "**He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**" So, if there had been no Resurrection- there would be no new Birth- ***even if there had still been a Crucifixion.*** No new Birth- no Hope. Therefore, no Resurrection- no Hope.

Now, we have three statements concerning the *Basis* of our Hope; and what our Hope is *resting on*. So, what's the Basis of our Hope? We were born again. And underneath our new Birth- is great Mercy from God- Who is the *Cause* of that Birth. And we obtain that Hope *through* the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Now let's ponder this for a moment. Let's begin with Mercy because that's where *everything* that God does for us- begins. When you think about your living Hope and your new Birth resting; or sitting atop God's great Mercy- what does that understanding do to you? It should make you tremble. And it should humble you. But it should also strengthen you as well. Mercy means that nobody *deserves* to be born again. Nobody has *earned* this living Hope. And it also means that God was not *obligated* to give it to you. So, God did NOT *respond* to your prayers; or your faith; or your actions; or your participation in the Sacraments and gave you this Hope. No. God sovereignly decided to give you this New Birth and this

living Hope- for one reason:

**according to His great Mercy.**

Nobody was born again because there's a sticker price on you and Jesus paid it. No. Because there was no sticker price on you. You are NOT valuable enough to have a sticker price placed on you. Human beings after the Fall are NOT treasures- we are deficits. We brought NOTHING to the table that God needed. We have NOTHING to offer God by way of value. Jesus is the infinite Value and we are deficits.

But the meaning of "by His great Mercy" means that, even though we possess no value of our own- we have been born again unto a living Hope. And that means that all our Hope- not just the Hope we had when we were first saved- but all the Hope you have right now- is by God's great Mercy as well.

*All our Hope and the entirety of the New Birth are all by God's underserved Kindness (Mercy). And as that thought humbles you- it should also fill you with a great sense of Confidence. "I didn't earn this! I don't deserve it! God didn't have to give it! But He did! And it's real! And I have it!"*

My dear friends, it is truly a sweet thing- when a Church is filled with people, who know *everything* they have is from God's Mercy. It changes the way we think. It alters the way we talk. It changes the way we treat each other. It transforms everything around the dinner table. It changes everything in Elder meetings. It changes everything in the Worship Services when everybody looks at everybody else saying, *"I don't deserve anything. I don't deserve your friendship. I don't deserve you to be nice to me. I don't deserve the sweetness of this Worship. I don't deserve a family of believers, I don't deserve life, and I don't deserve breath. Everything I have- especially my living Hope, is from Mercy!"* I tell you- it changes *everything!*

Secondly, we are born again "through" the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. But just how does that work? How does the New Birth come about "through" the Resurrection? The New Birth is something that happens inside of us. But the Resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact that happened one time- 6,800 miles away from here- 2,000 years ago. So, what does Peter mean when he says this?

When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives- He doesn't ask permission. At the time appointed by the Father- God the Holy Spirit *invades* our bodies;

*interrupts* all our plans; *violates* our wills; *imposes* His Will on us; and *causes* us to be born again. Why? So that he will look magnificent! And in this new condition- we now love God and we find the fullness of our Joy- in God being glorified.

So, really, what the New Birth does- is to *unite* us to Jesus Christ. **Romans 6:5&6** says:

**For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;**

The Holy Spirit does this Miracle. He *unites* us to Jesus- so that the Death that Christ experienced is counted as *our* death. And the Justice of God (that was insulted by our Sins) is satisfied- because all our Sins have been damned. And that allows God to show us His great Mercy- without being an “unjust Judge” (**Romans 3:21-26**). So, because I have been born again and united to Christ- I don’t have any Wrath or Judgment in front of me. Jesus’ Death counts for me. And I’m united to His Life.

And Christ’s Life is an *indestructible* Life that can never die again. And that is what produces this living Hope. And the New Birth is the point where that Union happens. We become united to Christ; His Death counts for ours; and there is no more Penalty for Sin. His Life counts for ours so that we are with Him forever in an indestructible Life!

Now let’s go a little deeper into the New Birth. Here’s a word about the New Birth. It says, “**According to His great Mercy, God has caused us to be born again to a living Hope.**” But that is all subconscious. It’s all invisible. You can’t see the Miracle of that mysterious Union of your soul with Jesus Christ. You can see the *results* of that Union- a transformed life. But you can’t see the Union itself.

So, my Question is: “*What did you experience in the New Birth? What actually happened? What is it like to be born again?*” And again, **1Peter 3:15** tells us to: “**Always be ready to make a defense, to give an answer to the one who asked you for the reason for the Hope that is in you,**”- so we really need to understand this.

So, one of the reasons we have this Hope- is the New Birth. So, what will you say to them? They’re going to ask you, “*What’s the difference? What happened? There was a time when you didn’t have the least interest*

*in Jesus. You didn't care anything about religion or church or God. But now, you're one of those weirdos. You sing; and you read your Bible; and you don't talk nasty anymore; and you don't sleep around anymore. So, what happened? What did you experience? Talk to me about it. I want to understand what happened."*

Here's an illustration. On April 3, 2015, in the nation of Kenya, at Garissa University, Islamic terrorists came early in the morning and killed 147 students. And as they went from dorm room to dorm room, they asked, "Are you a Christian or are you a Muslim?" And the Christians were shot dead immediately.

So, the real Issue is not about us having T-shirts and ball caps and wrist bands and bumper stickers and cute little slogans and clever phrases and us trying to use God as a "cosmic tool" so we can get more money and more earthly possessions. That is what the American Church is obsessed about. But the real Question is: "Where did those young people, with their lives before them- where did they get the Conviction; the Strength at that moment to be completely unafraid and stand for Jesus- knowing they would be shot dead if they said they loved Jesus? What has to happen to intelligent, thinking people to make them utterly fearless about Jesus and be willing to die?"

And the Answer is, "A living Hope" that comes from God's Mercy through the bodily Resurrection of Jesus from the dead whereby God causes unworthy rebels to be born again! We know what Easter meant to those believers. But what does the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead mean to you?

The pagan world wants to know the reason for the Hope that is in you. And you need to say something like this- "Yes, there was a time that all this God stuff seemed very boring and irrelevant and untrue to me. But one night- I heard the sound of Amazing Grace. I was half-drunk and full of my own Self-righteousness and I heard that there's a personal God- Who created the world. And I heard that because of Adam- I am nothing but a sinner and a rebel. I heard that this God took on human flesh and was born of a virgin and lived a sinless Life and died- screaming in agony as the Wrath of God was poured out on Him- instead of me and He died. But three days later- this Righteous Lamb rose from the dead by the Glory of the Father and He is coming back to earth to deliver Justice and Equity to all who do not believe."

And I stood on that track that night- trembling. Ashamed of my sins;

ashamed of my evil heart; and ashamed that I didn't even know how to pray. And I didn't hear thunder and I didn't see lightning; and I didn't hear voices and I didn't hear angels singing- but *somehow*- and I really don't know how- but *somehow*, as the Gospel was preached- I "saw" the Beauty and the Glory of this God through the Lord Jesus Christ- in that Gospel.

And I was born all over again that night. And the only thing I could think to say was, "*It's real! It's real!*". And that's why I act the way I do. That's why I live like I live. That's why I say what I say; that's why I married another believer; and that's why we raised our children like we did. And that's why I am standing here this morning. Because 49 years ago- God showed me His great Mercy. And He *caused* me to be born again. And through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead- I now have a living Hope. And that's why, if they come in here and ask, '*Christian or Muslim?*' I'm not going to waver; I won't hesitate. "*I'm a Christian!*" Bam. Paradise!

I'm arguing this morning that the Glory of the risen Christ being "seen" through the Scriptures- is the only kind of "knowing" that will keep you from wavering when they point a gun in your face. Because if all you have- is the kind of earthly confidence that is based on your parent's faith; or tradition; or historical arguments; or logical deductions- when the chips are down- your soul is going to say, "*My parents might have been wrong. Maybe I've been wrong. My family's tradition might be just nonsense.*" And you will waiver in that day. You will hesitate. And you will fail. Why? Because you have never really "seen" Jesus in His risen Magnificence. And to see- is to know. That's how we know. The Gospel was preached to us- and through those infallible and inspired Words- we "saw" the Glory of God in the Face of Christ!

## **2. What is the *future* Experience of your Hope?**

The Answer is given in verses 3&4 and then *expanded* in verses 7- 9:

**3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

**4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,**

**7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is**

**perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;**  
**8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,**  
**9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.**

The word, Inheritance implies a better future. And Peter says, "*It's coming.*" So, the Bible teaches that to be born again is to have a future Inheritance secured for you. And then Peter gave us four words to describe this Inheritance, and all four of these words are meant to make our Inheritance feel durable; and that it will be there- no matter what- and it will be there forever. Imperishable. undefiled. Unfading; and Reserved. But verse 7 is the key:

**so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;**

So, here's my Question for you: Is this Praise, Glory, and Honor *yours*? Is that *you* being praised; *you* being honored; and *you* being glorified? No, it is actually *your Faith* being praised. So, how does my Faith become something that will elicit Praise, Glory, and Honor?

The image that Peter gives in this verse- is that your Faith is gold. Actually, Peter says our Faith is *much more* precious (valuable) than gold. But, Peter says, right now- your Faith has got some dross in it (ie worldliness; sin; carnality, selfishness, etc.). So, how is our drossy Faith going to become clean and pure? The Test by Fire.

In the Bible- "Fire" almost *always* represents Trials and Tests. And Peter says here that your Faith and the *genuineness* of your Faith is going to be tested by Fire. And like gold that is smelted- our Faith is going to be burned to the point that all Hay, Wood, and Stubble will be burned away from it and only the *pure* gold- the *pure* Faith- will remain. And after the burning- our Faith will have been tested; and tried; and made real; and strong; and certain.

So, Peter is actually saying, "*What is it that you have to hope for? What is the Object of your Hope?*" Well, there's this Inheritance, and it's undefiled, and it's Imperishable, and it's Unfading and its Reserved," And as

you enter your Inheritance- (which is Jesus in His fullness)- God is going to praise your Faith- because He knows that He is the One Who made your faith genuine. Paul said in **1Corinthians 4:5**:

**Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.**

So, when we inherit Jesus- in His fullness- We are going to praise Him. You will not be the one praising yourself. You will be praising God. And what you will praise Him for- is His great Mercy in *causing* you to be born again to a lively Hope through the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And in Mercy (NOT because you earned it), God will say back to you,

**Matthew 25:21**

**'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'**

But what's the gold that Peter is talking about? The gold is the *genuineness* of your Faith. Your weak, worldly Faith is being tested with holy Fire. And out of the other side of the testing- comes genuineness. And that's why 33 years ago, this month- I wrote that the Fire I was in back then- was more than I could bear. I told God that I just couldn't do it. I was going to fall. I asked Him, "*Do you just want me to fail You? Is that why Your putting me through this?*" I wrote that there was just no way I could live another day. And that was 33 years ago! And, by God's Mercy- here I am. I did make it. I did go through it. God never failed me. He was never trying to hurt me. He was purifying my Faith and making it real and genuine. So, if you want strong Faith? Don't "name it and claim it". Just burn.

### **3. What is the *present* Experience of having a living Hope?**

- **We experience Faith.** Verse 5: **who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time** Verse 8: **though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him ...**  
You're guarded through Faith, and though you don't see Jesus in His fullness yet- you believe in Him. So, right now- we are believing. We

are trusting- right now. Over there- our Faith will turn to sight- but right now- we're resting in Christ- Who is our living Hope.

- **We love Jesus.** Verse 8: **and though you have not seen Him, you love Him,**

Isn't it good to know that you're in the same position as the people that got this letter in the First Century? Peter is already writing the people who've never seen him. He knows that's the way it's going to be for the years until Jesus returns. All the people who believe are believing through the Words of the Apostles. And even though we don't see Jesus in His fullness now- we love Him. But you simply cannot love someone you have not seen or do not know. There is a "seeing" that makes love possible and real. Total ignorance of a person makes love meaningless. And that's what happened in the new Birth. Eyes went open and Jesus became precious, and now you love Him. He's precious to you.

- **We have Joy inexpressible and glorified.** Verse 6: **In this you greatly rejoice ...** that is in this keeping that God does for you, and in this Inheritance you rejoice. Then verse 8: **and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,**

That's amazing! Because this is not some fantasy. We're not naïve. Joy rises and falls. And some days are wonderful while other days are terrible. But on our best days- when we're seeing Jesus as we should- our Joy is inexpressible.

But what does it mean that our Joy is glorified? That's the literal translation. Our Joy now is glorified, and Verse 9 says: "obtaining" (present tense), not just in the future- the Salvation of our souls. It means that we taste by Faith and in Hope of the Glory that God is to us, and our Salvation is being manifested- as we're being transformed into His Image from one degree of Glory to the next.

- **We presently experience Sorrow and Grief.** Verse 6: **In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.** 2Corinthians 6:10- while on this earth- we are "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." That's exactly what we have here. And we do both- simultaneously. In Christ, Grief comes into our

lives and makes Joy much more difficult; more complex. And sometimes- it looks like Grief is getting the upper hand. And during those days- Joy doesn't look like Joy. There are tears and sobbing, yet Joy is still there. So, in this world and in this life- there will always be Joy and Sorrow- working side by side.

- **We are being kept.** Look at verse 5: **who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** Do you see the wonder of how verses 4 and 5 are connected? I just love this connection. Verse 4 says, “There is an Inheritance being kept in heaven for you,” and verse 5 says, “You’re being kept for it.” I just love that.  
It’s as if God said, *“I’m going to keep your Inheritance. It’ll never fade. It’ll never be defiled. It will never diminish or go away. And I’m keeping you for it. I’m not letting it depend on your failure. I’m totally into keeping you and keeping your Inheritance, so that your Hope is absolutely unshakeable.”*

So, as believers- we have a living Hope. And that Hope is connected to God sovereignly causing us to be born again and that Hope is THROUGH the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And we have this living Hope because God is great in His Mercy. And by and through this New Birth- we are united with Christ- and He becomes our Inheritance that will never fail us.

But right now- in this present time, we believe Jesus and we love Him. And even though our Faith is being tried in the Fire- our Faith will become genuine and God will rejoice over what He alone has done in us. And as the infallible Words of Scripture go deeply inside of us- we will “see” Jesus as being the very Glory of God. And because we have been born again- we will love what we see; and we will be changed (from one realm of Glory to the next) into what we see- and Sin will no longer have its grip on us- because Jesus was risen from the dead by the Glory of the Father!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.