

Born to a Living Hope

I Peter 1:3-5

Main idea: Because God caused us to be born again to a living hope, we should live in that reality.

I want to ask each of you to think back to your earliest memories. Can one of you here in this room tell me the story of when you were born? What was it like? Was it traumatic? Did you participate looking at the calendar to help to decide what day you would be born? Were you the one who told your mother that the labor pains were real this time and that she better get to the hospital? I'm so old, I've forgotten all about when I was born, or maybe I really never knew anything about it. But you kids in here are so near to the time you were born and you have such sharp memories that surely someone here can tell me what it was like!

We are all clueless about our personal experience of being born even though we know that we were there when it happened! We were definitely there but we were neither the cause of our births nor the ones who controlled the process. In our text this morning, the Apostle Peter speaks about a birth that we experience when we put our faith in Christ, but it is a birth that we neither cause nor control. Let's consider this birth as we stand and read together I Pet. 1:1-5.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

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.

I Peter 1:1-5 NASB

Two weeks ago we started a series of messages on Peter's first letter. We saw that those to whom the letter was directed were "*chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.*" Now as we go into verses 3-5 of chapter 1 this morning, I'd like you to notice that these three verses make up one sentence, blessing God for causing us to be born to a living hope. Let's examine that sentence a little more closely.

Peter starts out with an old Hebrew expression of blessing for God. It follows the old Hebrew "the Holy One, blessed be He" pattern but additionally gives recognition to the place of Jesus Christ in His relationship to the Father. Of course neither Peter nor we can confer blessing on God in the same way that God blesses us. We cannot add to God's happiness or to His comfort, and we can't invoke blessing on Him from another greater being, because He alone is God!

But Peter says, blessed be "...*God...who has caused us to be born again to a living hope!*" Notice that we are not the cause of this new birth any more than any of us caused our own birth. The basis of our hope is not our goodness or our righteousness. It isn't because we have somehow secured our own future, and so our expectation is that we are going to be OK. Rather God caused us to be born again to that hope.

When Peter speaks of being "*born again*" in this context, he is not speaking of the term in the popular sense that it is often used today. He is not talking about just making a major change, or about adding something to our lives. It is not rejuvenation or getting a new start in life. In fact, a more literal translation would be that God caused us to be "*begotten to a living hope.*" The new living being that is begotten obviously can have no part in accomplishing the begetting any more than you or I had in our own conception.

So this is being born again in the sense of John 3 where Jesus said to Nicodemus that he could not see the kingdom of God unless he was born again! This new birth is something only the Spirit of God gives, regenerating that person so that he is a new creature in Christ!

This is the same birth John speaks of in Jn. 1:11-13 where he says that Jesus "*...came to His own but his own did not receive Him, but as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" God caused it to happen! We are born into the family of God as we are born again, and this birth is entirely of God! Scripture is consistent that God and God alone is the cause of this new birth so that He gives us our new nature just like my father and my mother gave me my human nature.

Look at our text again now. It says that God has caused us to be born again to a living hope. The concept of hope in the Scriptures is not just optimism that things will turn out OK. Hope for the Christian speaks to settled conviction that brings joyful anticipation! Hope describes the full assurance that brings peace even if our present circumstances are unsettling. This living hope that we are born into has a vitality that is qualitatively different from the hope of a person who says, "Well I hope it will happen." This hope can never die as time goes on.

Peter likes the adjective "*living*" and so you should expect to see it numerous times throughout 1 Peter (1 Peter 1:23; 2:4-5, 24; 4:5-6). This hope to which we have been born is living first of all, because it belongs to a believer who has been made alive in Christ. Think of Eph. 2:4-6. We were dead in our trespasses and sins and He made us alive! The professing false believer who is really still a lifeless sinner doesn't have this hope. Our hope is not based on a lifeless idol or a dead belief but on a living relationship with a faithful God who keeps His Word.

Above all, the hope we were born to is a living hope because it is based on the actions and promises of a living Savior. We are united to the risen Christ! Because the Spirit unites us to Him as we put our faith in Him, we have true life, not some mystical, theoretical, imaginary life. As Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17, we are "*in Christ*" and He is "*in us.*"

God did this because He was motivated by His great mercy. Mercy, like grace, is a gift from God and God extends it not based on merit but according to His own choice. God, who according to Eph. 4 is "*rich in mercy*," caused us to be born again to this living hope according to, that is, commensurate with His superabundance of mercy.

He did this through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead which guarantees us God's satisfaction with His sacrifice. Had Jesus not come back to life, none of us would be made to live and called to newness of life. Though Peter had a hard time believing Jesus' resurrection at first, living hope is guaranteed through the resurrection!

Since then we have been begotten again, we are born to a living hope. But notice in our text that we are also begotten to an inheritance. Remember that when we are born again, we are born into God's family. We become His children. As part of His family, we become inheritors.

Since I was born into the Tuggy family, I'm one of the inheritors when my mom joins my dad as she leaves this life for life in God's presence. Now, about thirty years ago my mom and dad bought an old house in Batesburg, South Carolina. They've done some upgrades, but I've noticed as I've visited them in South Carolina through the years, that the house has gone downhill. I'm starting to realize that I'll not be able to retire comfortably on my portion of the inheritance when that house is sold. It doesn't help that I have eight other siblings, but even so, as time goes on, my inheritance's value diminishes. And as I go into eternity, it will be worth absolutely nothing to me!

But that is not how it is with God's children's inheritance. Look at what Peter says. We were born to an inheritance that is first of all imperishable. It is free from corruption that comes from within itself and it is free from corruption imposed externally by others. Satan himself cannot touch it the way he was allowed to touch Job's estate. Our inheritance as God's children is incorruptible. Rust, carpenter ants and termites, moths, dry rot, fire, earthquakes, high winds, the hot sun's rays, and floods all make what we can inherit here subject to dissolution and decay. But our heavenly inheritance is imperishable.

Then notice that our inheritance is undefiled. It is kept completely separate from the defilement of sin. Everything on earth is touched or defiled by Adam's sin, but it is also defiled through our own sin. There is decay, imperfection, and sorrow tied to everything on earth because it is under the curse. But our inheritance as God's children is undefiled.

Peter also says we have been born to an inheritance that will not fade away. Those of us who are getting older, and notice I'm not saying that we have arrived at "old" yet, know that our pleasure in things diminishes as we age. I know that for me, the joy I get from the challenge of climbing up a rock cliff has somewhat diminished from the perspective that I had as a young man. So much fades away. In fact, in Ecclesiastes 12, Solomon instructs the young person, "*Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth before the evil days draw near and the years come when you will say, 'I have no delight in them.'*" He follows that exhortation with some amusingly descriptive metaphors for poor eyesight, poor hearing, and even teeth falling out. The point Solomon is making in those metaphors is that our delight in life's pleasures diminishes as we age because our capacity to enjoy them fades away.

The greatest inheritance will fade away. As an earthly king, who inherited the dominion and riches of his kingdom from his father, lies on his deathbed, his inheritance fades away. It is not just that his inheritance loses its luster or that it diminishes in value. It is that the earthly thing we most value fades into insignificance as we enter eternity. The result is that a king's funeral at best is just another funeral.

But the inheritance we have as God's children will never lose its luster. It will never tarnish nor will it diminish. In fact, we can only fully enter into its glory and sweetness as we pass into eternity. That is because this inheritance is reserved in heaven for us.

Because our inheritance is reserved for us in heaven, it is untouchable and unchanging. Our inheritance remains undiminished, its luster and the splendor of its glory infinitely bright!

But remember that this glorious inheritance is for those who have been begotten of God. The living hope is for those who have been born again. Indeed, as Paul said in Col. 1:27, *"Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

But some of you who are going down the path Solomon described so vividly are wondering, "How long will I be able to enjoy corn on the cob?" How long will it be until my hope is diminished? Will my inheritance lose its value for me? Like the king who wonders how long he will be able to hold on to the riches, the dominion that he inherited from his father, many of you this morning might be wondering, "Will I be able to hold on to this hope, and hold on to this inheritance?" I'd like to point you to two things:

First of all, I want to point you again to the descriptive words used by Peter. It is a living hope, not a dying hope. The inheritance we have been given as God's children is imperishable and it is undefiled; it will not fade away; and it is reserved for us in heaven. You can count on these things!

Then notice that the "you" of verse 4, is tied to verse 5. Verse 5 says that you *"...are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."* The word picture is that of a person guarded or garrisoned in a castle or fortress that is impregnable to the enemy. We are garrisoned by the power of Almighty God.

Remember though that it says that the power of God is exercised in behalf of those who by faith look to Him. It is not our faith that protects us. It is the power of God! What use is faith then? Faith is the trigger God has ordained to release the power of God. But faith is also a gift of God. He stirs faith in us. We can't gin up faith on our own.

Faith looks to God and says, "I'm defeated; I'm broken; I'm undone; I'm not strong enough, so I can't do it. God, You are going to have to do it for me. I believe Your promises and Your power to protect me and save me, so I look to You alone!"

But aren't you glad that it is all of God. Which of us would have faith if God would not give us that gift? None of us. We would all fail. If our salvation were left in our own hands what assurance could we have of our final sanctification? Even the best of people fall into sin.

Adam, who was made absolutely perfect and had never before sinned, fell. Some of God's angels chose to rebel. All it took was for God to give them choice. Every one of the best of all men and women have sinned. And not one of us has the will, the virtue, or the power to protect us for salvation that is to be revealed at the end time.

Our real hope for salvation is that God keeps His children by His own power for the coming salvation, that salvation that we have only a taste of right now. Because we are kept by the power of God, we have that living hope, that full assurance, of seeing the full expression of our salvation at the last time.

Because Scripture was written to be applied, every message from God's Word needs to deal with the question, "So what?" So let's think through some really practical, down to earth, application of this truth. This afternoon, take some time to think about how these three verses apply to you personally.

- 1) Are you feeling old and useless, fitting in with Solomon's description of the person of advanced years? Keep your eyes on the reality of Heaven and our living hope that comes through our Savior! The resurrection is a reality and we can count on it!
- 2) Are you discouraged by developments in your family? Maybe someone has disappointed you. This morning, God is calling you to a living hope. It is not something you can gin up. It's based on a relationship with a living Savior who is in the process of giving faith and a new birth to broken people.
- 3) Are you discouraged because your finances are not turning out like you anticipated when you were a young person? Maybe like me you've figured out that your inheritance is disappearing fast, or at least will never amount to anything here on this earth. Aren't you glad you have an inheritance in heaven?
- 4) Are you downhearted because there is so much sin and corruption in society around you, and the country you love is going downhill so fast? Cling to the living hope that we have. Put your eyes back on Jesus the Savior. Put your trust only in Him. Don't look for salvation from another quarter.
- 5) Are you discouraged by developments in your own life as you realize your own propensity to sin? Are you struggling, often unsuccessfully, to resist temptation? Remember that if you put your faith in Him, God will garrison you, he will protect and guard you. Put your eyes on Him and walk in the obedience of faith, not obedience that comes through self-effort. He'll protect those who put their trust in Him.

Have you noticed that in many cases your circumstances haven't changed at all, but your attitude changes when you take all of reality into account? You're able to factor in the living Savior. If you've been born again through the work of God in your life, you have a living hope. The reality is that you have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, that will not fade away, which is reserved for you in heaven, you who are protected through faith by the power of God for that salvation to be fulfilled at the last time!

- 6) But maybe you are realizing the futility of life. You might see that your life has no real meaning at all. Have you entered into life, the life that God gives through the second birth? If you turn to Him in faith this morning, He will give you life, that life that the Spirit of God offers, causing us to be born again! Remember that He has to give that life. You cannot work for it or buy it! Confess to Him that you are broken. Admit that you can't save yourself. Admit to Him that life isn't worth living on your own. But as you turn to Him in faith, He will give you life this morning, just as He promised.

This passage gives me tremendous hope but it also makes me desire heaven and that inheritance that will be mine as God's child! I hope these verses make you also, joyfully anticipate the salvation that is to be revealed at the last time!

Rom 15:13

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

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Blessed God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

Caused us to be born again

Born to a living hope

-according to His great mercy

-through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

Born to obtain an inheritance

-Imperishable

-Undefined

-Will not fade away

-Reserved in heaven for you

You who are protected by the power of God through faith

STUDY GUIDE FOR 1 PETER

Key Verse: 1 Peter 5:12 “...I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!”

Outline:

Greetings to God’s scattered people (1:1-2)

Salvation brings participation in the community of faith (1:3-2:10)

Born to a living hope (1:3-5)

Born to be tested (1:6-12)

Born to live holy (1:13-21)

Born to love your brother (1:22-2:3)

Born into a living organism (2:4-10)

Intrinsic responsibilities of God’s saints (2:11-4:11)

Living as aliens (2:11-25)

Living in God’s pattern for marriage (3:1-7)

Living in the church fellowship (3:8-22)

Living purposefully under suffering (4:1-6)

Living in light of the end (4:7-11)

Suffering and submission in God’s economy (4:12-5:11)

Suffering with Christ (4:12-19)

Shepherding under Christ (5:1-4)

Submission under Christ (5:5-7)

Salvation through Christ (5:8-14)

Conclusion (5:12-14)