

Living Hope and Abiding Joy

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Date: 22 May 2016

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[0:00] 1 Peter 1, verses 3-12 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating, when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you, in the things that have now been announced to you, through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Walter Mischel, a Stanford psychologist, conducted a classic study to measure the importance of delayed gratification.

[1:51] Many of you have probably heard of this experiment or seen redos of it on YouTube. To summarize the experiment, the researchers gathered children aged 4 or 5 and offered them a marshmallow, telling them that they may eat the one marshmallow immediately, or they could wait for a short time, approximately 15 minutes, until the tester returned.

If you look up the videos online, you can see the tortured expressions on the kids' faces.

Some of them eat the marshmallow immediately, others wriggle and squirm in an attempt to conjure up more patience, and still others lick the marshmallow without eating it, or take small, unnoticeable bites off of it.

After this initial experiment, a group of researchers tracked the children for the next several decades, and found that children who were able to wait for the second marshmallow had higher SAT scores, lower levels of substance abuse, lower likelihood of obesity, better responses to stress, and better social skills, among other things.

This groundbreaking study showed that the ability to delay gratification for a future reward is an important indicator for success in life. And just as delayed gratification is a key to success in this life, patient waiting for our future salvation is an important element of the Christian life.

[3:19] We endure the sacrifices and sufferings of the present day by keeping our eyes on our future reward. In this passage, Peter teaches us that the living hope of God's salvation gives us abiding joy in our suffering.

The living hope of God's salvation gives us abiding joy in our suffering. So first, I'm going to speak to you about this living hope. Secondly, I'll be addressing what the abiding joy we have.

And then lastly, I will speak of the revealing Spirit. So first, the living hope. Verses 3-5 of this passage is an exclamation of what God has done.

And verses 6-8 is an exhortation to live in light of that reality. Verses 3-5 speak of the living hope that is ours due to God's saving activity. And verses 6-8 speak of the abiding joy that should be ours in response to God's saving activity.

So first, let us focus on what is the character of the living hope that we have in God. Peter exclaims in verse 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For Peter, it is not enough to give an exposition of what God has done.

[4:31] He erupts in praise and exclamation for what God has done. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the reason is this. According to His great mercy, He has

caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. You see the what, how, and why of God's salvation all in this single sentence. What did God do? He caused us to be born again to a living hope.

Jesus has said that unless one is born again, he cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. In John 3, verse 3-5. The idea of the new birth highlights what a radical transformation it is to become a Christian.

It is not merely about changing a point of view or a lifestyle, but it is a complete change of the inner person that is akin to a second birth. This analogy of birth is significant because it conveys the truth that through Christ we are born again into the family of God.

We no longer merely have earthly fathers as our biological parents, but we now have a heavenly father as our spiritual parent. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is now the God and Father of us.

[5 : 46] We are His children. We are members of His family. And it is precisely because of our adoption into the family of God that we now have an inheritance, as it says in verse 4.

An inheritance, by definition, is given on the basis of heritage, not merit. And being the son of immigrant parents, I don't personally have much inheritance to speak of, but I have some friends who own quite expensive real estate properties that they could never afford now, but they inherit it from their parents or grandparents.

In the same way, by virtue of being members of God's family, we have an inheritance, the salvation that has been effected by Christ and awaits its consummation.

This is what God has done. And how did God do this? He accomplished our new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

By uniting us to Christ through His death and resurrection, God has made us dead to sin and alive to Christ. This is how we were born again to a living hope.

[6 : 54] It's because Christ rose from the dead and gave us new life that we now have a living hope. Our hope is not dead or dormant or merely potential, but it is living because we have been made spiritually alive in Christ.

So, what God did was to cause us to be born again to a living hope, and how God did this is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Then, why did God do this? It says in verse 3 that it was according to His great mercy. Not according to His justice, not according to His fairness, but according to His great mercy.

Titus chapter 3 verse 5 says that God saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy.

Mercy, like grace, is understood in contrast to our works of righteousness. That means we were not saved by our own righteousness, but by God's mercy.

[8 : 01] We received salvation not as a wage for our works, but as God's free and generous gift. God saved us, not because we were more holy than others, or more sincere than others, but because God is merciful.

In verses 4 to 5, Peter describes the living hope that we have in greater detail. The inheritance that constitutes our hope, it says in verse 4, is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

The three adjectives with negative prefixes accentuate the permanence and sureness of this inheritance. It is imperishable, not subject to damage or loss.

It is undefiled, not subject to impurity or uncleanness. It is unfading, not subject to wear or decay. And to top it all off, it is kept in heaven for you.

Only that which is kept in heaven can be considered truly secure. Because as Jesus enjoins us in Matthew 6, 19-20, Because this inheritance we have is kept in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal, we know that it is permanent and eternal.

[9 : 42] An economic crisis can take our home away, our food away, our security away, but it cannot take the hope of our eternal inheritance away.

Sickness can bereave us of our loved ones and cause unimaginable grief here on earth, but it cannot take the eternal hope of our inheritance away.

Moreover, it is not only that the inheritance is being kept in heaven for us now, but this inheritance has been kept up to this point. The verb kept is in the perfect tense.

So more literally, the verse reads, We have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, having been kept in heaven for us.

This has in view what Peter said earlier in verse 2, that we had been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

[10:41] The inheritance we have, our salvation, has been kept in heaven for us by God from eternity past. This truth fills me with so much wonder and gratitude.

Can you picture our loving Heavenly Father just keeping and safeguarding for us from eternity past our glorious inheritance in Christ? Further, it's not only the inheritance that is kept in heaven for us, but we ourselves are by God's power being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

As it says in verse 5, When we are now members of the family of God, with God as our Father, When we remember the inheritance that we have, the salvation that will soon fully be ours, that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, having been kept in heaven for us.

When we realize not only that our inheritance is being kept by God Himself, but that we ourselves are being guarded by God's power like an impenetrable fortress. We can't help but exclaim with Peter, O blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

O blessed be God our Father. I pray that your hearts well up with praise and blessing to God when you reflect on this truth. So this is the wondrous living hope that we have.

[12:35] Then, in verses 6 to 8, Peter moves from exclaiming about our living hope to exhorting us to have abiding joy in response to this hope.

He tells us that the living hope of God's salvation gives us abiding joy in our suffering. It says in verse 6, In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

This verse offers two comforts to believers who are suffering. First, our various trials are momentary. It's only for a little while, especially compared to the eternal life, salvation, and glory that await us.

The present trials are but a short, temporary delay. Second, our various trials are necessary. It says we have been grieved by various trials, if necessary.

And why do we need these various trials? It says in verse 7, So that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[13:50] Our various trials test us and make our faith more genuine. And this tested faith is even more precious than gold that is refined in the fire, and results in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The words praise, glory, and honor all point to our ultimate vindication. Later in chapter 2, verse 6-7, Peter contrasts the shame that will come upon those who do not believe in Christ with the honor that will be given to those who believe in Christ.

The basic idea is that now, in the present world, in which we are beset by various trials, we may be objects of scorn, humiliation, and shame. But in the end, when Jesus Christ is revealed, we will be vindicated and receive praise and glory and honor.

It will not be unlike the vindication of a man like Keith Harward, who was falsely accused of murder and rape and was jailed for the last 33 years. 33 years.

But was declared innocent this past month on the basis of new DNA evidence. tears streaming down his face as he hears his not guilty verdict after 33 years of unjust punishment.

[15:06] The present suffering is momentary and necessary, and we will soon be vindicated. This is a source of great comfort for the Christian, no matter the travails and tragedies of life.

Conversely, this should cause great discomfort for non-Christians. If you are not a believer and are still unsure about what to make of Christianity.

Because even if you experience praise and glory and honor in this life, even if you find acceptance and prestige in this life, in the ultimate verdict of God, you will be put to shame.

If you are here today and you have not experienced this new birth in Christ, let me warn you sternly and plead with you warmly, do not settle for the false sense of complacency now.

Don't settle for the riches of this earth and miss out on the riches of heaven. Don't settle for health and longevity in this life and miss out on the vigor and vitality of eternal life.

[16:16] Don't settle for the love and esteem of men who are but dust and ashes and miss out on the love of the glorious and perfect triune God. The Christians, though taken as fools in this world, will ultimately be vindicated.

Peter continues his exhortation in verses 8-9. Do you have not seen Him? You love Him. Do you do not now see Him? You believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

What a beautiful description of the Christian life. Do we have not seen Christ with our physical eyes? We love Him. Do we do not now see Him?

We rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. In both the Old and New Testaments, the greatest commandment, the heart of the Christian life, is summed up as loving God.

We are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strengths. This is why the first part of our church's mission statement is to love God.

[17:35] Love for God is the identifying mark of the church. And this love for God has a twin in Christian joy. Though we do not now see Him, we believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

This joy, as we saw earlier, is rooted in the living hope that we have in our new birth through the resurrection of Christ. Remember the beginning of verse 6. In this, we rejoice.

Our rejoicing is rooted in Christ's redemptive work. And as we love God and rejoice in Him, we are obtaining the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

As it says in verse 9. Some of you may be asking, I thought I was already saved. What does it mean that we will obtain the salvation in the future? Well, in biblical understanding, our salvation is tri-perspectival.

It involves the past, present, and future. So in a real sense, we have already been saved. We have been justified by Christ and freed from sin's power.

[18:38] In this sense, our salvation is in the past. But we are also currently being saved. We are being sanctified by Christ and being freed increasingly from sin's power over us.

In this sense, our salvation is in the present. We also, and in addition to the present, we also will be saved. We will be glorified and eventually freed from sin's very presence.

This last sense is what Peter has in view when he says that we will obtain the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls. Our salvation is here already, but it is also coming later.

Our salvation has been inaugurated and it will later be consummated. So the living hope of God's salvation gives us abiding joy in our suffering.

But what if our hope disappoints us? What if our hope is just a foolish fancy? How can we be assured of this living hope that we have?

[19:46] We have not seen Christ and we do not now see Christ, so how then can we be sure that Christ will be revealed in the last time? To answer this question, Peter recounts the faithful of God throughout redemptive history.

Let's read verses 10 to 12 again to refresh our memory. Concerning the salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

The Spirit of Christ here revealed to the prophets of old that Christ would come, suffer, and be glorified in the New Testament age. And Christ did come.

He suffered and died on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven in glory. And this truth has now been announced to us through those who preached the good news by the Holy Spirit.

[20:59] And note the repetition of the word revelation, the revelation language throughout this passage. A salvation ready to be revealed in the last time in verse 4. The revelation of Jesus Christ in verse 7.

And here in verse 12, again, it was revealed to the prophets. Just as the former revelation was fulfilled, we can be assured that the coming revelation will also be fulfilled.

What God had revealed to the prophets of old has come true, and the fulfillment has now been announced to us. And because God's word had proved true before, because Christ did come to die and rise again for our salvation, we can now be assured that God's word will once again prove true. In addition to the repetition of the idea of revelation, the fact that the Holy Spirit is the agent of this revelation is also repeated.

So the Spirit of Christ, it says, revealed to the prophets of old that Christ would come, suffer, and be glorified. And this truth has now been announced to us through those who preach the good news by the Holy Spirit.

[22 : 05] And it's because the same Holy Spirit who spoke to the prophets that has now announced the good news of Jesus Christ to us, we can be assured of our living hope.

As it says in Ephesians chapter 1, 13 to 14, In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.

The Spirit that we have now is the guarantee of our inheritance. He is the firstfruits, the down payment, the guarantee of our future inheritance. So then, our hope is not empty or unfounded. It is based on God's promises fulfilled and guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. This fact highlights an important difference between mere optimism and Christian hope.

G.K. Chesterton writes in his book, *Orthodoxy*, The optimist wishing to defend the honor of this world will defend the indefensible. He will not wash the world, but whitewash the world.

[23 : 19] The optimist says everything will be okay when all indicators suggest that everything will not be okay. The positive thinking guru says ignore your failures, visualize success, replace negative thoughts with positive ones, it will make you happier.

Well, positive thinking works until it doesn't. It's complete garbage that you can make your future brighter by simply imagining that it's brighter.

Christian hope is nothing like such naive optimism. We don't simply imagine that pain and grief in this life don't hurt anymore or airbrush our sufferings and struggles. No, we fully recognize our brokenness, pain, and sin.

And yet, even still, we hope because we have a reason to hope. And this hope that we have is so amazing that even the prophets of old did not get to fully participate in it.

The good news that Christ saves us from sin and death is so amazing that even angels long to look into this reality. The word here is literally, the word to look here literally means to bend over to gaze.

[24 : 27] Angels are bending over from heaven trying to get a glimpse of the salvation accomplished by Christ. I began this message by telling you about the Stanford Marshmallow Experiment and the importance of delayed gratification and made the connection that Christians are also called to live with the view to their future glory and inheritance in Christ and endure present suffering with joy.

Well, some years later, the researchers at the University of Rochester replicated the marshmallow experiment with an important twist. Before offering the children the marshmallow, the researchers split the children into two groups.

They exposed the first group to a series of unreliable experiences. For example, the researchers gave the children a small box of crayons and promised to bring a bigger one, but never did.

They gave them small stickers and promised to bring a better selection of stickers, but never did.

Meanwhile, the second group was exposed to very reliable experiences. They were promised better crayons and got them.

They were told about the better stickers and then they received them. Well, you can probably guess the impact these experiences had on the marshmallow test. The children who had experienced unreliable outcomes had no reason to trust that the researchers would bring a second marshmallow, so they didn't wait very long to eat the first one.

[26 : 01] The children who had experienced reliable outcomes, however, were training their brains to see delayed gratification as worthwhile. As a result, the second group waited an average of four times longer than the first group.

brothers and sisters, our God does not renege on His promises. Our God does not back down on His word.

He is faithful and true and we know this because He sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to save us, just as He had promised.

So remember the great redemption that He accomplished in Christ, that the sinless Son of God died to save sinful humanity, that the only obedient Son of God bore God's wrath so that we, disobedient rebels, can be forgiven and reconciled to God and adopted into His family.

Christ has come for us. Christ has saved us. And when we remember the grace of Christ already revealed, we can have certain hope of the coming revelation.

[27 : 12] The living hope of God's salvation gives us abiding joy in our suffering.