

Sermon Brief

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Text: 1 Peter 1:3-12

Title: “A New Hope”

Subject: Peter describes the great salvation that is ours in Christ.

Complement: Our present suffering doesn't compare to our future glory.

Textual Idea: Peter describes our great salvation in order to encourage the suffering believers to stay the course.

Sermon Idea: Our present suffering doesn't compare to our future glory.

Interrogative: God deals in futures.

Key Points:

We can rejoice in our present trials because our salvation is...

1. ...secure,
2. ...tested,
3. ...and privileged.

What do I want people to know? I want people to know that in light of the security and glorious nature of our salvation, we can endure present suffering for our faith. Actually, this suffering serves to bring forth the genuineness of our faith bringing praise to God.

What do I want people to do? I want people to (1) trust Christ as Lord and Savior, (2) do a word study on inheritance in Scripture, and (3) remember while suffering that God deals in futures.

What need am I addressing? I am addressing the need to find hope in the midst of suffering.

“A New Hope”

1 Peter 1:3-12

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You all know what that is, right?! **(LCD) Star Wars!** I still remember heading down to the Berlin Turnpike back in 1977 to see it at Showcase Cinemas. It was an event! Such a great story line of this hero, Luke Skywalker, who saves the universe. Then when the next movie came out in 1980...something strange came across the screen right off the bat. Instead of Star Wars 2, the title was **(LCD) Episode 5: The Empire Strikes Back.** What?! Episode 5?! All of a sudden, we realized that we'd come into the story in the middle! Woah!!! A year later when the original movie was re-released, it had a new name: **(LCD) Star Wars: A New Hope, Episode 4.** There was this whole backstory that would be re-visited in future years, which would show how Luke's story was that of the birthing of a new hope. That's similar to what we find in our section of 1 Peter today.

Now last week, we began our study of 1 Peter which I've entitled, **(LCD) Alien Living in a Chaotic World.** We've got this space aliens theme going here! Essentially, Peter tells the people in Asia Minor that as believers in Christ, they are temporary residents of this world, a world that is aligned against them. The question is how does one live in that kind of situation? Peter began addressing that in the greeting we looked at last week by reminding them of who they are in Christ. They are chosen by the Father and empowered by the Spirit to be obedient servants of Lord Vader, I mean Lord Jesus, in this world!

Having reminded them of who they are, Peter then goes into one long, run-on sentence, ten verses long, that describes just how great their identity as God's chosen ones is. In a phrase, it's resulted in a new hope. And like in Star Wars, while that hope isn't quite realized yet, it's certain; and there's a whole backstory behind it. Let's look at this new hope for humanity. 1 Peter 1:3, *“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, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

The first thing that Peter does, as is typical in Jewish worship, is to praise, bless God. Typically that prayer would be *“Blessed are you Lord our God, King (Ruler) over all the universe...”* But Peter describes Him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This brings out a family theme. God is the Father of Jesus and all who believe in Him are also sons and daughters of God. Now in saying that, I'm not suggesting that we're equal to Jesus. Peter makes that clear by calling Jesus Lord. Writing from Rome where it was illegal to say that anyone but Caesar was Lord, a divine title in the ancient world, it's clear that Peter sees Jesus as part of the Godhead Trinity with the Holy Spirit. And as verse 2 said, we're called to obedience to the Lord Jesus. So His sonship is much different than ours.

Yet God is our Father and that is cause for praise for the one who has given us new birth into His family. The word here for new birth is **(LCD) ana – again and gennea – born:** born again. We are given new birth by God the Father - making us who believe His children. The word found here is rare, but the concept is very biblical. Jesus Himself spoke of the necessity of the new birth to the Pharisee Nicodemus, **(LCD) “Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”** It’s one thing to be born, as we all have been, physically; it’s another thing to be born spiritually. According to the Bible, we’re all alive physically but we’re born spiritually dead because of the sin we’ve inherited from Adam. This spiritual death keeps us from being able to experience life with God. It is the key to everything.

Peter elaborates on this new birth with four modifying phrases, **(LCD) we are born again ACCORDING to His Great Mercy, INTO a Living Hope, THROUGH the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and INTO a Perfect Inheritance.** Wow! There is a TON here! First of all, we are born again according to God the Father’s great mercy. The heart of God toward us is immense and vast. His heart is stirred up with compassion for us as His prodigal children. He longs to bring us back home into His arms even though we deserve to be punished for our sin and rebellion against Him. So out of His merciful heart, He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for our sin, to take it away. However, if Jesus had died and been buried and that’s all...it would have meant that death was stronger than Jesus. But it wasn’t! On the third day, the power of God vindicated the Son by raising Him from the dead! Resurrection! And with that mighty act, all who trust in Jesus as their Savior and Lord, exchange their inheritance in Adam’s sin with a new inheritance in Jesus’ victory! A new hope! And it’s all because of the mercy of God – He doesn’t give us the punishment we deserve; instead, He lavishes new life on all who would receive His Son Jesus. As N.T. Wright commented, **(LCD) “Becoming a Christian means that what God did for Jesus at Easter he does for you, in the very depth of your being.”** Have you? If you haven’t, do so right now. Pray with me. (Prayer)

If you prayed that prayer, if you surrendered your heart to Jesus, you’ve been given new birth. You’re a blood-bought, Spirit-filled child of God who’s been given a “living hope.” This is in the present tense which means it’s an on-going, never-ending state. This is Peter’s whole point. No matter what faces us, suffering, difficulty, trials, our hope is living and enduring – it never ends, and it’s guaranteed. Peter says we’re given an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. It’s eternally secure and, verse 4, *“kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”* The verb tense **for (LCD) “kept” is the Perfect Passive** which means that this guarding or keeping of our living hope, our eternal inheritance has already begun and is guaranteed to continue. And that’s because it’s passive - meaning it’s something done by God for us. We don’t keep ourselves, God keeps us. That’s why we can be secure in our salvation: it’s by God from start to end! No matter what comes our way on this earth, we’re shielded by God, this word is also in the Perfect Passive tense. I like how one commentator put it, **(LCD) “God will protect them not like a guard watching prisoners who will in the end be condemned when the judge gives his verdict, but like a soldier guiding and protecting people as they move through hostile territory toward the freedom of friendly lines.”** We’re aliens living in

a chaotic world, but God has guaranteed us that He will guide us safely home. We're in good hands with our Great God!

Now this doesn't mean we just lay back, put our feet up, and enjoy the view! Notice that verse 5 says that it's "through faith" that we're shielded. We actively trust God through this whole process. We acknowledge that only God can keep us, only God can shield us, only He can deliver us from our sin. Trusting in God is our part. We experience the wonder of our inheritance as we trust in Him. If we fall back into doubt or worry, we lose this sense of security. It's to this theme of our faith that Peter turns next, verse 6, "*In all this (everything we just went over in verses 3-5) you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*"

Here Peter acknowledges the trials and difficulties these people have been experiencing. The word for "trials" typically refers not to everyday issues like headaches and bills but to difficulties that arise due to being faithful to Jesus. It's the kind of stuff that the persecuted church endures. Peter suggests that they rejoice in the midst of these trials. This goes against our natural reaction to pain and difficulty...especially here in the comfortable West. Recently, at Fuller Seminary, after ISIS launched a series of deadly attacks against Egyptian Christians, some American students wanted to hold a memorial service. But the Egyptian students disagreed and said this is a cause for a celebration. They rejoiced that their brethren proved to be faithful to the end. Their value system is governed by their eternal perspective. Now don't get me wrong; they weren't celebrating suffering in and of itself; but they were rejoicing in the faithfulness of these ones whose faith was proved genuine.

Which is precisely Peter's point. He compares trials that come because of our faith to the **(LCD) refinement of gold**. It's subjected to the fire in order to remove impurities so that it can be useful. These trials do the same thing for our faith which is WAY more valuable than perishable gold. James says the same thing, **(LCD) "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."** And that perseverance will be rewarded as these faithful ones will receive praise, glory and honor from God when Jesus returns in all His glory. All of this is reason to rejoice in the midst of persecution. Now we may not face life and death for our faith here in Connecticut, but we still experience trials for our faith. When I worked at Travelers, the guys would go out at lunch time to an establishment that I knew had inappropriate things going on. They used to tease me, "Hey preacher boy, can't come, can you!?" It felt lonely being left behind...but it strengthened me and I had a deep sense of camaraderie with the Lord even in that little way.

Peter describes this intimacy in verse 8, "*Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.*" Even though we can't see Jesus, we love Him, we

believe in Him, and it brings a deep joy that words can't express. I hope you're nurturing this deep, intimate relationship with Jesus.

What's really cool is what Peter says in verse 9, *"for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls."* Notice that the verb "receiving" is in the present tense. It's actually a very special usage as this Greek grammar explains, **(LCD) "The present tense may be used to describe a future event, though it typically adds the connotations of immediacy and certainty. [It can also be] an event begun in the present time but completed in the future. (Example: John 4:23 "An hour is coming and is now here.")"** What this means is that we're ALREADY experiencing our salvation; not in its entirety, but it's here. The kingdom of God is "already, but not yet." We are aliens, citizens of the kingdom of God, and we already have access to some of the rights and privileges of that kingdom while in this foreign land called earth. We're not victims; we're more than conquerors which is why we can rejoice even now in trials.

Remember that last week I said that **(LCD) "The Lord deals in futures."** What Peter is saying is that we can bank on the future too because we've already got the deposit of that future in us; and that makes such a difference when we're distressed. Bob Japenga actually had an interesting insight into this saying. He made a **(LCD) comparison between what the market promises and what God promises. With the market, your monthly statement will say, "The performance data demonstrated represents past performance and is no guarantee of future results." But with God, He says, "The performance data demonstrated represents past performance and is a guarantee of future results."** Amen! The Lord deals in futures and those futures are bright! Rejoice!

Finally, like in Star Wars, Peter looks to the backstory of this new hope. Verse 10, *"Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things."*

Peter is talking the Old Testament prophets who wrote about the sufferings of God's Messiah. Passages like Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 that were written hundreds of years before Jesus actually suffered. He's saying that when they wrote that God's Messiah would suffer, they tried understanding it but couldn't. It was a glorious mystery, and it was revealed to them that all of it was for our benefit – those who would come after Jesus was revealed to be the Messiah. An example of this is Daniel, **(LCD) "I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand."** Daniel desperately wanted to know what he was prophesying, but it

wasn't for him. It was for us – it's our privilege to have this insider knowledge that's now been made clear through the preaching of the gospel that I shared earlier.

Notice too that the same Spirit that inspired the Old Testament prophets is the same Spirit that works through the evangelists of today. That guarantees the accuracy of what's being preached, and it speaks to the power of the gospel. It changes lives as the Spirit brings forth new life in all who receive it. I hope you have. And if you have, share it! What a privilege to uncover for others what Daniel longed to know. In the nutshell, that glorious message is (LCD) **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** Most people have lost hope in whatever they've invested their life in. They need to know about this new hope that available to all who believe in Jesus. Let's share it!

Lastly, Peter adds that *“even angels long to look into these things.”* I love that! It's interesting that the angels are kept in the dark too. That was a common Jewish belief actually, (LCD) **“According to some Jewish traditions, some secrets were so important that God kept them even from angels until the end time; in other traditions, angels respected rabbis' esoteric teachings and came to their lectures to listen; in still other traditions, angels envied Israel, who received God's law.”** So picture the angels in heaven standing around the heavenly water cooler taking a break from serving humans and guessing what God is up to. Before Jesus came, they would have been trying to figure it out, “How's God going to fix the mess down there?” And then, they see it! God shows up as a human baby!! What?!?!? Mic drop!! Now they're wondering how God is going to complete this whole plan of salvation. Love it! Again, this shows the incredible privilege we have to both know and share this good news.

So how do we wrap this all up? First, let me review all that Peter's described, our (LCD) **believer's benefit package, like when you start a new job.**

- **Complete forgiveness of sin**
- **Made a son/daughter of Father God**
- **Given an eternal, living hope**
- **Given a perfect, inexhaustible inheritance**
- **24/7, lifelong protection from God**
- **Limitless joy regardless of circumstances**
- **Constant, intimate companionship with God**
- **Participation in heavenly glory now and forever**
- **Privileged access to divine mysteries**

Wow! That my friends is much greater than any 401ks or bonuses! Lastly, let me summarize all this with (LCD) **my main point: we can find hope in our present trials because our salvation is secure (vv.3-5), tested (vv.6-9), and privileged (vv.10-12).** Chuck Swindoll described an eight-day trip he once took to Canada as being incredibly frustrating. The reason is because he only had two days supply of clothes...and that was because his luggage was sent to Berlin, Germany! The good news is that that won't happen with our salvation! All who trust in Jesus have a secure hope that will never perish, spoil or fade. Amen!