

# A Living Hope Through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

by John Piper

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*This sermon focuses on the living hope Christians have through the mercy of God and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It emphasizes the new birth experience, the basis of hope, the future inheritance, and the present experiences of faith, love, joy, sorrow, and being kept by God's power.*

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 1:3, 1 Peter 1:4, 1 Peter 1:5, 1 Peter 1:8, 2 Corinthians 6:10

**Topics:** "Living Hope", "New Birth in Christ"

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## Transcript

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has, in His great mercy, caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And unto an inheritance, imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you are grieved by various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold, which though perishable is tested by fire, might redound unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. And even though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with inexpressible and exalted glorified joy, receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 3 through 9. And the reason I recited it for you instead of reading it to you is to make this point.

At 69, I need the Word of God in my mind and in my heart daily more than I ever. More than when I was 19 or 39 or 59. Psalm 119.

How shall a young man or an old man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to Your Word. I have stored up, I have treasured up, I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You. So let me ask you, how do you keep from sinning each day? What's your strategy to make war on your old or

young sinful heart? What's your strategy? How do you go about killing sin? Or put it positively, what's your strategy for day by day maintaining a living passion for Jesus? Here's one biblical strategy.

2 Corinthians 3, verse 18 goes like this. Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being changed into His image from one degree of glory to the next. Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being changed into His likeness.

You are changed into a sin-fighting Christ-like person by seeing Him. Second question, if that's the strategy, where do you see Him? How do you fix your gaze on Him if that's the strategy, if that's the way it works? If you get changed by watching Him, looking at Him steadily, beholding His glory so that it starts to go in you and change you, where do you see Him? There is one answer. The Word.

1 Samuel 3, verse 21. The Lord appeared to Samuel at Shiloh by the Word of the Lord. That's an amazing statement.

Appeared. The Lord appeared to you. The Lord will appear to you by the Word of, so I know of no other way to live the Christian life than to store this up in here and in here so that all day long, every day, the Holy Spirit has something to set on fire when He touches it.

He touches it. And the Word blazes with Christ, with the sight of His glory. And you see Him as preferable to pornography.

You see Him as preferable to money and power and fame. You see Him and He's preferable. He's infinitely valuable.

Why? Because a Word has been touched by the Holy Spirit. It has flamed with His appearance in your heart and you have become more like Him. So if that's the key to living the Christian life, to fighting sin, to having a passion for Jesus, to making a difference in the world, then we need the Word of God.

And so I ask you, if you have a Bible, to open it to 1 Peter 3. I recited that text because that is our text. 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 3 through verse 9. Verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 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.

Now the focus of this message is on that phrase, living hope. Let's read it again. So you see where that comes in the verse.

According to His great mercy, I'm picking it up in the middle there, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection from the dead. And Peter assumes every Christian has been born again. And he assumes that everyone who's been born again has a living hope.

So if you're a Christian, you've been born again. That's how you got to be a Christian. Even if you can't remember it, which I can't.

It's okay. You know you're alive today, not because you have a birth certificate, right? I'm breathing! I'm alive! I love Him! I am alive! You don't need to remember how you got into that glory. But everybody who's a Christian has been born of God again from the first time and have a living hope.

That's what it says. We have been born again unto a living hope. So you have all, if you're a Christian, been born again.

And if you're a Christian, you have a living hope. And I have three questions about the living hope that I think the text answers. Here are my three questions.

So what I want, I want you all, believers, to know your living hope. Where did it come from? What's the basis of it? That's the first question. What's the basis of your living hope? Second question.

What is the future experience of this living hope that we are hoping for? What's coming? And third, since it's a hope now, and I've been born now, what is the present experience like of having a living hope? Those are my three questions. What's the basis of it? What's the future experience of it? What's the present experience of it? And I am assuming, as we go to this first question now, what is the basis of your living hope that Peter wants you to know that? I'm assuming he wants you to know that. Here's why I assume that.

There are three answers given to that question in verse 3. I assume he wants you to ask the question and answer it, since he gives the answers in verse 3. And the other reason I assume it is because of a verse that many of you know. Chapter 3, verse 15. Always be ready to give an answer or a defense to those who ask a reason for the hope that is in you.

That's 1 Peter 3, verse 15. So can you do that? So you're walking out. Somebody puts a microphone.

They're doing a little, you know, Easter NPR interview of various worshipers. This is all about hope, right? Why do you have hope? It's in your face now. Can you do that? Would you do that? Okay, I would like you to be able to do that when we're done.

Okay, that's why we're asking what's the basis of it? Peter wants you to know for your own soul, and he wants you then to be able to talk about it with other people. So what's the answer to the question what's the basis of your hope? Let me just name them first so you see them right there in verse 3. Number 1, the first basis of your hope is new birth. It says we were born again to a living hope.

Born to a living hope. The hope started in the birth, right? Born again to a living hope. The hope wasn't there before the birth.

This event called the new birth gives rise to the hope. So that's number 1. Second answer. We'll come back to these and say more.

Second answer. God's great mercy. Blessed be, are you with me in verse 3 still? Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to His great mercy.

He caused you to be born again to a living hope. So first foundation, new birth. Second foundation, great mercy in God.

Third, 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.

No resurrection, no new birth. No new birth, no hope. Therefore, no resurrection, no hope.

So now we've got three statements of where your hope, this living hope is resting. What's the basis of it? You were born again. Underneath your new birth is great mercy from God and He did it through the resurrection from the dead.

Let's think about each of those for just a moment. Let's start with mercy because it's where everything starts. It was there before new birth was there.

It was there before the resurrection was there. So let's start there. When you think about your hope and new birth resting on great mercy, how does that affect you? It should have a very humbling effect and a very strengthening effect.

Mercy. That means that there's not a person in this room or anywhere else who deserves to be born again or to have hope. You do not deserve a living hope.

It came from mercy. So a neighborhood fundraiser for the band, say, at the school rings your doorbell. Kids got boxes full of candy bars and they're going to charge you \$2 for the candy bars because they're raising money for their school and they say, would you help us raise money? \$2 for the candy bar.

And you take a candy bar out and give the kid \$2. Zero mercy has happened there. But if you look with compassion upon these kids trying to raise money for their band and you take one candy bar and give them \$15, that's called mercy.

They don't deserve 13 extra dollars. You just feel generous. You feel that way.

That's who you became at that moment. That's God towards us. You are born again, not because there's a sticker price on you and he paid it.

He didn't. He went infinitely beyond the sticker price. There was no sticker price.

You're deficit. So the meaning of by great mercy, you've been born unto hope which means all your hope is by mercy. All your hope and new birth are by undeserved kindness which should fill you with a sense of great confidence.

I didn't earn this. It was free. That's what he's like.

And I'm just thinking of your church and what a sweet thing it is when a church is filled with people who know everything they have is from mercy. Changes the way you talk. Changes the way you treat each other.

Changes everything around the dinner table. Changes everything in board meetings. Changes everything in worship services.

When everybody is looking at everybody else saying I don't deserve anything. Don't deserve your friendship. Don't deserve you to be nice to me.

Don't deserve the sweetness of this worship. Don't deserve a family of believers. Don't deserve life.

Don't deserve breath. Everything I have, especially my living hope, is free from mercy. Changes everything.

Second, the resurrection. We are born again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. How does that work? How does the new birth come about through the resurrection? The new birth is something that happens in here.

The resurrection is a historical event 2000 years ago. What does he mean? Born again through the resurrection. Born again through the resurrection to a living hope.

I think it works like this. When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, invades us to cause us to be born. A new person is coming into being.

What he does is unite us to Christ. There's a verse. I'll read it to you.

This is Romans 6, 5. If we have been united to him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united to him in a resurrection like his. That's Romans 6, 5. Here comes the Holy Spirit. Here's Christ risen through the resurrection.

Here's my dead soul. The Holy Spirit does this miracle. He unites so that now the death that Christ experienced is counted as my death.

My debt is paid. My punishment is experienced. I've been to hell and back.

It's over. I don't have any judgment in front of me. So his death counts for me.

And I'm united to his life. My life is hidden with Christ in God. Colossians 3, verse 1. So in union with Christ, the indestructible life that Bill prayed over, the indestructible life, that he can never die again, is mine.

Hence, living. So I think that's how it works. The new birth is the point where that union happens.

You become united to Christ. His death counts for yours no matter sin. His life counts for yours so that you are with him forever in an indestructible life.

That's the second foundation, namely Jesus Christ risen from the dead, me united with him, and now the third. Let's bore in a little further on the new birth. So mercy of God, resurrection of Jesus, new birth, three foundations for living hope.

Here's a word about the new birth. It says, according to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope. Now everything I just described about the new birth is subconscious.

The miracle of that mysterious union of your soul with Christ's life, you can't see that. That doesn't feel any particular way. That was it.

It just happened. That was it. You put your finger on it.

So my question is, what do you experience in the new birth? That's subconscious. What do you experience? What do you feel? What's it like to be born again? Let's put it this way. Over in chapter 3, verse 15, always be ready to give, to make a defense, to give an answer to the one who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you.

And one of the reasons is new birth. What are you going to say to them? They're going to say to you, why? What's the difference? I mean, what happened? Once upon a time, you didn't have the least interest in Jesus. You didn't care about religion.

You were not a religious person. And now, you're one of these weirdos. You sing and you read your Bible and you don't sleep around anymore.

What happened? What did you experience? Talk to me about it. I want to understand what happened. Here's an illustration.

The real question is, once you were doubtful and disinterested, and now you've got a conviction that you're going to die for, how did doubt and disinterest and who cares become, this is true. I'll die for this. How does that happen? I mean, that's really amazing.

That's strange to go from, I don't care, I doubt, probably mythological. Weirdos do that to, I'll die for this. What happened? Now, what was it, Thursday, Al-Shabaab in Kenya, what's it called, the Garrison University.

You all read about this or saw it on television. So, the terrorists come into this university early in the morning on Thursday, and they kill 147 students. If you read behind the headlines, you know they were asking, as they went from dorm room to dorm room, are you a Christian or are you a Muslim? The Christians were shot dead immediately.

We live in the Twin Cities, which has been a pretty fertile recruiting ground for terrorists, which means that it is totally within the realm of possibility, that before I'm done, some black hooded person or ten would just walk right in there, shoot me dead, stand in front of you, say don't move, and then just walk right down the aisles and say, are you a Christian? Pew! Are you a Christian? Pew! Are you a Christian? Pew! That's just totally conceivable. So, my question is, where did you get the conviction that at that moment would not waver when they asked you? Or do you have it? This is what the new birth is about. Here's what happens in the new birth that you experience.

So, the person who's got the microphone out there in your face or some friend tomorrow says, what'd you do yesterday? It was Easter. What's Easter mean to you? And they want to know a reason for the hope that is in you. You would say something like this, I think, according to what the Scripture teaches about the new birth.

You would say, I know that once upon a time it all seemed quite boring and irrelevant and untrue to me, but once I heard the story, I heard that there's a personal God, I heard that He created the world, I heard that we humans have all become sinners and rebels, I heard the story that He sent or He came Himself in His Son and He lived a perfect life and He died as the God-Man to save sinners so that we don't have to die. He rose from the dead and He's sending His Holy Spirit. He's going to come again.

He's gathering the people. I heard that story and something happened. Not with these eyes, there was no shout, there was no light, there was no thunderclap.

I saw the glory of God in that story. I saw Him. I saw the beauty of God.

I could no longer go away. I was riveted. I was taken by the beauty of the Christ of that story.

That's how I was born again and that's why if they say Christian or Muslim, I'm not going to waver. Christian, bam, paradise. You don't have to be able to explain it.

In fact, you can't fully explain it. It says in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 6, the God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. What? You hear the story and different from all other times, as you're looking at the Christ of the story, light comes in and you're looking and you say, you're magnificent.

You are self-authenticatingly awesome. You are not to be imitated. Nobody made you up.

You're real. And I'm arguing that kind of knowing, the light streaming in, the light's going on, the glory of Christ being manifest to you is the only kind of knowing that will keep you from wavering as they point the gun at you. Because if you have the kind of confidence that is based on your parents' faith, tradition, historical arguments and inference, logical deductions, you know what your soul is going to do at that moment? It's going to say, my parents could be wrong.

I could be wrong. I could have made, the tradition could have messed up or I could have made some historical mistake. Maybe it's a mistake.

Because you want to live. Maybe my mind's not so logical after all and all my deductions over all the years were just a little bit off. Waver, waver, waver.

Why? To see is to know. That's how you know. The Gospel is spoken, you look at the Word through the Word stored up, through the Word, and you see the glory of God in the face of Christ.

That kind of knowing is like knowing there's light outside. Is there light outside? Argue for that there's light outside. There's no argument.

There's light outside. That's what these are for. And that's what Paul calls them, the eyes of your heart are for.

These in chapter one. So those are the three answers to the first question. What's the basis of your living hope? The basis of your living hope is the mercy of God.

It's where it all flows from. Totally undeserved. The resurrection of Jesus so that you are caught up into His indestructible life and this miracle by which the eyes of your heart are open to see the self-authenticating glory of Christ in the Gospel.

Second question. What do you hope for in this living hope? The first question, what's the basis? Second question, what is the future experience of your hope? And the answer is given in verse four and then expanded in verses seven and eight. Let's start in the middle of verse three so we get the flow.

You were born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Here it is. To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you.

So the word inheritance means future. It's coming. So to be born again is to have an inheritance secured for you and then He gives three words to describe the inheritance and all the three words are meant to make the inheritance feel durable.

It will be there and it will be there forever. So the first one is imperishable, have no fear, it will never disappear. Don't worry, it's out there but it will not fail you.

It will be there. Second one, let's go to unfading, the last one. Unfading, have no fear that the inheritance would become less glorious.

Like oh, it's just gonna, I used to fear as a kid that heaven would get boring. Might start exciting but after a million years, goodnight, it will be unfading. If anything, brighter and brighter as our eyes are capable of more and more forever.

And then thirdly, undefiled, no sinfulness in it, no defect in it, nothing to jeopardize its greatness and your inheritance. So it'll never end, there's nothing defective, it will never ever fade. But let's be more specific down in verses seven, verse seven in particular.

This is almost too good to be true but it's Easter so we should be pushed. Verse seven, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes though it's tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Here's my question for you.

Is that praise, glory and honor your praise? That is, you're being praised, you're being honored and you're being glorified or is it Jesus' praise? He's being praised, he's being glorified, he's being honored. And you think, just looking at the flow of the thought there, that's all we've got to go on here. There's no voices can tell you this.

If you get a voice, you don't belong in this pulpit. I get no voices. What I get is words that you can look at which means I can be tested.

Okay, so look at it. My answer to the question is this is praise of you, honor of you, glory to you. Which for me as a real God-centered lover of the glory of God, I have to take a deep breath and say, well, that sounds a little man-centered, but we believe the Bible and believe systems.

Why do I think that? I think it because, look, the comparison is being made between the genuineness of your faith and gold, right? The image is there's fire, there's gold that's got some dross in it. That's your faith and the genuineness of your faith. And how's the dross going to be burned up? He's going to put it through fire.

You've been through fire as a church. You've been through fire, every one of you, if you're older than 15, you've been through fire. What's fire about? What's the testings of this life, these various trials? It's like fire.

What is the fire supposed to do? It's supposed to make the gold come out of the other end so that you praise it and honor it and glorify it. That's our faith. That's the picture.

That's the way the thought works. So he's actually saying, what is it that you have to hope for? Well, there's this inheritance and it's undefiled and it's imperishable and it's unfading. And as you enter it, guess what? Heaven is going to praise you.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4, 5, then each one of you will receive his praise from God. I mean, that's not even open to question. That's just what it says.

1 Corinthians 4, verse 5, then each one of you will receive his praise. I know it says commendation in the ESV, watered down. It's praise.

Each one of you will receive praise from God. It goes the other way, thank you very much. I'm going to praise him.

Yes, you are. Yes, you are. You will not be the one praising you.

Not by anything. You will be praising God and what you praise him for is mercy. And in mercy, he's going to be saying, Well done, good and faithful servant.

And you will scarcely be able to believe it. Almost too good to be true. If it helps, remember what the gold is.

What's the gold? The gold is your genuine faith. The genuineness of your faith is being tested with fire. Out the other side of the testing comes genuineness.

You have some terrible loss in your life. Where is the church? You have some awful blow to your life. It threatens your faith.

You wonder why. Where did he go? What happened? And you hold on and two, three, four years later you come out and you're stronger and Christ is more precious and more real. That's going to be praised.

That's what's going to be praised. God's going to smile upon that faith that came through hell, that came through fire and did not throw God away. Which means that what's being praised is Christ exalting faith.

Christ loses nothing when Christ praises faith in Christ. That's the answer to question number two. What do we have to hope for in this living hope and inheritance that will never let us down and when he comes and brings us into it there will be this amazing festival by which of course he is center stage as we praise him for his mercy but oh how he will look with praising, honoring, glorifying favor upon your tested faith.

Don't give up. Last question. What's it like now to experience this? So the second question was what will the future experience of living hope be like? And my question now is what's the present experience of living hope like? And there are five answers given in this text and I'll just name them quickly and you enjoy them.

Number one. We experience faith. Verse five.

Being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Verse eight. Though you do not now see him you believe in him.

So you're guarded through faith and though you don't see him you believe in him. So we are believing, we're trusting, we're resting in Christ in our living hope. Second.

We love him. Verse eight. Though you have not seen 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? I mean we say oh it would have been great to see him.

And Peter's already writing to people who've never seen him. He knows that's the way it's going to be for all the years until Jesus comes. All the people who believe are believing through the words of the apostles.

So though you don't now see him you love him. You cannot love someone you have not seen or do not know. There is a seeing that makes love possible.

Total ignorance of a person makes love meaningless. If you say I love Joe and they say tell me about Joe you say I don't know Joe. That's meaningless.

Love is response to what you know. And in the new birth we have been shown his infinite value. And that's what it means to be born again.

Jesus has become your supreme treasure. You now see him as different, more than money, more than sex, more than fame. That's what happened in the new birth.

Eyes went open in the new birth and Christ became precious and now you love him. You love him at Redeemer. I hear it in the songs.

I see it in faces. You're here. He's precious to you.

Third, joy inexpressible and glorified. Verse six, in this you rejoice. That is in this keeping that God does of you and in this inheritance that I just mentioned.

In this you rejoice. And then verse eight. Though you do not see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy inexpressible and filled with glory.

Or literally glorified. That's amazing. When we're seeing him as we ought and it goes up and down.

We're not naive. Joy rises and falls. Some days are intense days and other days are more flat days.

But on our best days, when we're seeing him as we ought, our joy is, we can't put words to it. That's what inexpressible means. And what does it mean that the joy is glorified? That's the literal translation.

Our joy now is glorified. Receiving, present tense, not just in the future, the salvation of your souls. I think it means that we know we're going to be glorified out there.

Redound them to praise and honor and glory. We're going to be glorified out there. And that streams back in to inform our joy now so that we taste, now we taste by faith and in hope the glory that God is to us and will put within us and that is coming into being as we're being transformed into one, into his image from one degree of glory to the next.

Number four. Fourth experience presently. Sorrow, grief.

Verse six. In this you rejoice though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by these fiery trials. These various trials.

I have a verse that sustains me much. 2 Corinthians 6, verse 10. Sorrowful yet always rejoicing.

Sorrowful yet always rejoicing. That's exactly what we have here. These are simultaneous.

In this you rejoice though now for a little while you are grieved. It's not, oh, joy goes away, grief comes. No, no.

That's not what it says. That's not what the Christian experience is. Grief comes into joy, makes joy more difficult, more complex.

The moment where grief is getting in the upper hand, joy doesn't look like joy. There's tears and sobbing. But, oh, it is there.

In a world that's fallen with al Shabab happening virtually every day in one form or another and a world in which Jesus is raised from the dead, God is merciful, and we are born again to a living hope, there will always be joy and sorrow all the time in one soul. If you try to carve your life up and say, I've got happy days and sad days, you've got a big problem. Of course you have sad days.

Like every day. Or you must not be watching the news or praying for your kids. Every day is a sad day.

And every day is a happy day. We have reason for sadness every day, and we have better reasons for gladness every day. So I take these together.

In this you rejoice being grieved. In this you rejoice being grieved. And number five, we are being kept.

Look at verse five. I love this verse. I put this verse on my mother's gravestone.

I love this verse. I use the King James Version because that's what she would have wanted. The verse says in the ESV, who, by God's power, are being guarded through faith for salvation ready to be revealed.

Do you see the wonder of how verse four and five are connected? I just love this connection. Verse four says, there is an inheritance being kept in heaven for you. And verse five 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 or its failure. I'm totally into keeping you and keeping it so that your hope is absolutely unshakable. I just love that.

So I put on my mother's gravestone, kept by the power of God. Because that's what the King James says. Kept.

She was kept 56 years. Car accident. Kept by the power of God.

I'm 69. One of the things I exult in most is He kept me. He's kept me.

But like I began, there are disadvantages of growing old and real advantages. One of the disadvantages is your mind isn't quite as sharp in the sense of memory and focus. That's dangerous spiritually.

You lose focus on Jesus, you lose memory of His word, you're a sitting duck for the devil. We need to help each other. Help the older people in this church.

If they can't read anymore, retune them. Retune. If I go to the hospital and you come visit me, retune me the Bible.

Or quote me the Bible. Okay, I'm done. Close it like this.

Redeemer, you have a living hope. That's the point of this message. You have a living hope because God is great in mercy.

Because Jesus is raised from the dead. Because you have been born again unto this living hope which is an inheritance that will never fail you. It will never be defective in any way.

It will always be perfectly suited to satisfy you forever. And now in this present time, you believe Him, you love Him, you rejoice in Him. And maybe best of all, He is keeping your church.

And He's keeping. Father, we are so thankful for the Word of God. We're so thankful for Your mercy.

Thankful for the resurrection of Jesus. Thankful for the new birth that burst into our lives. Even when we can't remember how it happened when we were six or whenever, we're thankful for the present experience of hope and joy and love and keeping.

And we're thankful for that inheritance. Apply that now. Open the eyes of everyone here to see and enjoy this amazing living hope.

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