

1 Peter 1:3-5 “A Living Hope”

Pastor Bruce Zachary

Thesis: In the midst of a health and economic pandemic, our sense of hope can be challenged. Nevertheless, Jesus’ followers have the greatest reason to be full of hope. Since Jesus rose, we have a confident hope, even as we experience all the struggles of COVID-19. Let’s consider Jesus’ resurrection, our living hope, and experience a living hope together.

Subject: Jesus’ Resurrection

Object: Experience a living hope

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1. God provides a living hope in Christ [3]

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In context, Peter was writing to struggling people looking for hope in the midst of intense difficulty. He begins, *Blessed be God*, or praise to God for *His abundant mercy* that He *has begotten us* referring to our spiritual birth. We are born-again to a *living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection was just as the prophets foretold so that we could know that God the Father had accepted Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. So, we could be forgiven of the sins that separates us from God, given spiritual life, and experience a living hope because Jesus lives. God provides a living hope in Him that transcends the greatest challenges and struggles of life. On Good Friday, when Jesus gave His life for us so that we could live with God, everything seemed hopeless [Lu. 24:21], but Sunday came. His followers soon encountered the resurrected Jesus, and proof of His resurrection beyond a reasonable doubt. Peter is reminding these struggling believers that their hope is alive because Jesus lives.

Hope in Jesus is the only hope that will never fade because it is based in Christ who can’t get any better and won’t get any worse. Your hope is only as sure as the object it is placed upon. The coronavirus pandemic has shaken every place where our world was likely to place its hope. Governments, wealth, health care systems, personal ability, family, friends, career, achievement, and our own perceived super powers are exposed as inadequate by this existential crisis.

Following Jesus produces selfless, content, and hopeful people. This living hope is our present reward to encourage us even in our worst struggles which are temporary and brief compared to eternity with Christ in Paradise.

2. God provides a sure inheritance [4] to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. We have been given a new life, hope, and inheritance that are sure, because Jesus' resurrection is proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

Our heavenly inheritance is *incorruptible and undefiled and doesn't fade away*. This inheritance is *reserved in heaven* for Jesus' followers. The inheritance is secure, can't be stolen, won't diminish. We are joint heirs with Christ [Rom. 8:17].

The blessings of heaven cannot be corrupted, compromised, or in any way threatened.

On the other hand, during the outbreak of COVID-19, people around the globe discovered how quickly our earthly treasure and inheritance could be compromised. Stock market declines, wage and job losses, fear of recession and depression came upon us with incredible suddenness. In the Sermon on The Mount, Jesus taught us that earthly riches are unsure and unreliable [Matt. 6:19-21].

Jesus urges his followers to lay up treasure in heaven, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also [Matt. 6:19-21]. Your heart follows your hope, because that tends to be your greatest treasure. Our retirement planning is generally too short-sighted. We tend to focus on perhaps up to thirty years. It is wise and prudent to save for retirement as the Bible teaches us [Prov. 6:6-8].

As a follower of Jesus you add to your heavenly treasure every time you sacrifice time, talent, and treasure motivated by love for God and others. Imagine before the pandemic, being at an event like sports or a concert at a huge stadium with a hundred thousand people. The fact that you got a seat is awesome compared to the people who didn't get in. Especially in this case where the people who are out are separated from God forever in torment. Nevertheless, there are some people who are sitting in the nosebleed sections, and others who are in the front row, or with backstage passes and their experiences are wildly different, and that difference will be experienced for eternity. That is why your heavenly treasure should be the focus of your attention. Where your treasure is that's where your heart will be.

3. God provides the power to live for Him [5]

Jesus followers are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Remember, Peter was writing to people experiencing intense hardship who were wondering if they were going to make it. He encouraged them that they are being kept by *God's power*, the same power that raised Christ from the dead and created the Universe.

It is like a parent with a small child crossing a busy street who says, “Hold my hand.” It is not dependent upon how tightly the child can hold on, but always about the parent holding on, however the child needs to receive the parent’s hand and want to walk together.

The power to experience God’s *salvation*, our living hope in Christ, and heavenly inheritance, is *through faith*.

Faith is hearing God speak and responding with acts of obedience and attitudes of dependence as you commit to follow Jesus. As soon as you make that decision, God forgives all of your sin that separates you from Him, gives you spiritual life, and puts Jesus’ righteousness on your account. Once you’ve begun your journey with God, He provides the power to live for Him.

As you grow in your faith through Bible learning, prayer, experiences with God, genuine relationships with other followers of Jesus, worship, serving and giving, you’ll discover that Jesus makes order out of chaos by re-ordering our loves. As we learn to love Him supremely, and love our families, friends, and neighbors like we love ourselves. Our growing faith produces a living hope in the risen Christ, and a focus on our heavenly home and sure inheritance.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. How does the truth of Jesus’ resurrection change how you’re feeling about the current struggles?

Q2. How does knowing your heavenly blessings are sure make you feel?

Q3. How might you lay up treasure in heaven in this coming season {The Ultimate Retirement Plan}.

Q4. Describe a difficult time in your past where God provided the power to live for Him.

Digging Deeper:

1. Read Luke’s Gospel account of Jesus’ resurrection [Lu. 24]. What did you learn about God, yourself, and hope?

2. Here is a brief video from Josh and Sean McDowell regarding the evidence that supports the Christian Faith. I have found all their resources, whether free or not, very valuable

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0kxFRokbCE>