

# What do Christian outsiders have going for them?

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[ 0 : 00 ] It would be great if you could have your Bibles open at that passage. There's nothing like having God's Word in front of you when you're hearing it taught. is so much better, I think.

So do get that open. Let's pray. Lord God, Heavenly Father, we simply, simply ask that you would open our eyes to see wonderful things in your Word today.

Amen. Amen. Now when I say the phrase Christian persecution, what pops into your head when I say Christian persecution?

I bet it's something a little bit like this. Someone far away getting killed for their faith. But for most of us, that's not the case, is it?

That's not our story. What I want to say that we face is subtle suffering. Subtle suffering.

[ 1 : 06 ] A few commentators have put it like this. It's not a risk to your life. It's a risk to an easy life.

Now most of you will know that I used to be a secondary school teacher in a school a couple of years ago. And in the start from sometimes that kind of subtle suffering that I face personally kind of came in the form of like patronising comments.

These are real things that people said. Oh come on, James isn't going to get that joke. He's too innocent. He's too innocent to understand that. Oh so you follow everything in the Bible, do you? Oh, even the kind of weird stuff. Right, okay. It's only because it's socially unacceptable that they didn't kind of really sort of lay on thick in that moment.

But what do you think they're thinking in their heads? You're a bit of a weirdo. You're a little bit backwards. I bet you felt this as well.

[ 2 : 13 ] You know, not violent persecution, not violent suffering, but subtle suffering that makes you feel like an outsider. Now at school maybe you're not in the group because you choose to live for Jesus.

Maybe in the office you kind of have that feeling where you're only a couple of words away from being cancelled. Perhaps people see you as the kind of weird Jesus one in the family. People kind of avoid you at Christmas gatherings because they know you're probably going to try and talk to them about Jesus. It's subtle. And it's suffering. Because it makes you feel like an outsider.

Now being an outsider is a situation of this book of 1 Peter, verse 1, last week. And we saw that they are exiles, foreigners, outsiders.

And they'll feel it, not because of the sort of violent persecution that comes. They're not there yet. They will get there. They're not there yet. But because of what we read in this book, slander, sidelining, insults.

[ 3 : 29 ] Have a look at this. I'll just read this from verse 4. It says, unbelievers are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless wild living and they heap abuse on you.

That's the kind of suffering they're facing. It's not nice being an outsider, is it? It's not nice to feel like you are on the edge, not wanted, not kind of included or part of something.

Not able to get far in life. And when that happens long enough, you start to kind of wonder, have I got anything going for me at all?

Have I got anything going for me? Where's my future here? I'm an outsider. Do Christian outsiders have anything going for them? Well, in one sense, we're all outsiders if we're Christians here today. But the Holy Spirit is at pains for us to know. You might feel like you've got nothing going for you. But really, in Christ, you have everything going for you.

[ 4 : 42 ] That's the message of this part of 1 Peter. You have everything going for you. What do we have? Well, firstly, Ian's been really helping us to see this.

We have hope. We have a sure future. A sure future. Have a look at verse 3 in your Bibles. Chapter 1, verse 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 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

Now, outsiders normally don't have a future. But for Christians, we do. A living hope.

A sure future inheritance. You know, an inheritance, what is that? The Old Testament talks about God's people having an inheritance, a plot of land for the promised land.

[ 5 : 46 ] For us, the new creation, a plot on the new creation. Seeing Jesus, sins forgiven, eternal life, seeing Jesus. And in a sense, we kind of know this, right?

We know that we've got the new creation coming, but we don't always feel it, I don't think. So he drives home the certainty. Firstly, the inheritance itself is sure.

Have a look at verse 4. And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Now, isn't it true that everything in this life has a sell-by date, doesn't it?

Houses lose their value, or they could just burn down. There's not an investment that you might kind of... People trying to get you to invest in things on TV, there's adverts.

They've always got a bit of small print at the bottom. What do they say? At your own risk. They try to make it sound sure, but it's always a risk. There's no risk with the inheritance that Christ has secured for you.

[ 6 : 55 ] It's imperishable. Why? Have a look at the end of verse 4. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you. It's in heaven. This world perishes, that world doesn't.

Heaven is eternal, so it will never fade. You know what I picture here? I picture a bank safe with millions of locks on it. You know those ones you kind of see? I think they're real, aren't they? I've seen them in the films, but they are real.

But it's got your name on it. Imagine that with your name on it. Kept in heaven for you. Safe until you receive it.

So it's sort of like a time capsule. I know kind of primary schools love doing things with time capsules and burying them in the ground. It's one of those things that they always do. And I wonder how many are still in the ground, and they haven't been dug off and they've been forgotten about.

But our inheritance is a time capsule that's waiting for us, that we will receive, that won't be forgotten about. Imperishable inheritance.

[ 8 : 00 ] But it's not just the inheritance that's sure. This is interesting. You are sure to get it.

Have a look at verse 5. Verse 5. You who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed.

Can you see that? You who through faith are shielded. God guards you. Often the worry isn't, will heaven be there?

But will I make it? Here's the answer. It's not your grip on God that secures you. It's God's grip on you.

You are shielded. You are guarded. You're held by the almighty God and his power. Even though it's through faith.

[ 9 : 02 ] He uses our faith. But he holds us. You see that? I know he's holding us so tightly, in fact, that even the subtle suffering, even the big trials as well that we face in this life, well, they can't knock us off course getting our inheritance.

Have a look at verse 6. Verse 6. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith, have a look at this bit, of greater worth than gold, which perishes, even though refined by fire, even gold perishes. Your faith may result in praise, glory, and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Here's the big point here. It says lots of things, but even gold can't stand the fire eventually.

Because gold is really imperishable, right?

But the faith God gives you is even more imperishable than gold. It withstands the fiery trial.

[ 10 : 11 ] Someone I know, I trust, put it like this. It's a really good illustration, actually. Imagine you see those kind of, you know those time-lapse videos? You sort of see like a, imagine an apple in a bowl, a fruit bowl.

And you also imagine a gold ring in that fruit bowl as well. Now over time, that fruit, that apple is going to get very furry very quickly, okay? Now you'd have to be filming that gold ring for a very long

time for it to see it perish, to disintegrate.

But the point is, it will perish eventually. It will disintegrate eventually. But do you know what will outlive even gold?

Your faith. The faith God gives you will never perish. The faith that God gives you is a genuine article. And it's proved to be because it stands up to trials.

You see that? It comes through the fire. And it's proved to be genuine. That's what the verse says. I'm sure you've all, you can all look back on a point in your life where you thought, how on earth did I get through that as a Christian?

[11:23] How did I get through that trial? That pain? That job loss? That health scare? That flack you got for being a Christian, that subtle suffering? Well, it was God guarding you.

The faith that he gave you that keeps you going. On the last day, God is going to get all the glory so that it may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

So perhaps you're, as a Christian outsider, you're seeing things slowly fade away from you.

Opportunities, relationships, your reputation, money, career, a good comfortable future for yourself. Because you're a Christian, you make sacrifices.

But listen to one Peter. Your future in Jesus will never fade away.

[12:35] All the world can offer us is gold. Even that faith. Jesus offers an inheritance that is sure.

And you will get there. You will get there. But is it just, is it just future?

I mean, what about the now? What about the now? So, I was thinking about this. When Immy was in labour, she was having daisy. I'll try and kind of comfort her. And I would do my best. But it wouldn't be very good.

I'd probably say something like, you know, don't worry. In 24 hours, you're going to be holding daisy. It's going to be all right. And I'm sure it kind of helped a bit, right? But mostly the response I got was, ah!

There's a bit of hope. And that's good, right? But it doesn't always do that much for the moment. Is that what being a Christian, a Christian outsider is like?

[13:39] You know, only good because of what I've got later. You know, I've just got to grin and bear it now. It's a bit rubbish now. I've got this thing, but it's rubbish now. Well, for the future, for the Christian, a bit of a future bleeds into the present.

A sure future that blesses us now. Verse 8. Look at verse 8. Though you have not seen him, you love him.

And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him. Look at the tense of this word. I'm excited about the tense of this word. You should be too.

You believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. For you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

This is a God-given illustration, okay? The other day I came home. I didn't talk about this passage at all. And Daisy, just randomly out of the blue, blurted out, But mummy, I can't see Jesus!

[14:54] So cute. But what do you say to that? This is what Peter says. I know you can't see him now. I know you haven't seen him yet.

But if you trust in him, you can have a real relationship with him. You can know him. And you can have inexpressible joy in him now.

It doesn't say you will receive. It says you are receiving. The central part of our inheritance, the Lord Jesus. He's the centre of everything that we're looking forward to, isn't he?

Well, he's someone you don't see yet. But you can know. You can know. You can know him. And enjoy him. Just to clarify, I'm not being a heretic.

So because it is a little bit heretical to say all of our future comes into the here and now. And Peter's not saying that. But Peter is saying some of it does bleed into the now.

[16:00] The kind of smell of bread, cooking in the oven. It's a foretaste. You know, a free supermarket sample. It's not the whole thing. A foretaste. A foretaste. Now, if you're not a believer here today, well, firstly, you're really, really welcome.

We love it when you come here, when you're not maybe part of our group. It doesn't matter. You're really welcome. But perhaps all this sounds a little bit unbelievable, actually. You know, inexpressible joy now.

Knowing someone you can't see. That's kind of imaginary friend territory, isn't it? But please talk to a Christian here after the service.

Okay, I'm sure they will tell you. I can tell you. I've felt this recently. You know, amid a trial you might have faced, amid a subtle suffering, tears, the grief, there was real relationship with a real person on offer.

We felt his presence, for real. We had a deep-seated joy, even, that no one could explain. Amy went to a funeral last week, and I kind of told Amy that I didn't really want to talk about the funeral much, because it was a funeral for, it's really, really sad, for a newborn.

[ 17 : 25 ] And you might have experienced that, and I can't imagine how awful that is, what the parents are feeling even now.

If you don't have Jesus, you just feel like you just have nothing left, wouldn't you? But do you know what Amy noticed? Well, she knew these parents are Christians.

They're believers. They still grieve. They're probably going through the worst season of their whole lives. But they know Jesus.

And do you know what Amy witnessed at that funeral? A grounded hope. You can't get anywhere else. Only in a Christian funeral can you end on the hymn, It is well with my soul.

Unimaginable grief, but still able to hold it all together. And they've got access to the Lord Jesus. Access to joy. Amidst that trial.

[ 18 : 29 ] Amidst that suffering. You can't get anything like that without trusting the Lord Jesus, can you? The world cannot offer you anything like that. No hope comes close to that.

I think that kind of one-dimensional gloss of the Christian life. It's sort of suffering now and it's glory later.

That's kind of true. There's something to that. But it doesn't quite cut it. No, we are obtaining a bit of our future salvation now. By faith, we can know.

We can love. We can enjoy Jesus himself. In a way, the Lord Jesus is more real than anything we see.

But it's just veiled. There's a curtain. It's ready to be revealed in the last time. So in a sense, how can we not get to the end of what we've seen Peter say here and say, who wouldn't want to be a Christian?

[ 19 : 30 ] This is where he goes in that last kind of big chunk at the end. We'll just look at it very quickly. 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, trying to find out the time and the circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointed when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

Verse 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 to 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. I've heard it said of this passage, you know, if the Old Testament prophets had a time machine, where would they go? Where would they choose to go? I mean, where would you choose to go if you had a time machine? Who would you kind of want to be or hang out with? What part of time history would you want to grow up in?

Well, here's what Moses and Elijah would say. I'd give anything to see your day. I'd give my right arm to be a Christian with the Spirit.

[ 20 : 43 ] I'd long to see the day where you could know for sure that you have a future inheritance because it's guaranteed by the Lord Jesus and what he's done on the cross and his resurrection.

I'd give my right arm to have that future bleed into the present. Glorious joy despite suffering. This is the best time in history to live.

So here's the question after all this. Now, as a Christian outsider, maybe you're experiencing trial, that subtle suffering we talked about in this book, the patronising tone, the sidelining from the friendship group, the judgement you get from people from following the hard bits of the Bible, the pressure to join in, the threat of being cancelled by your friends, your family, the people you love, the underhanded insults, the real fear that you feel that you could be the person who kind of does lose their job, maybe, being a Christian.

Holy Spirit says this to you. Do you realise what you have? Do you realise what you have?

This is not a passage where we go away and we do loads of things. This is a fill the arm around you. Do you realise what you have in the suffering?

[ 22 : 25 ] You think you're just a marginalised nobody. You think you've got nothing going for you. But look at that. A sure future to bless you now.

I saw a story online this week, a story like quite a lot of ones that you might have heard before. A guy called Felix Knoll, a student at Sheffield University.

He was a Christian and he was having a discussion with another Christian online, defending another Christian. So we had a conversation with a non-Christian.

And just one comment he made, which is enough for it to kind of cross the line, it's enough for him to get cancelled, he upheld the clear Christian teaching in the Bible of homosexuality.

He said, it is a sin. That's what he said. Just one comment. A couple of words. And he was removed from his university course.

[ 23 : 29 ] He tried to appeal it, he didn't get the appeal. He's now an outsider, maybe feeling like he hasn't got a future. Now picture this, I wonder if you put a really, really rich person, imagine someone like Bill Gates or something, one of the richest men in the world, next to Felix, okay, I wonder how most people would compare them.

Well, let me tell you how Jesus would compare them. One of them is incredibly rich, has everything going for them, someone who you'd love to have what they have.

And the other one, the other one is Bill Gates. Christian outsider, you have everything going for you. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, what a comfort this passage is for us, the assurance that it offers, that we have an amazing future ahead of us, we have everything going for us, even though it feels like sometimes we don't.

Lord, help us to know that we can know the Lord Jesus now, yet we don't see him. Father, we pray that we would come to the wells of joy and knowing Jesus.

[ 24 : 58 ] We would enjoy him forever. We would enjoy him through trials. Thank you, it's the best time in history ever to live. We pray that in Jesus' name.

Amen.