

Sermon: A New Hope

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Preacher: Dr. Wes Feltner

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Some of you know that through tears. Some of you know that through experiencing all the sinking sand of life.

And the only rock that remained was Christ. We're in a new series. This is just kind of a mini-series before leading us up to Easter.

And then we'll come back to the Sermon on the Mount series after Easter. But it's called All Things New. And what we're looking at is three specific passages that deal with the resurrection and how the resurrection brings about something new or establishes something new.

[1 : 44] Last week we were in Hebrews and we looked at a new and living way. That we have a new and living way to approach God and to come before God. The big idea of this series, let's put that on the screen.

The big idea of this series is this. It's that because Jesus is alive, we have a new way to live. Because of the resurrection, we have an entirely different way of approaching life.

And tonight what we're going to look at specifically is a new and living hope that we have because Jesus is alive. And we're going to look here at 1 Peter 1 and we're going to read verses 3-9.

And so if you are able to stand, would you please do so as we honor the reading of God's Word. 1 Peter 1, verse 3.

Peter writes, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He's caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[2 : 51] To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and 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 have been grieved by various trials. 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 the 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 and the salvation of your souls.

We need six months to teach all of that, right? But let's pray and ask God to teach us tonight from His Word. God, thank you for this opportunity now to learn more about the hope that we have because Jesus is alive.

I pray that your Spirit would come and guide us into truth and that whatever baggage we brought in, whatever discouragement we brought in, whatever season of life we may be in, that this would speak a word to us, a word of hope, and that, God, you would fill us by your Spirit and your truth.

[4 : 15] In Christ's name we pray. And God's people said, Amen. Amen. You may be seated. Hope for a lifer is exhausting. Those were the words of a man by the name of Edwin James in an article that he wrote to the Guardian.

Edwin was describing his experience as a prison inmate as he struggled in prison with hopelessness and purposelessness as he served his time.

Here's what Edwin wrote. Quote, As a lifer now on parole, I remember all too well the struggle to find a reason to get out of bed in the morning.

In the beginning, for 23 hours a day, all I had was a bed, a table, a chair, and a bucket for a toilet. My future was a long, dark tunnel.

There were moments when I stared at the bars on my cell window and considered a swift end. But blessed or cursed, with a strong will to live, I kept going.

[5 : 25] You see, on prison wings, lifers are the walking dead. You're alive, but you're alive. You're alive. But you're not living.

To further make his case, Edwin went on with these following examples in his article. He described a man in a UK prison with a minimum of 30 years for murder. That man wrote to a national newspaper for prisoners this.

Quote, I won't get out till 2043. By then, I won't want to get out. I'll probably commit a minor offense just to get free bed and board.

I'll be 66 years old. I'll have no money, no friends, no house, no possessions. What purpose will I serve? Edwin told the story of a convicted mobster who served 17 years of his life sentence.

And 17 years in, this man wrote the Italian president this. Quote, Can you change my life sentence to a death sentence?

[6 : 33] Because I am, quote, tired of dying a little every day. And guess what, Faith Family? Another 310 prisoners signed his letter.

Hope for a lifer is exhausting. His article reminded me of one of my favorite movies, Shawshank Redemption.

How many of you have seen it? Show of hands. Such a good movie. If you've ever even turned on TV, you've seen it. It's like on 17 channels at the same time. One of the main themes of Shawshank Redemption is holding on to hope when it feels like you have no future.

You remember Andy Dufresne, played by Tim Robbins, is falsely convicted of a murder and he's sent to Shawshank where hope goes to die. His friend Red, Morgan Freeman, constantly tries to convince Andy to just accept his fate and give up hope.

[illegible]

[8 : 11] Andy, let me out! Andy? Andy? I have no idea to this day what those two Italian ladies were singing about.

Truth is, I don't want to know. Some things are best left unsaid. I like to think they were singing about something so beautiful it can't be expressed in words, and makes your heart ache because of it.

I tell you those voices soared, higher and farther than anybody in a gray place dares to dream. It was like some beautiful bird flapped into our drab little cage and made those walls dissolve away.

And for the briefest of moments, every last man at Shawshank felt free. Faith Family, have you ever found yourself in a prison of hopelessness?

Have you ever found yourself trapped where the walls were shrinking in on you? That's what hopelessness is. A hopeless person is someone whose world has shrunk.

[9 : 28] Everything has been narrowed down to the present situation. They feel trapped in some type of prison. They've lost all perspective of future reality. They're unable to see, listen, they're unable to see how their situation is going to be anything different than what it currently is.

And if that goes on very long, it becomes exhausting. Have you ever been in a prison of hopelessness? Maybe it was a hopeless marriage where you felt like there was no future.

Maybe it was a hopeless situation financially where you were convinced there was no way you were going to get yourself out of that. Maybe it was a hopeless medical report where you were informed there was no cure.

Faith Family, I remember, goodness, what, some 17 months ago, fall of 2019, wondering if God had any future for me.

Hope and hopelessness momentarily began to slip in. Have you ever been there? Those of you online, I know you've been there, right?

[10:35] What about y'all? You've been there. You've experienced that. And if you know that feeling of hopelessness, these first century believers to whom Peter is writing knows exactly how you feel.

Their walls have shrunk in on them. They had waited and waited and waited for the Messiah, and the Messiah finally came and life was now going to be as life was supposed to be.

Only a few years into his ministry, he dies. And their walls shrink in again. But three days later, he's risen from the dead. And finally, life is going to be how it's supposed to be.

Except then he leaves. And he says, I will return. And so they wait, and they wait, and they wait. And while they're waiting, they begin to become the target of persecution.

They're then scattered throughout all the neighboring lands. Faith Family, listen to me. I'm not making this up. This is real life. These people to whom are reading this letter, they've lost their families, networks, jobs.

[11 : 41] The Jewish leaders and Roman officials that killed Jesus wanted to kill them. Their religion has become illegal. The emperor blames all the natural disasters on them.

And many of them are being killed for their faith. And the walls of life have shrunk in on them. And they are in a prison of persecution. And they are fighting for hope.

And Peter writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And with the help of Silvanus, according to chapter 5, he writes this letter reminding them, are you with me tonight?

You have a different way of approaching life because of the risen Christ. Even though you feel like you are trapped in this prison of hopelessness, this prison of persecution, you don't have to live without hope.

Verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he's caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

[13 : 07] What Peter is doing in these verses is he's expanding their perspective. It's like that image in Shawshank, when they're standing there in that prison yard, and they're just scanning back, and they're looking at an entirely different perspective than their present life.

That's what Peter's doing here. He wants these believers, and he wants us to see the big picture of the hope that's ours in Christ.

He starts with the foundation of our hope. The foundation of our hope. That is, Peter wants these Christians, along with us, to know what our hope is based on.

What it's grounded in. In fact, he not only wants you to know this, Faith Family, he wants you to be able to share it. He wants you to be able to give a reason for the hope that you have.

Look at what he says in chapter 3, verse 15. But in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the what?

[14 : 13] For the hope that is in you. Why do you have hope? Why, though it feels like you're trapped in a prison, are you a person that's hope? How would you answer that question?

If I came up to you tonight and I said, what is your hope grounded on? What's it founded in? What's the basis of why you are a hopeful person? What would you say?

That's what Peter is giving us here. And he gives us three foundations in these opening verses that we just read. The first of which is this, new birth. So what's the grounds of our hope?

The first is new birth. Peter says, he's caused us to be born again to a living hope. Verse 3. That is one of the reasons that you have hope as a Christian.

You ready? Because you have life. Do you know why you as a Christian have hope? Because you're alive. And I don't mean alive physically. I mean, you've been born again.

[15 : 12] Christian, you've got hope in your DNA. Is anybody awake, right? It's in your blood, baby. Like, to say the phrase hopeless Christian is the same as breathing corpse.

It doesn't make any sense. It's a contradiction in terms. There is no such thing as a hopeless Christian because a Christian has life.

You've been born again to a living hope. Now, that's not to say you always feel this way. But it's true regardless of your circumstances.

Notice this on the screen. Faith family, your hope is alive because you're alive. You have been born again. You have been given new life in Christ.

So if somebody asks you, why are you so hopeful? You say this, I have life. I've been given life. I'm not a dead person walking. I am alive in Jesus Christ.

[16 : 21] Second foundation of our hope is not just new life, but the mercy of God. Peter says this new birth happened according to God's mercy.

Verse 3. Meaning, you have hope not because you deserve hope. You don't have hope, Christian, because you earned hope.

No, you don't have hope because God owed you hope. Here's why you have hope. God was merciful to you. Amen?

You don't amen that. I will kick you out of here, alright? What's wrong with you? The only reason we have hope is because the mercy of God in our life.

The hope that you have in Christ you didn't earn. And He didn't owe you. He gave it to you because that's the kind of God He is. Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 2, verse 12.

[17 : 23] Remember, you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

In other words, there was a time you didn't have hope. But now you have hope. And why do you have hope? Because you have life. And why do you have life?

The mercy of God. This is the foundation. It's the basis for your hope. The third foundation here in this verse is not just new life.

It's not just the mercy of God. But thirdly, it's the resurrection of Christ. And this is our main emphasis here because of our series. Peter says, through, you have this living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That is, your hope is not only based on the fact that you are alive and that God has been merciful to you. Your hope is based on the fact that Jesus is alive.

[18 : 31] Right? That means the only way your hope dies is if Jesus dies. And the last time I checked, He already faced death and won. So notice this on the screen, Faith Family.

Your hope is alive because Jesus is alive. So are you a hopeful person? If you're a Christian, the answer is yes.

Even if you don't feel like that. Even if your circumstances tell you something different. Even if the opinion of others says something otherwise. You have hope. Why? Because you have life by the mercy of God in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now, technical question. How does the resurrection of Jesus give me new life?

It says you're born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Or maybe I'd ask it this way. How does a historical event do anything to you? Okay?

[19 : 32] Right? Jesus was resurrected. Amen? Two thousand something years ago. How does that historical event do anything to you now?

How does it create life in you now? How does this work? Okay? And so I thought about how do I illustrate this? And a lot of my illustrations are very simple. Okay? And usually I get done with a sermon.

I'm like, I don't even know why I did that. But there's usually a visual learner that's like, okay, that made sense to me. Imagine that you're a dead light bulb. The Bible says that you're not just a bad person.

You're a dead person. Okay? The wages of sin is death. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. So how does this dead life become alive?

Okay? Let's look at a few verses here. Right? I'm not going to throw this at you. Look at Romans 6, 5. For if we have been, what? United with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be, say it?

[20 : 38] United with Him in a resurrection like His. Okay? Colossians 3, 1. Look at this. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

2 Corinthians 5, 17. Therefore, if anyone is, say those two words, in Christ, he is a new creation. So the answer here is this.

The way our new birth happens, which is part of the foundation of our hope, is that when you as a dead person are given faith by God to trust Christ, to put your faith in Christ, and the Holy Spirit then unites you, and by the way, if this doesn't work and I commit heresy, don't burn me at the stake.

Okay? So we don't do that anymore. But when your faith is united in Jesus Christ, it worked! Ah! Like, there was no life in you.

You were just simply united with the resurrected one. So when Jesus Christ was risen from the dead, He is life. Amen?

[21 : 50] So when you put your faith in Him, you're united to Him, and as soon as you're united to Him, boom! New life! You become alive.

And the fact that you are becoming alive, let's turn that off, right? Is the basis of your very hope. That's so much bigger.

And I'm not trying to minimize anything that you're going through right now, but the financial situation that you're in. You've got to step back and see big picture everything that is yours in Christ.

Peter says, you're taking it on the chin. Brothers and sisters, you're being run all over the place. In fact, the first few verses tell you where they're scattered.

But he's saying, you need to praise God. Blessed be God. Why? Because He, according to His mercy, has caused you to be born again to a living hope through the risen Christ.

[22 : 54] You with me tonight? So, here's the summary. Jesus is alive. And when you are united to Him by faith, you come alive.

That happens only because of God's mercy. And it means you'll never be without hope. That's good news. And so, now I hope you're able to answer the question if you weren't already.

Why are you a hopeful person? This is the foundation of our hope in God. Now, Peter doesn't just want them to know and us to know the foundation of our hope.

He wants them to know the future of their hope. Look at verse 4 and then verse 7. He says, So, again, that's future focused.

So, again, that's future focused. Peter here is scanning out from his readers, from their present situation, to remind them, not only of what they have in the moment, but what's being kept for them in the future.

[24 : 18] It's like the scene in the movie Ants. If you've ever seen that movie where you're following this story all along and it's a colony of ants. And there's a worker ant that falls in love with a princess ant and tries to save the colony and all from this evil general and all this.

But then this is how the movie ends. You've been following the story and all the details of the situation and caught up in the narrative and emotionally involved. And then at the end, it just starts to scan back and scan further and further back.

And all of a sudden you begin to realize that this story that you've been consumed with, this story that you have been occupied with, is actually a small story that exists in the broader story of Central Park.

This one little story actually belongs to a much bigger story. Do you get that image? That's exactly what Peter is doing here.

In fact, Scripture frequently does this with our lives. In the Old Testament, God often puts their story inside the Exodus story.

[25 : 34] The larger salvation story of God. This is the same thing as the New Testament. Putting your struggles and your suffering in a broader picture of salvation.

And Peter says that your future hope is imperishable. That is, it's not going anywhere. It's undefiled. There's no defect in it.

It's perfect in every way. It's unfading. It won't get less glorious over time. Have you ever gotten something you really wanted to get and then just after a while you're like, eh.

You know, you get a swimming pool. Who has a swimming pool in Minnesota, right? You know, but you get a new car and you're like, this is the best thing ever. And after a few years you're like, yeah, it's just a car.

Listen, your future hope will never get less glorious. There's never going to be a time where you're going to be like, oh, the glory of God again. Never, ever is that going to happen.

[26 : 38] The inheritance that is yours in the future that is being held for you is unfading in glory. Amen. And it is kept for you, meaning it is totally and completely secured.

Christian, you have a guaranteed future. And that is meant to provide comfort for you in your present suffering. Let me give you an example of this in the apostle Paul's life.

This is out of 2 Corinthians 4 verse 16. We do not lose heart, though our outer self is wasting away. Our inner self is being renewed day by day.

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. That's the big picture.

That's the broad picture. This eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. Now, what did that future overshadow?

[27 : 43] What did that picture overcome in Paul's perspective? This, 2 Corinthians 11 verse 24. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews forty lashes less one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times shipwrecked. A night and day adrift at sea. On frequent journeys and dangers from rivers and robbers. My own people from Gentiles.

Danger in the city. Danger in the wilderness. Danger at sea. Danger from false brothers. In toil and hardship. Many a sleepless night. In hunger and thirst. Often without food. In cold and exposure.

And apart from other things. Are you kidding me, Paul? Other things? There's the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. You thought your life was hard.

Try being a pastor. This is the job description of pastoral ministry. Right? No, no, no. Stop for just a minute. Okay, now I'm being a little sarcastic. It's my spiritual gift. But let's be serious for just a moment.

[28 : 42] The same man that went through all of that. Now let's be honest. Listen. There are people in here I know who have lost loved ones. And I have sat there with you and talked with you about that.

I have seen and experienced and discussed with many of you the real pain you have been through. But would you not acknowledge that Paul went through a fair bit?

He went through a fair bit. Life wasn't easy for him. But he never lost sight of the eternal weight of glory that is beyond all comparison that he was certain was his in Christ.

Four of you were excited. Man. Do I need to turn the light bulb on again? Like this is what Peter is saying and Paul's the example of it is that man, the prison of persecution and the prison of pain is real in life.

And no one would ever minimize that. But Christian, you got to like step back from the little ant colony that you're in and see brother, sister, you are a part of an incredible salvation story.

[30 : 03] That isn't going to isn't going to fade in glory that's kept for you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Are you the type of Christian that can live now in light of the full perspective of your hope in Christ?

Let me ask that again. Are you the type of Christian that can live now in light of the full perspective of your hope in Christ? Well, we're going to start the second service tonight at nine o'clock.

I've got more I want to share. Grrr. I'm going to have to jump to the third point. All right. There's more I want to say here, but I'm going to have to jump to the third point.

Peter doesn't just give the foundation of our hope. Right. New life, mercy of God, resurrection of Jesus Christ. He doesn't just talk about the future of our hope. Look at all of that that guarantees your future at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[31 : 10] But I'm going to jump here because I don't want to rush through the last point tonight. And that's the fruit of our hope. The fruit of our hope. I want to give you in closing five quick things, five things that hopeful people experience in their present reality.

OK, so so here it is. Peter saying life stinks for you. And I'm not softening that. I'm not belittling that you are running for your life.

You have been scattered into all these different lands. Some of you are alone because you have been separated from your friends and family. And the fact that you have identified with Jesus Christ puts a bullseye on your back.

This is real. But you're not without hope. Because hope is in your DNA. By the mercy of God and the risen Christ.

And it may hurt bad now. But there is an eternal weight of glory that's guaranteed to be yours. And what you're going through now doesn't even come close to what you'll go through for eternity.

[32 : 18] In the glory of God. So in the meantime, here are five fruits. It's not a word, but five fruits of your hope that you ought to see being expressed in your life.

Let me give them to you. Number one is faith. Number one is faith. I'll read the verse just very quickly in verse five. Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Verse seven says, so that the tested genuineness of your faith. In verse eight, he talks about you've not seen him, but you love him. You do not see him now, but you believe in him.

That is, you have faith. Hopeful people live by faith. People of hope are people of faith. They trust God far more than they trust their emotions, far more than they trust their circumstances, far more than they trust other people's opinions, or far more than they trust the news.

Amen, right? I knew I'd get an amen on that. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, according to the book of Hebrews.

[33 : 31] So, if you are living in your living hope, which is grounded in the living Christ, one of the fruit of that will be trusting God in your now.

Secondly, it's not just faith, but love. Verse eight says, though you have not seen him, you love him. This love that I'm talking about is love of God.

Hopeful people not only believe God, they love God. Because they treasure God far more than they treasure this life or the things of this life. You may not have the life you want.

You may be in a situation right now you do not want to be in. But guess what you do have? God. And you love him. More than any other better circumstance you might have.

That's how hopeful people live. Thirdly, is joy. Faith, love, joy. I take this from verse six. In this you rejoice. Verse eight says, though you have not seen him, you love him.

[34 : 42] Though you do not now see him, you believe in him. And rejoice with joy. I love that. You rejoice with joy. That is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Hopeful people are joyful people. Amen? You're able to rejoice, not in the suffering, but in the salvation that is still yours, even though you suffer.

And so your suffering doesn't take your joy away because you are a person of living hope. And why are you a person of living hope? Because hope is alive. His name is Jesus.

Y'all with me? Faith, love, joy. Now I'm going to get you on this next one. You're going to say, say what? Number four, sorrow.

What? You just said joy. Now you're saying sorrow. Prove it. Well, it's in the text, verse six. And this makes such a great point.

[35 : 44] Listen. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials. Give me just 30 seconds to preach for just a moment.

Because some of you are saying, what do you mean? Hopeful people grieve? Hopeful people are sorrowful people? Absolutely. By the way, we just did a series in the Beatitudes that said, blessed are those who mourn.

Hopeful people grieve. And though this sounds like a contradiction, it actually coming off the heels of joy is a parallel we need to hold.

And here it is. Every day for a Christian is a joyful day and a grieving day. You say, how can that be? Here's why. It's a joyful day because Christ is alive and you have new life and God has shown you mercy.

Can you rejoice in that every day? Amen. So every day, every day is a joyful day. And at the same time, every day is a sorrowful day.

[36 : 52] Why? Because life is not how it's supposed to be or one day will be. It's why Paul writes to the Thessalonians and says, you grieve, but you do not grieve as those who have no hope.

Hope. Hope. Which means a hopeful person is able to go about their day rejoicing in the things that are worth rejoicing in.

And grieving the things you ought to grieve. If though for a little while you are grieved by various trials.

And do you know why I love that? Do you know why I want to push the second service back? Do you know why I want to spend more time on this point? Because I think far too many times we as Christians think that hopeful people are only the people with a smile on their face.

And it may mean the most hopeful people are the ones with tears running down their face. Because they grieve. But they don't grieve as those who have no hope.

[38 : 05] What does this hope look like? It looks like faith and it looks like love and joy and sorrow. And then lastly is endurance. Endurance. He says you are kept.

This is kept in heaven for you. And by God's powers being guarded through the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Hopeful people keep on moving.

Hopeful people keep on moving. We have all been in situations where the easiest thing to do was to quit. But hope won't let us. Amen? Man, the older I get the more convinced I am that life is a series of events that knocks you to the ground.

Whereby you have to demonstrate you have hope in God. I'm going to leave you tonight sincerely. I'm going to leave you with this idea. I want you to think on this phrase right here. Endurance is a series of resurrections.

When I wrote that I was like, there's so much in that. Like just ponder on that. Endurance is a series of resurrections. Here's what I mean. If my living hope is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, then the only response I have when life puts me in a grave is do what Jesus did.

[39 : 19] Rise! So when you walk out this week, you can clap for that, right? I mean, if you're going to clap, clap. This golf clap.

This ain't the masters, everybody. This ain't the masters, everybody. All right? Like when you go out and like, man, financially, boom, you get put in a grave.

You go out relationally, boom, you get put in a grave. Well, your hope is in the one who got out of a grave. So get up. Because he's guarding you.

He's keeping you to the end. So hopeful people keep moving. And my guess is we've all been there, haven't we?

Where we got kicked to the ground. And we were rejoicing and grieving at the same time. And the response of a living hope is it gets out of the grave.

[40 : 14] So if the marriage dies, family member dies, reputation dies, the response of resurrection hope is getting up and moving forward.

You see why I didn't want to skip that stuff? And that's how we live now. So here's the summary. Here's the summary. Okay?

If the second service shows up, just scoot over. We have a living hope. Yes, we do. And why do we have a living hope? Because we are alive. And God has been merciful to us.

And Jesus is risen from the grave. And not only that, we have a glorious inheritance that's being kept for us. And as a result, today and tomorrow and the day after that, we will live by faith, by love, by joy, by sorrow, and with endurance.

So, faith family, how do you respond in the prison of hopelessness? When the walls of life shrink in on you.

[41 : 23] And I declare to you tonight that because of Jesus, we are able to approach life in a brand new way. We are able to approach life with hope. Why? Because our hope already became a prisoner.

Because our hope already served the sentence. Because our hope already died. And today, our hope is fully alive.

And that faith family is why no matter what happens in our life, our hope will always be a living hope. And God's people said, Amen.

Amen.