

**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,<sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.<sup>7</sup> These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.<sup>8</sup> 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,<sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (NIV 84)**

Theme: Jesus is your Living Hope.

1. In the face of suffering.
2. In the face of death.

Hope—it drives the world. Without hope **nothing** would ever be done. The farmer doesn’t work the soil, plant seeds in the ground, and water them if he doesn’t have any hope that they would grow. You wouldn’t put in 40, 60, 80 hours of work in a week if there was no hope that you would get compensated for your work. A country wouldn’t go to war unless it had hope that it would be victorious. Without hope we have nothing in this life. But it’s April 27<sup>th</sup>, and the week after Easter. For you as a Christian, hope springs eternal. Jesus lives. He is your living hope—in the face of suffering and in the face of death.

When Peter wrote this letter Nero was emperor of the Roman Empire. It wasn’t long before this that persecution against the Christians broke out. Nero started killing off thousands of Christians in Rome after he blamed them for a fire. But this persecution wasn’t contained only to Rome. No, Christians were put to death throughout the kingdom. Thousands upon thousands of Christians were put to death because of

their faith. Many of them were tortured or put to death in some of the most disgusting and horrific ways imaginable.

About a year or so after Peter wrote this letter he was put to death because of his faith. Christian tradition tells us that he died on an upside down cross. That same year, we are told that Paul was also put to death because of his faith. He was beheaded in Rome as part of the mass persecution carried out by Nero. This is the kind of suffering that Peter mentions in verse six. **Now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.**

We suffer too. We often have grief in all kinds of trials. Sure we suffer in a different way than the people to whom Peter is writing. I don’t know of anyone here today whose life was at risk because they are a believer. Yet sin is in this world. And with sin comes evil. We suffer through sickness and disease. People mistreat us. Friends let us down, family members take advantage of us. Money woes, problems at work or in school.

We could go on and on listing all the things that cause us to suffer in this life. Where’s the hope? Where’s the hope for those who suffer? Where’s the hope for the millions of residents in nursing homes? Whether they’ve been there a week or 10 years; they need someone else to take care of them—perhaps to feed them and bathe them. Some can’t walk, their eye site is almost gone, their hearing is even worse. Where’s the hope for cancer patient—who has been in and out of chemo or radiation for months, but nothing seems to be working. Where’s the hope for all of those who are beaten down by diseases and sicknesses like Alzheimer’s, multiple sclerosis, or those who are paralyzed by a stroke? Where’s the hope for the rest of us, who suffer through all the things this sin-filled world throws at us every day?

There is no hope for the unbeliever. Whether he knows it or not—he has no hope. He believes that this life is all there is. There is no afterlife—you live and you die and that is it. But he suffers. Life isn’t all that pleasant. And if this life is all there is, and it’s full of suffering, than what’s the point of it all? It’s a sad existence. It’s void of any hope. It’s full of despair and sorrow. Nothing to look forward to. No promises that things will get any better. For unbelievers there is no hope.

But the believer has a living hope in Jesus. Since Jesus rose from the dead, we know that he has power over the sicknesses and diseases in this life. And he often chooses to keep those sicknesses and diseases away from us. Peter points out in verse five that you, **through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.** God shields you. He guards you and protects you. He keeps many afflictions away from you. So that you may not always suffer.

But when you do suffer, you can rejoice. Why would you that? Because suffering proves your faith. It shows you that your faith is genuine. In verse seven Peter says that sufferings, **have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—maybe proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.** When you suffer you don't turn to yourself for comfort. You don't rely on yourself or simply on the medical advancements of the day. Rather you turn to the only one who is able to help you—Jesus Christ. Your faith is genuine and so you rejoice.

James in his letter, makes a similar, yet slightly different point. **Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.** When we suffer we turn to the Lord. We read his word. And through his Word we are encouraged and comforted. We are reminded of the salvation that he has won for us. And as we turn to his Word our faith is strengthened. So as we turn to the gospel, our sufferings actually make our faith stronger. So we persevere through our troubles. And we can even learn to rejoice and praise God when we go through difficulties.

Through Jesus we have hope when we suffer. But we also have hope in death.

And death is ultimately what we need the most hope in. That is why we are afraid of sicknesses and diseases, isn't it? Sure, they're painful. But they wouldn't be so bad if they didn't end in death. We don't want to die—to have their soul and body separated. We realize it's unnatural—God never intended it to happen. Death is the wages of sin. And no one knows exactly what is going to happen when you die.

So many people are afraid of death. They will pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to live a few years longer. They will go through excruciating pain simply to live a long life. In the past they searched through the ends of the earth in hopes of finding the fountain of youth. No one wants to die. And we can't save ourselves. So we are afraid of death.

People receive gifts like an inheritance all the time. I in the mid 90's a friend of my grandma's passed away. She gave my grandma her two early 90's Buick LeSabres. My grandparents didn't need another car so they gave one to each of their sons. That 1992 Buick LaSabre the first time my family ever had a second car. Eventually, it became the car that my brothers and I drove. It was a good car, but over time it began to wear down and the repair bills started piling up. Many years later, my brother who was living in Phoenix had his truck stolen. So my Dad drove the Buick down to Phoenix to give to him. It wasn't long before the Buick was stolen too. It was probably taken to Mexico where it was stripped down and sold for parts. This great gift faded. And then it eventually perished. That happens with every earthly gift—no matter what it is.

But not so with the inheritance that we will receive. Peter says that our inheritance from our Heavenly Father **can never perish, spoil or fade.** The inheritance that we have from God is the gift of eternal life in heaven. A perfect life with our Savior that will last forever. Unlike everything we have on earth, it won't ever wear out or be lost. It remains just as amazing and wonderful a thousand years later than on the day you first received it. Eternal life with your Savior will never get old. You will never tire of it, it will never go out of style, or depreciate in value.

And eternal life with your Savior is, as Peter puts it—the goal. **You are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.** Faith receives the blessings one by Christ. The goal of your faith is the forgiveness of sins and eternal life with him in heaven forever. Without eternal life there is no point in believing. There is no point in worshiping God and singing the praises of his Son, if he hasn't saved your soul.

But he has. For Jesus lives. He rose from the dead and defeated death. And he still lives in heaven to this day and will into eternity. He is

described as a living hope because he is living. Living—not dead, not hopeless, not dormant, but living. Because he lives you too will live. Because he lives the hope that you have is not dead or dormant or hopeless, but living. There is still hope. Hope is alive.

And for Christians hope isn't some wish. It's not a desire or something that you would like to happen if at all possible. It's not like you hope for a new car, a better paying job, or for that girl to like you in high school. No, hope for a Christian is a sure conviction. It is absolute. This will happen—it's not a wish or desire, but it is something that you know without a doubt that will take place. Jesus is that sure and certain living hope. For he truly did rise from the dead and lives forever.

That is your firm and sure conviction. You believe in him even though you have never seen him. You love him, you sing praises to him, you even give back to him. You've never met him. You've never seen him. You haven't seen any physical proof that he even existed, let alone rose from the dead. But you know him to be true. And on him your salvation rests.

As Peter put it, **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.** You may have never seen Jesus, but you love him. Because he first loved you. You sing his praises because of what he has done for you. He fills you with joy because of the salvation he has won for you. So you worship and praise Jesus because he lives. Because he is your living hope.

Hope moves the world. Without hope we are nothing. And the unbeliever has no hope as he lives his life. But a living hope moves the Christian. Where is the hope for the sick and dying? Where is the hope of those facing persecution because of their faith? Where is our hope when you suffer in this life? Our living hope is in our living Savior. His life assures us that we will rise from the dead and enjoy a life free from pain and suffering. And so we rejoice in someone we haven't see—because he is your living sure conviction of eternal life.

As Paul said to the Thessalonians, **we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we**

**believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. Amen.**