

Born Again

1 Peter 1:3-5

Joy in Suffering (1 Peter Series)

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livinghopechurch.net

We're looking in our Bible **1 Peter 1:3-5**.

“To be born again is, as it were, to enter upon a new existence, to have a new mind, a new heart, new views, new principles, new tastes, new affections, new likings, new dislikings, new fears, new joys, new sorrows, new love to things once hated, new hatred to things once loved, new thoughts of God, and ourselves, and the world, and the life to come, and salvation.

~ J.C. Ryle

Hyper Active but Spiritually Dead

When I was a child, my parents were constantly telling me, “Matt, slow down.” “Matt, calm down.” “Matt, stop shouting, I’m right here.” They gave me a neat new title: they said I was a “hyper active child.” They gave me pills to try to make me calm, but it took away my personality so they soon ceased that and just accepted me as I am!

I had a personality that was filled with life and energy, but spiritually I was dead. The Bible says that we are “dead in our trespasses and sins” and we need God to wake us up.

That’s what we are talking about today: spiritual awakening. Have you been born again?

Feeling Like a Foreigner as Rome Burns

Once we are born again, the change is so radical that Peter tells us that we feel like “elect exiles.” As far as this earth goes, we don’t fit in. We are citizens of heaven. We are elect, but we are exiles. **1 Peter 1:1** “¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are **elect exiles** of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia...

Ephesus is here. In fact, all of the seven churches are here – as well Colossae, Antioch, Iconium, Derbe, Phrygia, and Troas. This is the area where the most growth of the church was. Peter writes to them at Rome’s burning... Nero blames the Christians... what if you were there? What would characterize your life? Worry? Anxiety? Bitterness.

Brothers and sisters, Praise ought to characterize your life. Why? Because though we have so many trials and tribulation on this earth, we have all that we need. We have God as our **Father** and the Spirit as our **Comforter** and Jesus as our **King**

Praise and Blessing

Peter writes to the “elect exiles” and says: “³Blessed 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.”

Doxology and praise is the product of this great life change that God has given. We have been born again into Christ, our living Hope. We have a living hope named Jesus! Aren't you glad that because of the resurrection, as bad as things might be, this is not our final home? We have a living hope in Jesus Christ being raised from the dead! We have hope!

He said, "I am He that lives, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18).

THERE IS HOPE IN YOUR TRIALS. THERE IS HOPE FOR YOUR SINS! Jesus is alive!!

"I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
2 My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad.
3 Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together!" Psalm 34:1-3

Jesus has Revealed the Father

Well, first off, Jesus has revealed the Father to us. The demons don't get redemption. But we fallen, weak humans do! "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."

Whenever the New Testament calls God Father, it primarily denotes that He is the **Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.**¹

There is only one true and living God. Allah is no god. Allah is a demon, pagan God of hatred and war. Allah of Islam in no way resembles the God of the Bible. There is only one true and living God who is exclusively revealed by Jesus Christ. As Christians we say: "³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" There is no other way to heaven. Jesus is the "way, the truth, and the life" and no one comes to the Father, the one true and living God, but through the exclusive say of Jesus, so says Jesus in John 14:6.

Jesus is the express image of the invisible God. He exegetes and reveals exactly who the Father is. We could not know him in a personal way without Jesus Christ.

A Strange Double Life

All Christians are living a strange double life: Peter addresses his audience as 'foreigners', not because they have emigrated to where they now live but because they now have a dual citizenship. They are, simultaneously, inhabitants of this or that actual country or district (Pontus, Galatia, or wherever), and citizens of God's new world which, as he will shortly say, is waiting to be unveiled.²

Elect Ones Living as Foreigners

We are "chosen" or "elect" foreigners. Our home is in heaven. "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ..." (Phil 3:20). Because of the transforming power of Christ's resurrection, we are no longer the same.

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2004). *1 Peter* (pp. 30–31). Chicago: Moody Publishers.

² Wright, T. (2011). *Early Christian Letters for Everyone: James, Peter, John and Judah* (pp. 49–50). London; Louisville, KY: SPCK; Westminster John Knox Press.

My Kind of Multiplication

1 Peter 1:2b, “May grace and peace be multiplied to you.”

Here is Peter’s **cosmic multiplication formula**. I was never that great at complex math, but I sure do need this kind of multiplication in my life. **Grace** and **peace** superabound to us! Aren’t you grateful for the resurrection of Christ that makes this possible for us?

Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve!! However great your sin is, God’s grace is infinitely greater!

Peace harkens back to the Old Testament word “Shalom” – it doesn’t just mean an absence of war. It means total well-being.

Listen everything is going to be all right with each of us because of the resurrection of Jesus. God’s grace and peace are upon you dear ones. They are **multiplied** to you! That’s the kind of **math program** I want to be a part of!

Because of the resurrection, no matter what you are going through, you have hope! You have a living hope!

Outline: Born again unto a living hope!

Three signposts along the journey:

1. Born again by mercy, vs. 3
2. Born again to an inheritance, vs. 4
3. Born again by faith that is guarded, vs. 5

I. I am born again by God’s **mercy**, vs. 3

If we look back, we have to bless God for his mercy in causing us to be born again!

1 Peter 1:3, “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.”

We are born anew is *by his great mercy*. The whole point of mercy is God had to have pity on us to save us. God got no help from us! God ‘caused us to be born again.’”

Metaphors of the New Birth

In order to understand that we cannot decide when a person is saved, let us be reminded of some of the metaphors of regeneration in the Bible. In these metaphors God is the active mover and miracle worker. These metaphors draw attention to the glory of God’s grace to powerless sinners who cannot help themselves.

- **Resurrection:** In the new life raised from the dead (Eph. 2:1-6; Eze. 37, i.e. “dry bones”), God brings the dead sinner to life.
- **Birth:** In the new birth (Jn. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:23) God makes a new person by conceiving faith in the sinner by the Word of God.
- **Creation:** In the new creation (2 Cor. 4:6; 5:17), God speaks and creates something out of nothing.

- **Metamorphosis:** In the conversion of heart (Eze. 36:26-27; Deuteronomy 30:6) God transforms the heart of stone into a tender heart of flesh.
- **Increase of Harvest:** In the miraculous increase of the harvest (1 Cor. 3:6) Paul and Apollos plant and water, but it is God who gives the increase.

Man is Passive

Back to Peter, it was according to his mercy he **caused** us to be born again. In all of these examples, including new birth, man is passive. God is active. I cannot raise myself from the dead. I cannot give birth to myself. I cannot create myself. I cannot give the increase of harvest. The new birth is passive. We weren't seeking God. God wasn't lost. We were lost, and God was seeking us!

Story of Cedric & Nicole

One of the most profound illustrations of this is the story of Cedric and Nicole. I'll never forget sitting at their kitchen table on October 31, 2011. We had been studying through Ephesians for several weeks, and we got to that place in Ephesians 2, where it says we were "dead in our trespasses and sins" – and then it says, "But God who is rich in mercy raised us up with Christ..." I'll never forget, Cedric interrupted and said, "Pastor, I got to pray!" Nicole at that time being a proper Italian Catholic, said, "Cedric, don't interrupt the priest!" I told her – the Spirit is giving birth to Cedric. He is going to be a new creation. So Cedric prayed with such an intensity and fervency, and he was swept into the glorious Kingdom of God by faith in Jesus. And then Nicole followed right after. And you've seen the entirely new disposition.

A New Nature

Regeneration is God imparting to us a new nature. As Ezekiel says (36-37), It's God giving us a new heart. It's God taking the dry, dead bones, and raising us up and causing us to live. It's God quickening us with life. Ephesians 2:1 says that we by nature were "children of wrath." But now we have a new nature. We have a new heart and a renewed mind.

Ephesians 2:10 says we were "created in Christ Jesus" with a new nature that loves God and obeys him. Let me illustrate this with several Scripture passages.

Born Again by the Spirit

John 3:3ff. In mercy, God sends his Spirit to transform our hearts. Jesus says in **John 3:3**, "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The one entering the kingdom must experience an absolute miracle. He goes on in **verse 6**, "That which is born of the flesh is **flesh**, and that which is born of the Spirit is **spirit**."

So if you are born of the flesh, that is **physically**, that's all you are. Fallen flesh like that doesn't inherit the Kingdom of God. You need a miracle. You need the Spirit to make you alive and birth you spiritually.

Verses 7-8, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' **8** The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

So being born of the Spirit happens not by human design, which is very predictable, but it happens like the wind, which is surprising and unpredictable. When someone is born again, you are like, "Whoa! How did that happen!" It's a miracle!

John 1:12-13, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” All who believe are born of God. They are born:

- “Not of blood – they didn’t get the new birth through **natural descent**.
- “Not of the will of the flesh” – they didn’t get the new birth through **personal choice** or **human decision**.
- “Nor of the will of man” – they didn’t get the new birth through, or more literally, the will of a husband. Your mom and dad cannot just decide for you to be born again.
- Instead you are “born of God.” You are born by the miracle mercy of God.

1 John 5:1, “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.” Now we need to define belief. In means to trust. It doesn’t mean merely intellectual understanding, but intentional dependence.

So the one who has been “born of God” – here is the sign: Faith. Belief. Trust. Trust in what? In Jesus as Christ. Christ means “Anointed One.” Anointed for what? To be King.

So one of the signs that a person is born of God is faith. Ephesians 2:8 says faith is “a gift from God.” And 1 John 5:1 says that the sign for one being born of God is that they trust Jesus as their King. Wow.

Born Again by the Word

What does God use to cause us to be born again? The Word of God. **1 Peter 1:23-25**, “you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for

“All flesh is like grass

and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,

and the flower falls,

25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the **good news** that was preached to you.”

God uses his Word to bring people to faith. It’s specifically the “good news” that Jesus substituted himself for us that saves us.

Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

James 1:18, “Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” James is referring to the new creation. We are the first things created for the new earth. We don’t belong here.

Praise God for Transforming Your Heart!

The believers Peter is writing to are suffering, yet he says, “Bless God! The God who changed your life should be praised and adored and worshipped! “Blessed be... God!!!” Praise Him! No matter what you are going through, bless Him for your transformed life.

Bless God for He Caused You to Be Born Again

Peter encourages his readers to praise God, a helpful remedy for hearts weighed down with discouragement because of suffering. He then lists the reason for praise: *By his great mercy we have been **born anew***. The word for ‘born again (*anagennaō*) has a more active sense than our translation (ESV) indicates, for the root word (*gennaō*) often refers to a father’s role in the birth of a child. In blessing God, Peter thinks first of the new spiritual life that God has given to his people. Let’s bless Him for it!³

Share Your Testimony

One of the best things you can do is get your eyes off yourself. That’s what resurrection power is all about. It’s about helping those who are hurting around you. No matter how much you are hurting, you have the promise that your pain will end. God will wipe away all tears.

Many don’t have that hope of the resurrection. I want to fervently urge you to share your faith. Share what God has done for you! Bless the One who has given you a Living Hope!!

Because of Jesus' resurrection all Christians have the hope of:

II. I am born again to an **inheritance**, vs. 4

1 Peter 1:4, “Born again... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.”

What is this Inheritance? (Candy Wrapper Illustration)

Our inheritance is not merely the streets of gold, the crowns of glory, or the celestial cities. Oh yes, we get all that. But that is like the wrapping on the candy bar. Our inheritance is God. It is communion with Him forever and ever. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. What did Christ have before the worlds were created? He had the Father. The Father and the Son and the Spirit is our inheritance.

Remember what God told Abraham? **Genesis 15:1**, “The word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward.”

What is our reward in paradise, in heaven? We get God!

Future Share in the Kingdom

Of course we get a future share in the kingdom! The New Testament regularly uses ‘inheritance’ (*klēronomia*) to refer not only to an earthly inheritance but also to a believer’s ‘share’ in the heavenly kingdom, his or her future heavenly reward.⁴ When we think about our inheritance, we ought not look forward to merely the streets of gold and the celestial city. Those things are like wrapping for a candy bar. You don’t eat the wrapping. You aren’t satisfied by the wrapping. The gold and the jewels and the city are just wrapping. What is our inheritance?

Exodus 6:7, “I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God”

God in the Abrahamic covenant says in Genesis 17:7, “And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”

³ Grudem, W. A. (1988). *1 Peter: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 17, pp. 59–60). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

Revelation 21:1-7 echoes the cry of God through all of Scripture. The living God is our inheritance. All the crowns and gold and cities are just wrapping.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6 And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”

God is my inheritance.

The Holy Spirit is Our Inheritance

He’s given me a down payment of my **inheritance**. Look over at Ephesians 1:13-14, “In him [Jesus] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him [Jesus], were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee [down payment, earnest money] of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

The Inauguration of a Whole New World

God has, through the resurrection, inaugurated a whole new world. At the moment it is being kept safe, out of sight, behind the thin **invisible curtain** which separates our world (earth) from God’s world (**heaven**). But one day the curtain will be drawn back; and then the **‘incorruptible inheritance’**, at present being kept safe in heaven, will be merged with our earthly reality, transforming it and soaking it through with God’s presence, love and mercy (verse 4). And if that new world is kept safe for us, Peter assures us that we are being kept safe for it.⁵

Imperishable [unbreakable, untearable]

Our stake in the future kingdom is not subject to decay. It is unable to be worn out with the passage of time. The New Testament uses this word only of eternal heavenly realities, such as God **himself** (Rom. 1:23; 1 Tim. 1:17), God’s **word** (1 Pet. 1:23), and our **resurrection bodies** (1 Cor. 15:52; cf. 1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Pet. 3:4).

All earthly possessions will ultimately decay and be destroyed (Luke 12:33; Rom. 1:23; 2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 2:22; 1 Pet. 1:18), for the creation now is in ‘bondage to decay’ (Rom. 8:21).⁶

Undeiled [It doesn’t Rot]

Peter invites contemplation of a heavenly inheritance **unpolluted** by even our own sin and containing nothing unworthy of God’s full approval.⁷ Our place in God’s kingdom is secured by Christ alone! It is undeiled because it is secured by Christ’s unfailing and perfect righteousness.

⁵ Wright, 50-51

⁶ Grudem, 62.

⁷ Ibid.

Because you are robed in His righteousness, you are completely worthy in Christ of that undefiled inheritance! You are unpolluted in Christ!

Unfading [It doesn't wear out]

Peter next describes our inheritance as “unfading”—that which is not subject to fading or decay. Unlike earthly wealth (Jas 1:11), it will never wither, grow dim, or lose its beauty or glory (cf. 1 Pet. 5:4).⁸

Having come to middle age, I am learning that the human body fades. Presently mine is falling fast into a state of decay. Gravity is taking over. My skin is no longer taut. The inevitable descent toward the earth from which it came is noticeably underway.

In contrast, the inheritance toward which Christians are said to be moving is said to be “unfading.” It will never be subject to decay. What good news! When our own bodies, long since expired, are reunited with Christ on that final day, we will be made incorruptible forevermore, restored, new, complete. This is the inheritance that awaits all who are in Christ.⁹

Kept in Heaven for You

The form of the verb ‘kept’ (perfect passive participle) indicates a completed past activity (by God) with results that are still continuing in the present: God himself has ‘stored up’ or ‘reserved’ this inheritance in heaven for believers and it continues to be there, ‘still reserved’ for them.¹⁰

Christians possess some of the benefits of salvation in this life, but the great fullness of redemption is yet to come. God has promised unfathomable glories in the eternal perfection of heaven that will one day be the conscious experience of every believer¹¹

III. I am born again through a guarded faith, vs. 5

Being born again is a miracle of grace. We didn't come up with it, and so we do not keep it for ourselves. God guides us and keeps those who are born again. This is God's work.

Jesus is risen from the dead, and it makes all the difference.

1 Peter 1:5, you are chosen born again exiles, “who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Guarded: Safe from Self and Satan

Guarded (*phroureō*) means ‘kept safe, carefully watched’, and is frequently used in military contexts.

The word can mean both ‘kept from escaping’ and ‘protected from attack’, and perhaps both kinds of guarding are intended here: God is preserving believers from escaping out of his kingdom, and he is protecting them from external attacks.¹²

Ephesians 2:1-3 says we used to be enslaved to self, Satan, and the world. Now we are safe from those old enemies, even our own fleshly, sinful nature.

No one is able to pluck us out of the Father's hand! Even our own selves!

⁸ Helm, D. R. (2008). *1 & 2 Peter and Jude: sharing christ's sufferings* (pp. 34–35). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

⁹ Grudem, *ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2004). *1 Peter* (p. 38). Chicago: Moody Publishers.

¹² Grudem, 63.

Jude 1:24-25, says it so well, “Now to him who is able to keep [guard or imprison] you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

You are imprisoned by the power of God from falling away!

Grace Empowered Faith

I love how Peter says we are “guarded through faith” in verse 5. The present participle, which Peter uses, gives the sense ‘you are continually being guarded’. He stresses that this is *by God’s power*. Wayne Grudem says of this verse: “God’s power in fact energizes and continually sustains individual, personal faith.”¹³

This mystery is expressed in **Philippians 2:12-13**, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” We might call this “grace empowered faith.”

It is God’s power that is illumining our minds and strengthening our faith. We love Him because He first loved us. We came to Him because He drew us to Himself by His Spirit. We are kept by the power of God, which is a fountain for our faith. We might say we are kept by the grace, or power of God. In other words, it is the grace that empowers and enlightens our faith to understand who God is. It is God graciously revealing Himself to us that empowers our faith.

Conclusion

Philippians 1:6 says, “He who began a good work in you will complete it.” The Word of God implanted the Spirit and a new nature in you! God’s not done.

Planting Grass in Spain

I remember we wanted to plant grass in our yard in Spain. We hauled out the rocks, put down dirt, and planted grass seed. We watered it. Katie was about six years old and Krissy was 4. They came out of the house and were so excited. They asked “Why isn’t the grass growing?” It is. Over time the evidences will come forth, and the seed will have a miracle of life. That’s what it is to be born again. God’s giving the increase!

¹³ Ibid.