

Book	1-Peter
Study	Study 2
Topic	New Birth and New Hope
Reference	1 Peter 1:3-5
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Speaker	Dr Peter Ng

1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV) 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, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The first thing that he is thanking God for is mercy. Mercy is like grace, unmerited favour, his great mercy. He calls them to be born again to a living hope, as well as, this is guaranteed inheritance that they have. So, this is basically the structure of the verses that we are going to be looking at.

Now I want to go back to Ecclesiastes. This is a beautiful poem, which a lot of people will put in movies and books but they don't really understand what it is about.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 (ESV) For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: 2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

So actually it describes in realistic terms the world that we live is full of beauty and full of terror at the same time and yet with all these things happening,

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (ESV) He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put **eternity into man's heart**, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

So somehow there is all that stuff going on, people kill and people die, people live and yet in his heart, he has put this idea that man will live beyond this life. It is like a touch of heaven in your heart and you are always wondering that life goes beyond this poem as it were. The Buddhist have the same idea. They have the Buddhist wheel. They have a horrible demon called Maya, he is holding a wheel in his teeth. This wheel is a wheel of rebirth. So when you talk to a Buddhist about being born again, they will say I agree with you brother, we are all born again.

Scientologists also believe in rebirth. Tom Cruise is also a scientologist. He had a son and the scientologists say, he is born under the reincarnation of the founder of scientology.

Modern western religions, some of them believe in reincarnation. Professor Stephen Prothero writes, *"We all want the here and now, and reincarnation is about the here and now," "Reincarnation is fueled because now people want to come back and live again."*

So born again comes from several passages in the New Testament and the main passage we studied in John

John 3:3 (ESV) Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

So what actually put out to Nicodemus is that regeneration or being born again is necessary, it is not optional if you want to see God. It is absolutely vital. Nicodemus was full of knowledge, a top teacher of Israel. He has great understanding, gifts, social standing, power and yet a guy like that has to be born again, which then tells you that regeneration is a work of God, all those things don't count. So no matter what your background is, we are talking about being born again, it is not something that you can do. It is only something that God can do.

John 3:7-8 (ESV) 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 it is an uncertain process for which it is totally beyond human control. God decides who gets born again, so therefore no matter how qualified you are that's not going to be the case.

Several years ago a monkey took its selfie accidentally from a wildlife photographer's camera. The photographer made a quite lot of money from this. But people from animals' rights put up a claim that this picture is taken by a monkey. They say, the intellectual rights to this beautiful piece of art belongs to the monkey because he pressed the button, but the photographer argued that it took him a lot of time to setup this camera. In the end, the fellow won the lawsuit because the judge said, you actually have the creative mental processes that lie behind the pressing of the buttons. So therefore the monkey cannot have copyright because the monkey doesn't have creative mental processes that go behind pressing a button. Any fool can press the button.

So that was the argument. That brings us to this idea of being born again. What is this being born again? I think the best illustration is from Keller who describes being born again in terms of biology. So you have got different levels of life. The first

order of life is vegetable, the second order of life is animal, the third order of life is human. Basically the orders of life basically encompass our ability to appreciate reality.

So reality is, if you stand here and I get two people to play guitar and sing a song, no matter how well they play the plant will not appreciate it. They only respond to light. So therefore the plant's appreciation of reality is very limited. Now if you are an animal and the artists are playing, the animal might become a bit calmer, but he is not going to distinguish about the tune and pitch of music. They appreciate some reality but not all of it. But for humans, they appreciate the music, the words, the atmosphere, they appreciate all of the reality which they are performing. So the orders of life are mechanism by which we appreciate more of what is actually in the world.

So basically in the order of life, we have animals, humans and then child of God, which is beyond animal, plant and human. It is basically spiritual, you become a child of God.

2 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV) His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5

So Peter is saying that when you are born again, you are special. You partake the divine nature. You actually have the divine nature implanted into you. That is what being born again is about and the regeneration is through the gospel.

1 Peter 1:23-25 (ESV) since 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

So this word causes you to be born again. This is basically, you can only be regenerated and born again through the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is no other way. Not only that, the regeneration is part of a bigger plan, it is not just says.

Romans 8:19-21 (ESV) For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God

So therefore when we are born again, when we come finally to glorification, the whole of creation will be reconciled to God and assume its former glory and if you thought creation is beautiful, now you think about it in its original form which it will revert to.

So regeneration:

- Is necessary, not optional.
- Is a work of God, not man.
- Only happens through the gospel and not without it.

We are **born again to a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. So that's the first thing that we are going to be looking at.

The Nature of Hope

Aristotle says, *"Hope is the dream of a waking man"*. HOPE can be defined as the desire for something combined with an anticipation of it happening. In short, hope is the anticipation of something desired. Emil Brunner, a Swiss theologian wrote, *"What oxygen is for the lungs, such is hope for the meaning of human life."* All human beings need hope. In fact there is a study of students in American university and those who basically had high scores in hope did very-very well in their studies compared to those with low hope. There was a 16% difference. So as long as you have hope you are going to do 16% better.

We have ancient tales like Aesop's Fable, which talk about hope too. There was a story of a young man who used to spend a lot of money. So, he spent everything and one day he only got one thing left that was his coat. One day he saw a swallow, which always comes in summer. So the swallow came and the fellow saw the swallow, he said, "wow! Summer is coming". He took his coat and sold it. Why because he saw the swallow, but that was a random swallow. Next day he saw the swallow dead on the floor because winter was still coming and so the man also died because he got no coat as it were. So hope can be a false hope.

In fact, if you look at Greek mythology, they have Pandora's Box. Pandora was this beautiful lady who was given as a gift to the brother of Prometheus. Prometheus was cursed by the gods because he gave a gift to the people, a gift of fire. The gods were very pissed for this act of his. Then they punished his brother by giving them a very beautiful woman. Why do you think you punish the brother by giving him a beautiful woman? Because women are curious, always want to look inside. Pandora was given a jar and the jar contained all the evils in the world, like lust, jealousy, greed, everything in the jar and before you know it, the woman opened the jar and all the lust came out, the greed came out, the war came out, the evil came out but hope was left behind. My question to you is this, why was hope there in the first place and why was it left behind? Is hope an evil.

So, the whole argument about this Greek mythology was the fact that hope can actually be evil because it ramps up your expectation so high that when the thing doesn't eventuate you crash. So hope can actually be perceived as an evil if you look in the secular point of view because life is so uncertain. Hope is the feeling that you get right before disappointment. So if you've got no hope, you will have no disappointment. So you basically expect all the worse things in life as it were.

Shane Lopez is a secular scientist. He writes recently, *"the belief that the future will be better than the present, along with the belief that you have the power to make it so."* So the idea of hope in secular minds is more about what you can do. In fact, he writes, *"Hope is created moment by moment through our deliberate choices,"* Shane wrote in his best-selling book *Making Hope Happen*. *"It happens when we use our thoughts and feelings to temper our aversion to loss and actively pursue what is possible."*

So you have all sorts of hopes in your mind when you wake up in the morning and the means to fulfil them, that's what basically Shane is talking about.

- "How we think about the future - how we hope - determines how well we live our lives."
- hopeful people pick good goals,
- know how to make them happen,
- spot and seek out the pathways that will move them forward

So generally in psychological terms, hope has three components, one is goal which you would like. Pathway is to do them and agency is basically your feeling of how to achieve them, which is basically my past experiences prepared me for, I energetically pursue my goals, I meet the goals myself, I have been pretty successful in life and based on all of this you actually have optimism.

Now this is a story of Philo Farnsworth who created TV. When he was 14 years old, he was a farm boy and then he saw the farmer plant grain and what he did was, he plough horizontal lines all the way across. Then he thought of an idea, oh my goodness if I can send electromagnetic waves horizontal ones and whatever alter this horizontal lines can actually create an image. A 14-year-old farm boy thought of this idea, wrote it up on a piece of paper gave it to his teacher and that was the cleverest thing he ever did. Later on, he actually worked on his invention and one day in 1927 he actually managed to transmit from one room to another one horizontal line through the waves. And based on that he gambled every cent he had, he borrowed thousands of dollars to create the television set and he was actually attacked by the very famous radio broadcasting group called RCA. So they fought with him and try to bankrupt him doing it. In the end, when they went to court. They only reason why the thing was settled was that the teacher came and showed the judge, my 14-year-old boy drew this and based on that drawing he actually won the lawsuit but he suffered greatly.

The point that I want to put forward is that, one horizontal line is enough to give him the hope to fight with every cent he actually had, one little line. So basically, our hope is to be a living hope. We have different sets of hope depending on what kind of life we have. If you are an animal like monkey, your hope would be where is the best tree, where is the best banana, where is water, who would threaten my tribe. They will not think of life and death. Being a human you will have different thinking and hope like where is my condominium, how to earn today, how I can get famous, where is my best career. Having the spiritual life that you are born with, you wake up with different motives. Like how do I work to glorify God, what ministry, ethical decisions, how do I serve the Lord. When you are born again, you experience a whole realm of new reality which is spiritual reality which people cannot see but you can. It is a remarkable ability. It is a different set of hopes. Secular hope is based on the conditions that you create in which you will fulfil your goals but the problem is, the moment you fail you die.

There is a suicide epidemic all over the world. Suicide all over the world beats war, murder, forces of nature and in fact in Malaysia the suicides rates have increased 60% over the past 45 years.

Why do people have suicide? People have suicide simply because they hope on which they live for is gone. When you have no hope, you have no hope to live. So basically behind every suicide is a death of an idol, death of hope. Behind every single suicide there was a dream attached that was shattered. That's why hope is the oxygen for your life.

Hugh Hefner was very famous for Playboy. He got married to so many women. When he was old he cannot perform sexually, so he had 2485 volume collection of scrapbooks of all the sexual encounters that he had. So he now lives in the past because his idol is dead. There is no more hope for him as it were. It is very sad.

So the solution for you is to get new short-term idols. So we have a show of Morgan Freeman with Jack Nicholson, Bucket List. The Bucket List is basically short-term goal. There are many organizations in United States that actually fulfil short-term dreams for children, because they are dying of cancer. So what they do is that they fulfil their desires and dreams come true.

There is a tension in life because of hope. On one hand, there is a time and season for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: 2 a time to be born, and a time to die. On the other hand he has put **eternity into man's heart**. A child who is dying still dreams of the future and yet they have to face the reality that they are dying of cancer. So we are all in a terrible situation because our dreams don't match reality. The writer of Ecclesiastes says,

Ecclesiastes 3:14 (ESV) 14 I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him

Which means the brevity of life and the suffering that we encounter has a purpose and the purpose is that we may fear God. The world is created not to make you happy. God is not obligated to make us happy or make our dreams come true. The main ultimate good in the universe is that man will fear God, respect and honor him. So all things are possible, why because you have got a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Let me go the biblical concept of biblical hope. Biblical concept of hope is not like non-Christian hope, which is uncertain and based on the ability and circumstances. Hebrew word for hope is 'Yakhal' which is to wait for. The other one is Qavah, which basically means a cord held under tension. Not only you are waiting, it is held under tension and expectation because you are waiting for something to eventuate. For example, if you look at Isaiah 5, he talks about God planting the vine and then the vine producing grapes and in between the planting and the grapes there is a Qavah for grapes which is basically God waiting with a bit of tension, is waiting for all this beautiful grapes to come out and when they come out they were horrible and sour. You can see the level of disappointment in chapter 5. So hope is waiting with tense expectation

Isaiah 8:17 (ESV) I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I **will hope** in him.

Psalms 130:5 (ESV) I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope

There is a difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is always based on a circumstances, the odds, how it can turn out. Hope is always based on a person despite adverse circumstance. Hosea writes,

Hosea 13:4 (ESV) But I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no saviour.

That is what he reminds them. It was a historical event. Then he says in chapter 4

Hosea 14:4 (ESV) I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.

Hosea 14:7 They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain;

It is a long-term vision and how you know it is going to happen, because it is based on historical precedent where the hope is based. This is the hope that God will heal

them and they shall return, but it is always based on a particular historical fact. So therefore God's acts in the past are the basis of the hope in the future.

Psalms 39:7 (ESV) And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.

So, we apply it to Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is described as the living hope. Biblical hope is looking back at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the fact that he is living today becomes the basis of us hoping that God will act in the future to bring us together to be with him. That is the basis of biblical hope. Biblical hope transcends circumstances. If you look at the Book of Habakkuk

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (ESV) Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

Christian hope doesn't depend on circumstances. It depends on historical data and event that happened, that when Jesus Christ rose from the dead and lives today. That's the difference of Christian hope. So it is independent of circumstances. You only commit suicide when your hope dies. If your hope lives, I don't see a Christian committing suicide unless their hope is based on something less than Jesus Christ. So Christian hope is not fantasy, it is expectation. It is not non-Christian hope which is secular, it is basically the belief in the 100% as certain as the Sun will rise tomorrow, Christ will come back again. So that's important. Paul writes,

2 Corinthians 4:13-14 (ESV) Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, 14 knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

When we are born again we have an inheritance

4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

So basically because you are born again, because you are spiritual sons of God, you actually have inheritance which is basically indestructible.

Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV) Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

In the old days, they will store their treasure in grain, on fine clothes but they will be gone. In our time, we put our treasure in the bank. So basically your inheritance is guarded by God's power through faith and the word guarded is garrison, it is a military term.

Can I lose my salvation, once saved always saved. We have verses like these

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39 ESV)

On the other hand, you got Hebrews 11,

Rom 11:22 provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off

It puts the fear of God in you and then there is another verse

heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Romans 8:17 ESV)

We have got other verses too

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised— who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ. (Romans 8:33-35 ESV)

This is fantastic, nothing can separate us, but on the other hand we have got verses like these,

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 (Romans 8:9-10 ESV)

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Romans 8:13 ESV)

A bit confusing, one thing got, one thing don't have. So the issue here is that eternal security is not like this. It is not like a race driver who drives his car. Where everything is like iron clamped. Basically, if you see a road sign and if you are thinking once saved is always saved that means what you are saying, is that the sign doesn't matter, I am saved already. It is like we have a sign on road that to drive slow as there is a bend on the road, but if you don't read the sign and drive you will crash. That's the problem with that, which means you are overconfident, you give in

to temptation to sin, you focus on the world, you have apathy to spiritual matters, you take spiritual growth for granted, because you think once saved always saved. I think people take the verses in the wrong way.

Approach 2 is Arminian or Methodist. These warnings are interpreted as vulnerabilities.

Rom 11:22 provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off

It tells you when you are driving a car the accident is probable, as you may be a bad driver. It all depends on you. Then you have got all sorts of ideas that you are worthless, you cannot make it and so on, which percolates your mind that makes you uncertain, because driving the car depends on you. So you have got this spiritual problem which is real.

Approach 3 is much more balanced. I believe the tension is between assurance passages and warning passages can be resolved by looking at guidepost. These warning signs are guidepost to your destination. Accident is possible if you don't follow the warning. It does not mean accident is probable. So basically what he is saying is this, the assurance passages will tell you, guarantee you will get there but the warning passages are road sign to follow in order for you to get there. So God is telling you, I have chosen you, nothing will separate you from the love of Christ, so you look at this warning passages that come out and you say, these warning passages tell you when you are driving around where the danger is, you have to slow down. The warning is put there, so that you follow the warning sign and you don't steal. So in that way I think we can resolve the problem. Otherwise, you are going to say, half the bible verses are true, the other half not true one. So we resolve it by saying that some of the warning passages are road signs for you to follow in order to complete the journey and therefore we can reconcile God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

Tom Schrenier writes,

Jesus fully intends for us to understand that God who elected his own for salvation, secures them from apostasy and preserves them through afflictions by use of warnings that caution watchfulness, wariness and vigilant steadfastness

God saves you through guiding you with his Holy Spirit with a strength to godliness. God doesn't save you through a path that leads to ungodliness. He doesn't do that, so the whole purpose that you are here is to trade in godliness.

Sir Ernest Shackleton was one of the most famous explorers in the world. He actually explored and cross the Antarctica in 1912. He set off in a big journey with a boat called Endurance. In fact, if you look at this advertisement

"Men wanted: for hazardous journey. small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. honour and recognition in case of success. - SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON"

People don't line up and volunteer for such jobs. People at that time came in large crowds and 28 men were chosen and they went off in this horrible journey all the way to Antarctica and sure enough got into trouble. They got trapped in ice, in case they have to live on the ice itself and float all over the place and they were near death after about 18 months away. At the last minute, he has got to go and get some help. They went off in a small boat. 16 days they battled horrendous waves until they actually reached an island and they were too tired to carry on. Ernest Shackleton organized four rescue attempts for his man left at Elephant island. It took four months in the bitter cold.

Every day there was a guy called Frank Wyld, every morning he wake up the guys and say, boys pack up your sleeping bags, the boss is coming back today. Now if Frank Wyld didn't do that, didn't get them to pack up, day after day for four months.

We have a living hope. Our boss will come back and that's for sure. So therefore maybe we post this up in our church at Alpha

"Men wanted: for hazardous journey. small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. honour and recognition in case of success. - Jesus Christ."