

1 Peter 1:3-9 "A Living Hope Through a Risen Savior"***

Main Idea: In 1 Peter 1:3-9 we learn that because Jesus rose from the dead, those who know Him experience three wonderful benefits.

- I. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have a new birth (3).
 - A. It's ours on the basis of mercy.
 - B. It's ours on the basis of our union with Christ.
 1. Jesus lived the life we should have lived.
 2. Jesus died the death we should have died.
 3. Jesus was raised from the dead so we could live again.
- II. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have an eternal inheritance (4-5).
 - A. It is permanent.
 - B. It is reserved in heaven.
 - C. It is appropriated by faith.
 - D. It will be revealed in the last time.
- III. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have present joy in trials (6-9).
 - A. True Christians rejoice (6a).
 - B. True Christians suffer (6b-7).
 - C. True Christians love a person they cannot see (8).
 - D. True Christians live for something that's out of this world (9).

Make It Personal: Ask yourself these bottom-line questions...

1. Do you believe in the risen Christ?
2. Does the evidence support your claim?
3. What makes you happy?
4. Who do you really love most?

It's the most significant event ever to have occurred on planet earth. One Sunday morning twenty centuries ago, the person known as Jesus of Nazareth walked out of His tomb alive. For sure, He *was* dead, having been crucified by the Romans and even speared by a guard to verify His lifelessness. But then, just as He had predicted on multiple occasions, Jesus the Christ defeated death and came back to life, leaving His tomb as a victorious conqueror.

You know the story. It's why you're in church today, with millions and millions of others who know the story.

But the real question is, what's the significance of it all? So Jesus died and then came back to life. To what end? What does this have to do with us?

Is it supposed to inspire us? Is that what it's all about? To make us feel good about the potential of new beginnings?

I want to look at a significance text this Resurrection morning. Instead of investigating the resurrection itself, which we've done many times, I want us to see the *why* of it all.

Perhaps you've never thought about this before, but if Jesus is alive, and He most certainly is, then that means you need to come to grips with Him, for every eye will see Him one day.

So what difference should Jesus' resurrection make in our lives?

The apostle Peter answers that question for us in the opening paragraph of his first epistle. Peter wrote this letter to believers facing hard times. Christians found themselves living in a very non-Christian, even anti-Christian society. Persecution was not merely a hypothetical word, but a stark reality.

*** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

The year was A.D. 65. The church was under attack, by hostile critics and aggressive antagonists. Some believers had lost their jobs and homes. Some lost family members. Not a few would eventually lose their lives.

How do you encourage someone in that situation? How do you put hope into the hearts of people that you love who are facing hard times?

Here's how Peter did it. He focused their attention on the most hope-giving subject he knew, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Specifically, he told his readers in 1 Peter 1:3-9 that because Jesus rose from the dead, those who know Him experience three wonderful benefits.

We're going to investigate these three benefits of Jesus' resurrection. The first benefit is a past tense experience, the second a future tense experience, and the third a present tense experience. The first looks back, the second looks ahead, and the third looks around.

You may be here today and *not* know Christ, at least not personally and savingly. I'm so glad you are here! You're not here by accident, for the Lord has brought you and is about to use my feeble voice to present to you the most hope-giving news possible. I'm about to share with you three benefits that *could* be yours because Jesus rose from the dead. I want you to have these benefits, which is why I'm going to tell you as plainly as I can how they can be yours.

And for those here who do know Christ, these *are* your benefits. But affirming what you have is the key to experiencing true hope. So let's do some affirming this morning. Let's affirm together what we have because we have a risen Savior!

I. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have a new birth (3).

Notice how Peter, after his greeting in verses 1-2, begins the body of his God-inspired letter in verse 3, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Let's do some unpacking. Peter says we should praise the Living God. Why? Because He gave us something. What's that? He's given us *new birth*. He has *begotten us*, says the KJV.

What's Peter talking about? What's this *new birth*? Notice the prepositions, for they reveal two significant realities concerning this new birth believers enjoy.

A. It's ours on the basis of mercy. "In his great mercy he has given us new birth." So if we're in God's family, how did we get here? On the basis of our heritage? No. Our good works? No. Our initiative? No. This is a blessing that comes our way on the basis of *divine mercy*.

God the Father has given us new birth, a second birth. We needed this new birth because we were born into this world the first time dead in sin (Rom 3:23). We were without hope and without God in this world (Eph 2:12). But in His mercy, God the Father did something for us. He sent His Spirit to cause life to come into existence in us.

He literally gave us new birth. As Jesus puts it in John 3, we were begotten of water and of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5). We were born again (John 3:7). We became members of the family of God, and all on the basis of His mercy.

But not just mercy. By what means or power did God the Father grant us this new birth we enjoy? Notice the next phrase. Peter says, "He has given us new birth into a living hope *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*"

So it's not only mercy. This new birth is ours, secondly, by means of Christ's triumphant work on what we call Easter morning. Or, if I can put it this way...

B. It's ours on the basis of our union with Christ. What's that mean? It means we experience what we experience because Christ experienced what Christ experienced. And by being connected to Christ, in *union* with Christ, we receive the merit of His work.

When you unpack this clause, *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, you find three things that Jesus accomplished for those of us who have been born again.

1. *Jesus lived the life we should have lived.* What kind of life did Jesus live? A holy life. An obedient to Scripture life. A God-glorifying life. A submissive to authorities life. A return good for evil life. A suffering unjustly but joyfully life. That's the kind of life He lived, the kind of life we should have lived, but haven't, not one of us.

But through our union with Christ, the merit of what Christ did becomes ours. When we are born again, our Father gives us the fruit of His precious and perfect Son's life.

Jesus talked about it in John 15. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing (5)."

But it's not just His life that's the basis of our hope. It's His death, too.

2. *Jesus died the death we should have died.* Of course, that's the inevitable penalty for sin, *death*. "The wages of sin is death (Rom 3:23)." And that's why Jesus died, not for His own sin for He had none, but for ours. He died the death that we should have died.

Peter ponders this thought throughout his letter. In 1:18-20, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times **for your sake**."

In 2:21, "**Christ suffered for you**." In 2:24, "He himself **bore our sins** in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."

In 3:18, "For **Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous**, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit."

Friends, we all deserve to die. We've all violated God's law. But if we're united to Christ through faith, we *have* died. He died in our place. So when He died, we died, which means the penalty for our sin has already been met.

But that's not all, for that's not all Jesus did. First, Jesus lived the life we should have lived. Second, Jesus died the death we should have died. Third...

3. *Jesus was raised from the dead so we could live again.* Look at our text again. God the Father has given us (and the "us" is defined back in verses 1-2, those the Father has chosen, the Spirit has sanctified, and now obey Jesus having been transformed by faith in the merit of His blood) new birth *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*.

So God the Father did what He did for us (gave us new birth) on the basis of what His Son did (His resurrection). If we've been united with the Son by saving faith, we then experience what the Son experienced. Though dead, He came out of His tomb alive. Likewise, though dead, we came out of our spiritual tombs alive.

So we have experienced new birth because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Never forget that. We who were once dead were made alive because He is alive!

The key event in all of human history is the death AND resurrection of Jesus Christ. You can't separate the two. Yes, we thank God for the cross. But were it not for the empty tomb, the cross would mean nothing, for lots of great men have died. But only One has conquered death! And His resurrection is the basis of this benefit, our new birth.

Have you experienced the miracle of the new birth? Have you been born again? If so, that miracle was made possible because of the resurrection of Christ. And it's yours now because of your union with Christ by faith.

Friends, it's as if we were there. When Jesus died, we were united with Him. And when He left His tomb, we walked out with Him. He had us in mind, and did what He did for our benefit.

And when we enter God's family, when we "get saved," it's because we have Him in mind, and place our trust in His work, believing He did it for us.

Paul talks about this in Romans 6. "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been **united with him like this in his death**, we will certainly also be **united with him in his resurrection** (Rom 6:3-5)."

So if this has happened to us, if we've experienced the miracle of the new birth, and that on the basis of Christ's resurrection and our union with Him, how should we respond? There's no question, for Peter tells us right here.

Take a look at the first word of verse 3. *Praise*. Peter begins His letter with a call to praise. He invites us to praise God for who He is and what He has done for us. That's what true Christian does. He calls attention to what God has done. He *praises* God.

And, of course, that's something we once did not do. We didn't praise God. We couldn't. We had no desire to. We ignored God, or tried to use Him for our own agendas. But the Father changed that! On the basis of His Son's resurrection, He made us His sons and daughters, giving us new birth into His family. And now we praise Him!

But there's more. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have received new birth. That's means we're in the family of God now. And that means we're entitled to a second benefit.

II. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have an eternal inheritance (4-5).

They go together, don't they? Being a child of the Father and then receiving what belongs to the Father. Sonship and inheritance.

Notice, verses 4-5, "...and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, 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."

Don't miss the tie with verse 3. It's on the basis of His Son's resurrection that the Father has given us new birth, and now He gives us an inheritance too. It's all ours because of what Christ did on resurrection morning!

Now what's true of this inheritance that's ours? We're told four things here.

A. It is permanent. "And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade." So this inheritance isn't like your earthly family's inheritance. That heirloom will eventually perish, or spoil, or fade. But this won't. It belongs to a realm on the other side of the grave, the side our Savior came out on on that first resurrection morning! I say *first* because ours is coming.

B. It is reserved in heaven. "Kept in heaven for you," says Peter. Peter doesn't say the inheritance *is* heaven, but that it's *kept* in heaven. Why in heaven? Because that's where the executor of the estate is. Our Savior is now in heaven, and He is the guarantee that all that the Father intends for us will be ours.

C. It is appropriated by faith. Notice verse 5, "Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed." Notice those words *through faith*. This is God's way. His gifts are appropriated *through faith*.

We're saved through faith (Eph 2:8). We receive Christ's righteousness through faith (Phil 3:9). We approach God through faith (Eph 3:12). We're justified through faith (Rom 5:1). And our inheritance is ours through faith.

But not just any faith. This isn't generic faith. As each of the texts I just cited indicates, the gifts of God are appropriated by faith *in Christ Jesus*. So if you've placed your faith in Christ Jesus (as He's revealed in the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments), then these are your possessions. You have been saved. You have received righteousness. You can approach God. You have been justified. You have an eternal inheritance.

And why did I insert those words *as He's revealed in the Scriptures*? Because there are millions who have faith in a different Jesus.

I googled the question, "What does Easter mean?" I clicked on the first answer on the page and it took me to an attractive webpage with these words on the first screen: "Jesus is the Son of God, our Savior and Redeemer. Because of Him, death is not the end, and life takes on new meaning. We can change, we can start over—and we can live again with God. This Easter, celebrate His life and discover all that's possible because of Him."¹

Sounds good, doesn't it? In fact, so much of what I read on the page sounded good, lots of Scripture. Then a link that took me to another page which said, "God Restored Christ's Church through Joseph Smith. The central truth of the restored church is that God is our Heavenly Father and we are His spirit children."

I was on the website mormon.org. When a Mormon says they believe in Jesus, please realize they're talking about a different Jesus.

This is serious. I googled another question. *Who is Jesus?* Do you know who provides the first answer people will read on that page? Mormon.org, which says it has 7,054 followers on Google+. According to Mormon teaching, Jesus is a man who evolved to become a god. He was our Elder brother who pointed the way, but isn't The Way. He is actually the brother of Lucifer and was born through physical incest.

So it's not just faith in Jesus. It's faith in the Jesus revealed in the Old and New Testaments period. If you want to enjoy God's inheritance, it's appropriated by putting your complete faith in this Jesus. There is no other Jesus who can do what Jesus did, died for our sins and conquered death to grant us resurrection life.

One more truth regarding our inheritance.

D. It will be revealed in the last time. Notice the end of verse 5, "Until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time." Our salvation, and the inheritance it secures, is certain (for it's "ready"), and it's already ours ("through faith"), but it's yet to be experienced in its fullness. That won't happen, says Peter, until it's "revealed in the last time."

And who will reveal it? The One who obtained it for us. More about that in verse 7.

This is ours, brothers and sisters. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have experienced new birth and are now children in the family of God. And as children, we're entitled to an inheritance, an eternal inheritance that is permanent, reserved in heaven, appropriated by faith, and will be revealed in the last time when Christ returns.

This past Wednesday Sherry and I went to the Mooney Warther museum in Dover, Ohio. And I got this. To the naked eye, it looks like a small piece of wood. In reality, it's so much more.

This piece of wood takes me back 45 years or so to a day that I went to visit a schoolmate's grandparent. I sat there in Mr. Warther's workshop and watched him take a

¹ Easter.mormon.org

little piece of light-weight basswood, pull out his knife, and make ten tiny cuts in the wood. It took maybe sixty seconds.

But when he was done, the object in the master craftsman's hand was no longer just a piece of wood. It had become... a working pair of pliers.

Yet there's more. At the museum this week I saw something else he made. Mooney once came home and told his wife he had a picture in his mind of something he just had to make. And so he took a little larger piece of wood, about a foot and a half in length, and shaped it into a special design. Then, over the next two months, from June 24 to August 28, 1913, he inserted 31,000 cuts into that block of wood.

First, he inserted ten cuts to make one set of pliers. Then he carved each handle into two more sets for a total of three. Then he carved each of those four handles into two more each for a total of seven sets, all branching from the first. Then he continued to branch out, further and further.

The result? A tree of 511 inter-connected working pliers, all from one piece of wood, from a shape he pictured in his mind, with no left over shavings. And when folded back together, all 511 pliers returned to the shape of the original block of wood.

His plier tree was put on display at the World's Fair in 1933. Professors at Case University studied the plier tree and said a person would need an advanced mathematical education to be able to design a block of wood of the correct shape to begin such a project. Mooney replied that he was glad he was told this after he made the tree and not before. He had a *second grade education*.

It's amazing what a master-craftsman can do when he puts his hands on something. And if that's true for another human being like us, just imagine what the Infinite Master-craftsman can do, the One who defeated death itself! Can you imagine what the new heavens and earth that He's fashioning will be like? No you can't, nor can I. But we'll experience it, if we know Christ, for not only do we have a new birth but an eternal inheritance, all because of His resurrection.

Yet there's one more benefit, and it's ours in the here and now.

III. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have present joy in trials (6-9).

Peter tells us about this in verses 6-9, "In this you greatly rejoice [in what's coming, our salvation and the experience of our inheritance in Christ], though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 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. 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, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

Because Jesus walked out of that tomb, it affects not only our past (God birthed us into His family), and our future (God will give us the full experience of our inheritance), but also our present. According to Peter, there are four things that are true of true Christians.

A. True Christians rejoice (6a). "In this you greatly rejoice." Of all people, Christians have reason to rejoice, and those who are thinking rightly *do*.

But about what? What is it that causes Christ-followers to rejoice? A nice sunny day? Good health? Food on the table? A job you enjoy? Having your family together? For sure, we should express thanks for those God-sent blessings, but the truth is, even non-Christians rejoice in those things.

What makes a true Christian rejoice? "*In this* you greatly rejoice." In what? In what God has given to us in the person of Jesus Christ, a salvation that we've experienced in

the new birth but will experience in its fullness when our Savior returns for us. That's what causes a true Christian to rejoice. In fact, *greatly* rejoice, according to Peter.

And keep in mind his audience. Who first read these words? People that Peter identifies in verse 1 as "God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered." These are a chosen by God yet displaced people, refugees who've had to run for their lives. But you're not just running, says Peter. You're *rejoicing* as you run.

B. True Christians suffer (6b-7). Notice the end of verse 6, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now." Stop there. Why are they rejoicing? Because of what God has done for them, and will when His Son returns. But what about now? "Though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials."

This too is the Christian experience. Rejoicing, yes. And suffering.

Now—in the present age. *For a little while*—a few weeks, months, perhaps years, but just a dot compared to the unending infinity that's coming. *You may have had to suffer grief*—all true Christians suffer, and the resulting grief is real. We're not stoics. We feel the pain. And the pain comes to us *in all kinds of trials*—so while all Christians suffer, they don't all suffer in the same way.

You say, "But why do *any* of them have to suffer? If God could give us new birth in the past and an inheritance in the future, surely He could eliminate the suffering in the present, couldn't He? What's the point?"

Some say there *is* no point. Thousands are preaching a health and wealth gospel, all over the world, with millions giving their souls to it, and then often turning away from Jesus when He doesn't produce the health and wealth He supposedly promised.

Oh, the health and wealth is coming, but that's in the age to come, not in this age. In this age, Christians suffer. But even the suffering fulfills a purpose, which is why we can rejoice in it.

And what's the purpose? What's the point of these trials? Peter tells us in verse 7, "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."

God wants our maximum joy in the coming age, and His maximum glory. That's what present suffering is all about. He intends to use our present suffering to refine our faith and prove it genuine.

That brings us to a third mark. One, true Christians rejoice. Two, they suffer.

C. True Christians love a person they cannot see (8). "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."

I love that verse. The world doesn't understand who we are, but this is it. We are a people who love a Person we've never seen. And that explains everything about everything.

Why do we live holy lives? Because we love this Person who is holy. Why do we gather every week in this place? Because we love this Person and delight in worshipping Him. Why do we read this Book? Because we love this Person, and this Book is His self-revelation. Why do we call sin *sin*?

For instance, why not call homosexuality an acceptable alternate lifestyle, as so many are doing? The answer again is, because we love this Person, and believe what He says in His Word. We believe what He says about marriage in Matthew 19:4 ("Have you not read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female," see also Romans 1:18ff, 1 Cor 6:9-11), and about sins against marriage in Matthew 19:6 ("What God has joined together [the male and female two verses earlier], let man not separate").

And so we must call sin *sin*, whether it's someone else's sin, or our own. It's because we love this Person who died for sinners, and we love those for whom He died, and want them to know and love Him too.

It boils down to this.

D. True Christians live for something that's out of this world (9). "...for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

That's it. Not only do true Christians rejoice, and suffer, and love a person they cannot see, but they're living for something. Not something in this world, but something that's out of this world, *the salvation of their souls*.

So we've seen three benefits this morning, benefits that true Christians enjoy because of Jesus' resurrection. One, the new birth. Two, an eternal inheritance. And three, present joy in trials. They're all ours because of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

"Pastor Brad, you keep referring to *true* Christians. Are you saying that *not* everyone who calls himself a Christian is?"

Yes, and I'm saying it because Jesus said it. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 7:21)." Just because a person says something doesn't make it true. Which is why we need to make this personal.

Make It Personal: Ask yourself these bottom-line questions...

1. *Do you believe in the risen Christ?* I'm not asking, do you believe the tomb is empty? I'm not even asking, do you believe that Jesus was raised the dead. Those are historical facts. I'm asking something more specific. *Do you believe in the risen Christ?*

This is personal. Do you believe in the person who came to earth to rescue sinners, who died on a cross to make a payment for their sins, and who then, having finished making the ransom payment, walked out of His tomb alive?

The Bible says, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Rom 10:9)."

Salvation isn't something you inherit from your parents, or earn by your good deeds, but rather, something you receive from one person. I'm asking, do you believe in that person, the risen Lord Jesus Christ?

2. *Does the evidence support your claim?* Consider again the evidence. True Christians rejoice because they've been born again and know they have an eternal inheritance. True Christians suffer because they live in ways that make them different, even offensive at times, to this world. True Christians love a person they can't see, and they love Him more than anything or anyone else in the universe. And true Christians live for something out of this world, for they know it's theirs.

Does this evidence describe you? If it does, praise God! Give praise to the One who gave you new birth through the resurrection of His Son! If not, be honest about it, with yourself, and most importantly, with the Lord.

3. *What makes you happy?* "In this you greatly rejoice," says Peter to people who were suffering. They rejoiced because they knew what they had was of far greater worth than what they didn't have in this world. Is that what makes you happy?

4. *Who do you really love most?* To be a Christian is to be a person who loves Jesus. But to be a rejoicing Christian in tough times, you must love Jesus *most*. Not Jesus plus. But Jesus *period*. "Whom having not seen, you love."