

# Easter Celebration: “God’s Salvation”

## 1 Peter 1:3-9

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[SERMON MANUSCRIPT]

### Introduction

Happy Easter everyone! We rejoice together with church family and friends because Christ is risen! Our message for this Easter Celebration service is called, “God’s Salvation” from 1 Peter 1:3-9.

I didn’t mention it a few weeks ago, but now I can say that it’s been a little more than a year that our entire world has been under the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic. If I think back to around this time last year, we were still trying to figure out our responses to this virus. It’s almost funny to remember that we were wondering if we could meet in-person for Easter in 2020; now it seems like we’ve been meeting online for ages.

Since those days, we’ve all experienced maybe the most difficult time we’ve faced collectively in our generation. What has happened? Schools- from kindergartens to universities- have all shifted to being at home; simple, daily things like shopping, dining out, and socializing have become super-stressful; wearing masks, using hand-sanitizer, and staying one meter away from others is the social norm; we’ve either lost our jobs or feel stress from our work like never before; all sicknesses are worrisome and visits to the hospital now feel high-risk; loneliness, anxiety, depression, and even suicide are concerns for ourselves and others around us; we’ve suffered the loss of so many loved ones in our families and social circles and cannot properly say our goodbyes and grieve with others.

If there is any time that we need hope- not just fluffy positivity but *real* hope- it is now. But actually, I would say that we have *always* needed a greater hope, but now we may *feel it* now like never before. So this Easter, let’s put our attention on God’s salvation that is the true, living hope for all of us here, no matter who we are, what we’ve done, or where we are.

### Proposition

This is related to the “one thing” for today’s sermon, the main message for us from 1 Peter 1:3-9:

The “one thing” from 1 Peter 1:3-9:

***Put our hope in God’s salvation,  
focusing our faith on Christ.***

### Organizational Statement

We’re going to look at how 1 Peter 1:3-9 gives us three specific aspects of God’s salvation that anchor our hope, as we focus our faith on Christ: 1) first, put our hope in the secure inheritance of God’s salvation; 2) second, put our hope in the refining process of God’s salvation; and 3) third, put our hope in the joyful journey of God’s salvation.

### Scripture Reading

Peter the apostle wrote this open letter to the churches in these Roman provinces of Asia Minor. He wrote this letter in A.D. 62-63, a time that was extremely difficult for believers, as they faced terrible persecution for their allegiance to Jesus Christ. It was in this situation that Peter wrote these words. Let’s read this Scripture now.

1 Peter 1:3-9 (ESV):

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, 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. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

This is God's Word.

## Sermon Outline

### I. See verses 1:3-5: The Secure Inheritance.

#### A. The 1<sup>st</sup> overall lesson is *God causes his people to be born again into a secure inheritance (3-5).*

1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV): *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, 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.*

1. In the verses before this, at the very beginning of this entire book, Peter wrote how God is the architect of this great salvation for his people.
  - a) God the Father planned every detail of history; God the Spirit did the transforming work in his people's hearts; God the Son shed his blood on the cross to wash away their sins. And then Peter shares these words of praise in verse 3: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!* Did you know that a simple way to understand "blessed" is "happy"? So God was absolutely and totally happy about his plan of salvation and is totally happy about the execution of his plan of salvation- even right now, among us!
  - b) Now Peter God more personal and said in verse 3: *According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again.* God's salvation is all because of his great mercy towards people; and his great mercy caused people to be *born again*. This meant that God would give people a "spiritual rebirth": given a new heart to desire and know God; enabled to trust God; and forgiven of sins and reconciled with God. It is a definitive, life-changing experience that is a gift from God! Then the apostle said that Christians were *born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* This "hope" is real- not just blind optimism or a neat mind-trick- but based on the historical event of Jesus' resurrection. Let me explain why this is significant.
  - c) Illustration: The core Christian message that we call the "Good News" is based on the historical event of Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Historical events affect the course of future events; the more significant the historical event, the more it impacts the course of other events that follow. For example, if Napoleon won the Battle of Waterloo on June 1815, who knows- maybe most of the world would be speaking French instead of English right now. Or if Japan won the Battle of Midway in World War II in June 1942, who knows- maybe Indonesia and other Asian countries would still be Japanese colonies. But the reason the world is exactly the way that it is right now is because these historical events happened and affected the course of other events to lead to the world we have today. In the same way, the historical facts

that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead have altered the fate of humans for eternity!

- d) Context: This is what we celebrate today on Easter! Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried on Good Friday. He was three days- Friday, Saturday, and Sunday- but early that Sunday morning when three women (Mary Magdalene, Joana, and Mary the mother of Jesus) went to take care of Jesus' body, they found the tomb empty! An angel of the Lord told them that Jesus had risen, and they rushed back to the other disciples to tell them. Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself- Jesus was indeed not there! It was only later that day that Jesus came to where all the disciples were and they saw and touched him, they talked to him, and they ate with him. In that short time that Jesus was back, over 500 people were eyewitnesses that Jesus was truly alive again! People like Peter and countless others over the last two thousand years staked their whole lives on this historical fact and on what he believed their *living hope* was.
2. In verses 4-5, Peter took a bit more space reassuring the church that their inheritance would be eternal life with God in our own resurrected and glorified bodies.
- a) There were four phrases that he used to describe this inheritance. He said that it is *imperishable*: it will not decay and is incorruptible. It is *undefiled*: pure and untainted. It is *unfading*: it will retain its wonderful, pristine character for eternity. It is *kept in heaven for you*: it means literally that it is guarded with an eye constantly on it- kept under God's close observation and perfect watch. This is the great promise that those who believe in Jesus Christ are *born again* into! They were not born into something tragic or hopeless- they were given new spiritual life that would end in something meaningful and hopeful!
- b) Peter went on to expand on this truth in verse 5: *...who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation to be revealed in the last time*. He said that those who are born again- while living on earth as "elect exiles"- are protected by all the muscle and might of their Heavenly Father. That's why in another place in the New Testament, believers are called to take up the "shield of faith" (Ephesians 6:16) because they will certainly face many fire-tipped arrows aimed at them by the evil one himself: to pursue idols that they think will provide security or satisfaction; to harden their hearts and selectively obey; or to abandon Christ all together. Following Jesus in this world will have its challenging situations and these "arrows" are the ways we are tempted to sin in response to them. We wield our faith though- trusting that it is God's power guarding us so that we are never out of God's care and protection on our way to paradise.
- c) Context: But what if we feel like our faith is too weak? I have certainly felt this way, especially many times during this pandemic, as you probably have as well. The thing we have to keep preaching to ourselves is that when we are exercising faith, it's not based on us at all, but on the object that we are putting our faith in. *Show thanos.jpg*. For example, let's say that I had to fight Thanos- just plain old me without any superpowers, I would get crushed. Even if I had immense confidence in myself- being well-rested, doing CrossFit for a few weeks, taking some Muay Thai lessons- I'd get crushed! In my own strength, even if I sincerely believed that I could, I wouldn't stand a chance against Thanos. But let's say that all the Avengers, the Guardians of the Galaxy, and other Marvel superheroes fought on my behalf- I'd be secure to also engage the fight- hold up my shield of faith (probably made out of vibranium) and trust these superheroes got it taken care of. I am *guarded well*.
- d) Context: You see, the strength of our faith is not based on us in any way, but rather on the reliability of the object of our faith. Even though Thanos is powerful; those superheroes will always win! God's power- shown in the resurrection of Jesus Christ- means that we will always win! We might face tremendous, powerful forces outside us and even inside us that tempt us to abandon Christ. But we are strong and secure

in God's power that guards us. Being "born again" is by faith alone in Christ alone- that he cleanses us from our sins, pays for our debt of sin, and gives us new life. As we carry on throughout our earthly lives- through all its twists and turns- we continue to live by faith alone in Christ alone. We can know and trust that our future inheritance is secure. *Let me share a "life application" for this first part of "putting our hope in the secure inheritance of God's salvation."*

- **Life Application #1:** How can I get to know the object of my faith, Jesus Christ, better?
- This is in order to develop a greater hope in your secure inheritance. We've been saying "grow in intimacy with Christ together" this season and we'll continue to say it even now. Be intentional to start a new Bible reading plan this season (by yourself or with someone else- friend, LG member, spouse, child). Be intentional to build in much-needed time with God in worship and prayer too!
- **Transition:** So the first overall lesson is that God causes his people to be born again into a secure inheritance. Therefore, we can put our hope in God's salvation, focusing our faith on Christ. Now let's go ahead and look at the second aspect of God's salvation to put our hope in as we focus our faith on Christ...

## II. See verses 6-7: The Refining Process.

### A. The 2<sup>nd</sup> overall lesson is *God's people grieve over trials but rejoice in the refining process (6-7).*

1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESV): *6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

1. The reality of the church's current situation was a stark contrast to the promised future inheritance.
  - a) Peter wrote in verse 6, *In this you rejoice*- they rejoiced in their secure inheritance that was talked about in verses 3-5. But look at the contrast: *...though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials*. So although they rejoiced in their secure inheritance, they were also *grieved* by the various trials they faced. They lived in a society that was hostile to Christians; they faced difficulties that challenged their faith in Jesus Christ.
  - b) Back in the first century, public opinion of Christians was fueled by suspicion, prejudice, and intolerance. There were a lot of false reports throughout the Roman Empire about them. There were rumors that they were cannibalistic (because people had heard that they "ate" Christ's body and "drank" Christ's blood) and incestuous (because they referred to each other "brother" and "sister"). They were easy targets of hatred- Nero blamed the Christian community for causing a great fire that burned down much of Rome (even though it was actually him).
  - c) Context: Peter stated here that grieving over trials is a natural, acceptable response. The thing about the Bible is that it doesn't try to hide the messes and pains that we inevitably experience in life. Peter says it that in light of the promise of eternal life in heaven, the messiness and painfulness experienced in our lives is only *for a little while*. But the Bible doesn't try to ignore or cover it up. The special term that we've been talking a lot about during this pandemic is "lamenting." In the Bible, people of faith lament by talking to God about the pain they face for the purpose of renewing their confidence in God. We don't have to deny the sorrow and anguish we feel before God- we can tell God. This is what Tim Keller wrote about how to view our grief in his book *On Death*:

- o "Christians have a hope that can be 'rubbed into' our sorrow and anger the way salt is rubbed into meat. Neither stifling grief nor giving way to despair is right. Neither repressed anger nor unchecked rage is good for your soul. But pressing hope into your grief makes you wise, compassionate, humble, and tenderhearted. Grieve fully yet with profound hope!" – Tim Keller, *On Death*
  - d) Context: It's okay to lament over your family or business going bankrupt or losing your job. It's okay to lament that you are lonely, depressed, or suffering. It's okay to grieve over traumas or abuses you've experienced; it's okay to grieve over issues with your children or marriage; it's okay to grieve over loved ones getting serious illnesses or passing away.
2. But Peter also taught that these trials could be handled with faith- just look at how the apostle stated how trials strengthen our faith in verse. 7.
- a) He wrote this: *so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* Peter used an illustration that people in the first century would be familiar with, which is the refining process for metals. *Show gold.jpg*. For example, crude gold is mined but still has plenty of impurities mixed into it. So, it has to be refined: it needs to be heated up with fire to over 1,000 degrees Celsius so that it melts down and the unwanted metals separates out or burns off.
  - b) Peter said that their faith was refined through the “fires” of the trials that they were facing. Earlier he hinted that this refining process might actually be *necessary*- that one of God's purposes in bringing people into these trials was so that their faith could be purified and strengthened. Faith *can* be refined in the trials of life. We are weaned off our dependence on ourselves or anyone or anything else but instead learn dependence on God alone- this is great thing! We find no pleasure in empty pursuits and cheap substitutes but instead learn to wait for God's strength and grace to sustain us- this is a great thing! We grow thankful for what we have and a healthy dissatisfaction for the best this world has to offer but instead look forward to paradise with God forever! And this- this faith in Christ now- is more precious than any amount of gold!
  - c) Context: Brothers and sisters in Christ, may our hearts not become overwhelmed by the trials that we face in life so that we lose our faith in the Lord! May we not become cynical, hardened, or numb to the refining process of God's salvation that you are doing in us! The truth is that God loves us like the perfect, heavenly Father that he is- so he's developing in us one of the most valuable things we can have in our lives! I read this book a while ago called *Grit* by Angela Duckworth. One of things she writes is that “grit”- which she defines as passion and perseverance for long-term goals- is one of the best things they can instill into their kids. For example, we have our kids learn piano not necessarily because we expect them to be concert pianists, but to learn how to “grit” out a piece of music: from not knowing it at all; to learning the notes, dynamics, tempo, etc. step by step; to practicing so the neurons and muscles build strong connections; so they learn how to not give up and to appreciate the beauty of music. If earthly parents know that this is good for their kids even though we are flawed; how much more does our perfect Heavenly Father also want to develop “faith-grit” in our lives!
  - d) Context: May I add one more comment to some of us here? Maybe some of us for whom all of this stuff is new or so unfamiliar, God is using some difficult situations in your life to get your attention. God is helping you see that actually the *most valuable* thing in life is faith in the biblical message of the Gospel, in Jesus Christ who died on the cross for your sins and rose again to give you new spiritual birth! Maybe there are others here who have wandered pretty far away from the Lord this past year- the different trials and tests you've been facing are the loving hand of discipline by your Heavenly Father; he's been refining you in some fires so that faith- no matter how

weak or small- comes out towards Jesus, who is a trustworthy and reliable object of faith!

- e) But there's actually even a *greater* purpose to the trials that we face than just mere grit: it is so that Christ may be praised and glorified and honored! We may lament now in our lives; we may have so many questions left unanswered during our lifetimes; we may carry many scars from wounds we've endured. But in the end when Jesus Christ comes back in full *revelation*, there will be complete closure as God reveals himself and the purposes of all these events and circumstances in our lives. *Here's another "life application" this time for the second part of "putting our hope in the refining process of God's salvation."*

→ **Life Application #2:** How can I rejoice in the trials that I am facing in my life right now?

- We definitely can grieve before the Lord honestly. He can take it! And he wants to talk to you about it! We can also identify what is being refined out of our hearts and lives as we reflect on our own and also as we maybe discuss with close friends, disciplers, and family members. This is your God-given opportunity to learn how to depend on, cherish, and love Jesus more!

→ **Transition:** So the second overall lesson is that God's people grieve over trials but rejoice in the refining process. Therefore, we can put our hope in God's salvation, focusing our faith on Christ. Praise the Lord! Let's tackle the third and final aspect of God's salvation to put our hope in as we focus our faith on Christ...

### III. See verses 8-9: The Joyful Journey.

#### A. The 3<sup>rd</sup> overall lesson is *God multiplies God-glorifying love, faith, and joy within his people (8-9).*

1 Peter 1:8-9 (ESV): *8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

1. It's really important to notice what happens as our faith gets refined through trials, as Peter began to explain in the tail end of verse 7.
  - a) To say it again in a different way, the end result of faith that lasts until Jesus comes back is this unfettered, abounding, wholehearted worship of him. Then in verse 8 Peter wrote even more about this: *Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory...* This so strange and crazy if you think about it! What else comes out of God's work of salvation- from being born again, through the faith-refining process of trials, while waiting faithfully for the promised inheritance is that God's people grow in love for him and they grow in their belief in him and they grow in their joy in him. It is *inexpressible*- nothing really quite explains it- but it is glorious because it's all a gracious and powerful work of God in a person!
  - b) This is what Peter himself experienced in his life. He definitely didn't expect the up-and-down journey that it became when Jesus simply invited him to follow him and "make fishers of men." Those early days were exciting but also full of teaching moments- mostly when he put his foot in his mouth in front of Jesus! The last days of Jesus' life on earth were especially hard and unforgettable. Jesus prayed in the Garden; Peter fell asleep. Jesus was arrested there and Peter tried to fight back valiantly, but the Lord just kind of gave himself up. Peter pursued closely waiting for his chance to help Jesus escape, but while waiting at the high priest's house, the realities and fears crept in and he denied knowing Jesus not once but three times! For three days he was in absolute misery and despair because of how he'd failed Jesus. But after all the reports that Jesus was alive, Peter was still drawn to seek him out. And there on the beach at the Sea of Galilee, Jesus forgave Peter and gave him his

commission to “feed his sheep.” Peter embraced this for the rest of his life. He could introduce himself here as an “apostle of Jesus Christ” but he knew before God he was a nobody. He grew in loving Jesus; he grew in believing in Jesus; he grew in his joy as he followed Christ!

- c) So, the wise old apostle tells the church this, as if reinforcing to them that these are true statements to the first century church and all future generations after. Although they never *saw* Jesus, they know what he taught and what he did for them in dying on the cross. They understood and appreciated this all the more through the trials they went through, so they truly did *love* Jesus more and more. Although they did not *see* Jesus physically in their situations, they did experience his forgiveness, cleansing, comfort, and new life- it was undeniable in their hearts, so they truly did *believe* Jesus more and more. And although their trials might not end and they would inevitably face more to come in their earthly lives, they could still truly *rejoice* in Jesus. In fact, their joy became more and more inexpressible and filled with the weight of God’s presence, peace, and worthiness.
2. This passage ends with verse 9: *...obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls*. An important goal of our faith is to experience God’s salvation at the end of it all!
    - a) The “outcome” means the end or the goal; the end or goal of their faith is the realization of God’s salvation for themselves. Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is confidence in our hope and assurance about what is not seen. In our lifetimes, the final stage of God’s salvation- our return home and the complete restoration of God’s Kingdom- will be a reality. Faith will not be needed anymore because it will be seen! We can cherish the refining process; we can cherish the journey along the way; but the end goal is the best by far!
    - b) Context: This is like the idea of a “road trip.” In 2019 my family did a massive road trip in the U.S. We started down south in a city in Florida called Tampa; then we drove up the east coast of the U.S. stopping by cities like Jacksonville, Raleigh, Washington DC, Philadelphia, and New York City; we then drove to the middle of the country to cities like Grand Rapids, Traverse City, and Chicago; we finally drove down through Indianapolis, Nashville, Atlanta, and ended up back in Tampa. It was a long, hard trip, but we loved the journey! It was so much joy to visit friends and loved ones in these places; it was so much joy to drive and talk in the car as a family; it was so much joy to eat all these kinds of foods and try stuff like Chick-Fil-A for the first time; it was so much joy to talk about our ministry in Indonesia and get others excited about it too. These are all the joys of a road trip! But the end goal of a road trip is to get somewhere; our goal for this particular road trip was to get partners on our team who would pray and support us. Our end goal was to get back to Indonesia, our home, to serve the Lord where he called our family.
    - c) For the Christian, Peter taught that God was responsible for them being born again and starting this journey; they could cherish the secure promises of God’s salvation. He then taught that although they were grieved by various trials, they also rejoiced in them as God’s way to test their faith; they could cherish the refining process of God’s salvation. The apostle ended by explaining how their love, belief in, and rejoicing in Jesus Christ would grow and develop; they could cherish the joyful journey of God’s salvation. And the purpose of this all was so that they could make it until the end of the journey- reunited with their spiritual family in their eternal home with the Lord God forever!
    - d) Context: I want to invite those who might be sensing the Lord calling them to begin this journey today to take that step of faith to trust and follow Jesus. Of course, we want you to “count the cost”: following Jesus is not easy- as I hope you have heard in this message- but it is trusting that Jesus saves us, takes care of us, and guards us until the glorious God’s promises are fully realized in eternity. When God makes you “born again,” you will believe in Jesus as your Savior and choose to follow him as his disciple.

If this you today, make sure you also let someone here know as well, so we can affirm your decision, follow up with any questions you have, and help you with your next steps to take as a Christian. *I want to share one last "life application" for the third part of "putting our hope in the joyful journey of God's salvation."*

→ **Life Application #3:** How can I start, get back on, or appreciate my journey today?

- I want to give an invitation to start or get back on this journey. As I mentioned just now, God, maybe today is you take that first step of following Jesus. Or maybe this past season or year you fell off track but Easter and other holidays are helpful to reflect on the journey that God has put you on, and to think how he has cultivated your love, faith, and joy in him.

→ **Transition:** So the third overall lesson is that God multiplies God-glorifying love, faith, and joy within his people. Therefore, we can put our hope in God's salvation, focusing our faith on Christ. *We'll go back to our live Easter Celebration now, to respond to God's Word together and observe communion together.*

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