

Script: Pastor Frank R. Johnson

Resurrection Sunday 2026 “The Basis of True Hope” (1 Peter 1:3-5)

Take a first look.

I. LISTEN TO THIS CHRISTMAS letter from Bruce and Rose Bliven that appeared in Ann Landers' column in 1976:

“At 86, Rose and I live by the rules of the elderly: If the toothbrush is wet, you have brushed your teeth. If the bedside radio is warm in the morning, you left it on all night. If you are wearing one brown shoe and one black shoe, you have a pair just like it somewhere in the closet.

Try not to mind when a friend tells you on your birthday that a case of prune juice has been donated in your name to a retirement home. I stagger when I walk, and small boys follow me making bets on which way I'll go next. This upsets me. Children shouldn't gamble. Like most elderly people, we spend many happy hours in front of the TV set. We rarely turn it on.”¹

II. We must remember, temporary citizens of earth, one day we will all be checking our toothbrushes to see if we have used them that morning. I realize this more and more with every birthday. “What is your life?” asks James. “You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (James 4:14, NIV). What then?

III. Peter helps us here. He reminds us that our identity as followers of Jesus is shaped by our eternal relationship with God: we know where we have come from, and we know where we are going because of Jesus. Then, when Peter turns his heart to praise God, he reflects on what it is that gives us confident hope. He knows that his readers are facing imminent trouble for their faith in Christ in this temporary world. We need what he describes: a basis of hope that is not founded on that which is temporary and vulnerable. We need a hope that is as secure as the character of God. We can have it today.

Take a closer look at 1 Peter 1:3-5.

I. OUR HOPE IS BASED ON THE MERCY OF GOD. v. 3a

1. *It is the mercy of God in Christ which makes possible our “new birth.”* This is a mercy that has two sides.

a. We have received mercy before the court of heaven. Though we deserve to be cast out because of our stubborn hearts and sin, He offers to accept us because of what Jesus His Son has done for us at the cross, dying in our place, for our sin.

b. We have received mercy as the blessing of God based on His covenant with His people. God *is* merciful, and so He acts toward us in keeping with His character.

¹ From *Biblical Illustrator*.

A—Have we found hope through the mercy of God?

I—Jacques Plante was formerly a goalie in the National Hockey League from 1952-1973. After having his face cut open by the puck flying toward him, he was the first to create and wear a protective mask. According to Wikipedia, “He was considered to be one of the most important innovators in hockey. He played for the Montreal Canadiens from 1953 to 1963. During his tenure, the team won the Stanley Cup six times, including five consecutive wins.”² George Barna once told this about him: He “had just come off the ice after a particularly poor performance and responded to a badgering reporter with the following remark: ‘How would you like a job where, if you made a mistake, a big red light goes on and 18,000 people boo?’”³

Why do they boo? They are judging him with strict justice. I fear that many people see God like that: just waiting to “Boo!” if we make an error. God is only like that if we force Him to be. He offers us *justification*—a pardon before the court of heaven because of the death of Jesus Christ in our place, for our sins. If we refuse justification, all that’s left is justice.

2. *This is a “living hope” to which we have been born anew.* When we are born again, from above, by the Spirit of God, we enter a life, we don’t just sign up for a future experience.

A—Surely, we have not just signed up for heaven; we have entered the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ. We have been inducted into the army of heaven.

I—We have enlisted to fight on God’s side. I don’t doubt that our son Michael has a much better understanding of this Biblical image than I do, since he spent almost ten years with the regular Army, and now serves as a Chaplain in the Washington Army National Guard. He just (March 2026) took a job for the National Guard at their headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. When he was recruited into the army, he was required to take Basic Training to be a soldier. Even though Michael was recruited to play the piano for the Army Band, he was still required to pass the training that every soldier takes. He became qualified both on the M-4, the M-9, the piano, and the guitar. To be called a soldier, he not only learned to wear the uniform correctly (which is part of basic training, also), but he also learned to live by the discipline and honor which that uniform represents. So it is in the army of God. The Church is the spiritual fighting force of God. We don’t wage war as the world does (see 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 on this). We fight a spiritual battle with prayer and disciplined thinking and persuasive speaking.

When God calls us to Himself, we don’t just say to the Almighty, “Hey, I bet you are glad to have me in your division. Listen, I signed up to receive ‘the victor’s crown of life’ (cf. James 1:12) in heavenly glory at the resurrection in that Celestial City. In the meantime, I’m going to enjoy a generous life-long leave in the City of Destruction. There are a lot of thrills and pleasures to be had, and since I will be spending eternity in glory, I thought I might just indulge a bit prior to then. Let me know when my time is drawing near, and I will get out my uniform (man, I hope it will still fit!) and get ready for the awards ceremony. Um, no.

In the same way, we are born from above to live the life that Jesus makes possible by His Spirit living in and through us. We are living by our hope in Christ right now. That hope will be fulfilled in the future.

II. OUR HOPE IS BASED ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS. v. 3b

1. *This roots our hope in the soil of genuine history.* Jesus rose from the dead during the

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Plante.

³ George Barna, *The Power of Vision*, (Regal, 1992), p. 106.

time of the Roman occupation of Israel, so we no longer consider physical death the end. It is only the beginning. When we pass *from* this life, we pass *into* the fulness of life that God has promised to His children. So, our hope is not just a “feel-good, subjective, finger-crossing” hope. It is as solid as the historical resurrection of Jesus: “Look at my hands and my feet,” said Jesus to His disciples after His resurrection. “It is I myself! Touch me and see” (Luke 24:39, NIV). Even Jesus’ closest followers were reluctant to accept the evidence that He had been raised to life again, until, as it were, it was staring them in the face. Then, once empowered by the Holy Spirit, they went out fearlessly in His name.

2. *This roots our hope in the life-giving power of God.* Thankfully, our hope is not based on what we do for God, or even how well we can describe His nature and work. He has the power; we are weak and need the power of genuine life and hope.

A—Have we centered our confidence about the future in the resurrection of Jesus Christ by the power of God?

I—Thomas Oden is a theologian who was converted (his words) to orthodox Christian belief by reading the early church fathers of the first eight Christian centuries. In his book *Two Worlds*, he reported on his own experience of coming to terms with the future—death and beyond.

“I had coronary surgery on July 17, 1989. They cut me down the middle, opened me up, went into the coronary arteries, took out those plugged up, and inserted an unobstructed artery taken from my leg, devising a three-way bypass of clogged-up arteries. I almost died. I am incredibly fortunate and blessed simply to be here.

“I learned something wonderful from that. I would not have learned it had I not been in that situation of extreme limitation. What I learned is simple: I am not afraid to die. I did not know that before this experience. I did not have anything that I could describe as an out-of-body experience, or a beyond-death experience or any unusual or paranormal sort of premonition of precognitive experience. My awareness of death was completely conscious and based upon simple observation. I woke up after the surgery so weak I could hardly raise my finger. I was hooked up to biofeedback equipment that signaled when I was exerting too much energy. I could set off the buzzer by simply raising my hand. But the pivotal lesson hinged on a New Testament text: that God’s “grace is sufficient for you, for [God’s] strength is made perfect through our weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). I learned that through this experience.”⁴ Professor Oden has since completed his journey to the Celestial City, and he knows this better than we do:

“Because *He* lives, I can face tomorrow; Because *He* lives, all fear is gone; Because I know Who holds the future, and life is worth the living just because *He* lives” (The Gaithers got this right, didn’t they?).

III. OUR HOPE IS BASED ON THE CERTAINTY OF GOD’S PROMISE. vv. 4-5

1. *The future of God’s people is a guaranteed inheritance.* This word links our hope with the hope of God’s people in the past. Their inheritance was the Promised Land. They were delivered from slavery in Egypt and brought to a new land based on the promise and by the power of God.

Now the future hope of God’s people is a new inheritance, a heavenly country. We don’t anticipate a New World Order of political freedom brought about by Christians taking over the government. We anticipate a New Universal Order with Jesus recognized by every breathing

⁴ Thomas Oden, *Two Worlds* (IVP, 1992), p. 116.

person as the Lord of all—a new heaven and earth where righteousness dwells.

a. This inheritance can't *perish*.

I—This present body is quite perishable. I feel it every time I play golf. Old players never quit, they just buy more props—knee braces, ankle braces, back supports. They never quit, they just take time off for the most recent reconstructive surgeries. I remember the greetings in the locker room at Central Washington University after playing basketball during what was called The Wellness Hour at noon. They went something like this: “Hey, how’s the knee since the surgery last fall?” “Not bad. I was only away [from basketball, he means] for two months, and then I was right back to 3-5 days a week.” Or, “Hey, where did you get that 10-inch ankle brace? I’m gonna get me one of those.” Or, “Wow, what happened to your chin? Oh, yesterday? Yeah, I couldn’t make it yesterday. At least I didn’t do that to you (this time)!” I believe that our local District Attorney still flinches when I walk by him. I have no idea why (😊). Some time ago on a Monday, just before playing nine holes of golf, I bumped into a slightly older friend who used to play basketball at the Wellness Hour. He played almost every day. He told me he had to move to Arizona to keep from going up there all the time. After a year or so away, his doctor told him that he was finally recovering his health and strength. How much we should look forward to an inheritance in the resurrection that will not *perish*!

b. This inheritance will never *spoil*. It is not polluted by even the slightest bit of sin. We have a home ahead in which righteousness dwells.

I—This inheritance will not be diminished by being mixed with unrighteousness. It will be pure and holy before God. Not a day passes but I have to struggle against temptation and sin. It begins in the thoughts; it desires to find expression in my words and actions. And yes, sometimes I fail. But I am looking ahead to life in a world where even temptation will not press upon me, where my soul and body are in harmony with the full purposes of God in Christ.

c. This inheritance will never *fade*.

I—In the Summer Olympic games in 2021, played a year late because of worldwide lockdowns due to COVID-19, a celebrated runner named Allyson Felix won a bronze medal in the 400 meters and shared the gold medal in the 4x400 meters. That made her total eleven Olympic medals, the most of any USA track and field contestant in Olympic History to that time. She had competed in five Olympic Games, beginning in 2004. She said that she runs for the glory of God who has given her such an ability.⁵ But she knows something that we also know. At the age of thirty-five, her ability was *fading*. With every year now, she understands that she will run a little slower. Speed is for the young, and she is moving away from that realm. Motherhood is her primary race now, and she intends to run that race for the glory of God, as well.

d. This inheritance is “kept in heaven for you,” says Peter.

I—I used to chuckle sometimes when I read some of those words of assurance on little placards at the bank. One of them said, “Deposits guaranteed by the full faith and credit of the United States government.” Somehow, I was not very reassured by that sign. “Backed by the full faith *and credit* of the United States”? That doesn’t give me all that much

⁵ USA Today in 2012. <https://www.movieguide.org/news-articles/5-christian-athletes-to-watch-at-the-tokyo-olympics.html>.

confidence, really. How about you? I'm sure whoever came up with that statement meant well. It just does not give much actual reassurance. It means that our hard-earned money is really only as safe as the *credit* of the United States! Am I the only one discomforted by this? In contrast, thankfully, both what we have received from God and what we have offered up to God are stored in heaven. There, they are backed by the full character and power of the living God, Creator of everything else outside of Himself! Now that is some guarantee on our deposit, isn't it?

2. *The future of God's people is guaranteed by His power to protect it.* He is the One who *shields* or *keeps* those who are His own. What security this promise brings to our hearts!

I—God's power is like a garrison of soldiers that surround the children of the King of the land, protecting from any outside threat. That is half of the meaning of this word.

I—God's power is also like a giant guardrail surrounding the deck of a great ocean liner. His power guarantees that those traveling toward their final homeland, those who have entered this life in Christ, will not fall overboard, at least not finally.

A—Are we trusting in God's power to keep us or are we fretfully trying to keep ourselves?

I—At the time it was completed in 1937, the Golden Gate Bridge was the longest suspension bridge in the world. During the first phase of the \$77 million project, 23 men fell to their deaths in the waters of the bay. Very few safety devices were used.

Before they began the second section, it was decided that something had to be done. Stout manila cords were fashioned into the largest net ever made (the cost was \$130,000—a mammoth sum in that day), and it was stretched out below where the crews were working. Was it worth it? Ask the 19 men who fell into it without being injured! As survivors they formed the "Halfway to Hell Club." I wish they had called it halfway to the Halfway to Heaven Club, but that is just me. Not only did that net save those 19 lives, the workmen completed the bridge in three-fourths the time because they were relieved of the fear of falling.

"God's great net of security," observed Chuck Swindoll, "spans this globe. No matter where His children live, He has stretched out beneath them His everlasting arms. As a result, every one of us can live and work freely and fearlessly, knowing that we are protected, safe, secure, sealed, and kept by Him."⁶

3. *This future is secured by faith.* It is "through faith" that we humans enter into such a security and accept such a promise.

A—Have we come to place our faith in what God has done for us in Christ, or are we vainly trusting in ourselves?

I—Trust can easily be misplaced. When we are trusting in that which is temporary: money, physical strength, beauty, social standing in the community, our own "wits," we can easily be disappointed. Ultimately, we will not be prepared for the future beyond death.

A United Press release in a Midwestern city told of a hospital where officials discovered that the firefighting equipment had never been connected. For 35 years it had been relied upon

⁶ *Eternal Security: The Assurance of Our Salvation* by Charles Swindoll. Zondervan, 1995, from *Biblical Illustrator*. See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLRCZAXfEa4>.

for the safety of the patients in case of emergency. But it had never been attached to the city's water main. The pipe that led from the building extended 4 feet underground—and there it stopped! The medical staff and the patients had felt complete confidence in the system. They thought that if a blaze broke out, they could depend on a nearby hose to extinguish it. But theirs was a false security. Although the costly equipment with its polished valves and well-placed outlets was adequate for the building, it lacked the most important thing—WATER!⁷

This is eerily similar to the Palisades fire that burned down a large span of Southern California in January of 2025. The firefighters hooked up their hoses to hydrants that had no water. The controversy that erupted after this was about blaming someone for not having enough foresight to be adequately prepared. They had put their hope in a system that was not ready.

To what is our hope connected today? It must not be merely an appearance of security based on things that are temporary. It must be connected to the Main Pipe of the living water that only Jesus has the power to supply.

Take it home (applications).

I. We must fix our hope firmly on the mercy of God. He acts toward us in keeping with His character, offering us forgiveness, not justice, if we will just receive its transforming power.

II. We must focus our hope clearly on what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

1. His mercy is seen at the cross.

2. His power is seen in the resurrection. He is risen!

III. We must entrust this present crisis, this present moment, to the care and promise of God and rest in Him ... alone.

⁷ Selected from Biblical Illustration database.