

## **“Even Angels”** (1 Peter 1:3–12)(4.16.23)

1 Peter 1:3–12 (NIV84) *Praise to God for a Living Hope*

<sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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,<sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

<sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,<sup>11</sup> trying to find out the time and circumstances to

which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.<sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

## **The word of God for the people of God.**

LET US PRAY.

Title: **"Even Angels"**

INTRODUCTION:

Bishop John Taylor Smith, former Chaplain General of the British Army, was preaching in a large cathedral on this text: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In order to drive it home, he said: "My dear people, do not substitute anything for the new birth. You may be a member of a church, but church membership is not new birth, and "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "

On the left sat the archdeacon in his stall. Pointing directly at him, he said, "You might even be an archdeacon like my friend in his stall and not be

born again, and "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." You might even be a bishop like myself, and not be born again, and "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "

A day or so later he received a letter from the archdeacon, in which he wrote: "My dear Bishop: You have found me out. I have found me out. I have been a clergyman for over thirty years, but I had never known anything of the joy that Christians speak of. I never could understand it. Mine has been hard, legal service. I did not know what was the matter with me, but when you pointed directly to me, and said, "You might even be an archdeacon and not be born again," I realized in a moment what the trouble was. I had never known anything of the new birth."

He went on to say that he was wretched and miserable, had been unable to sleep all night, and begged for a conference, if the bishop could spare the time to talk with him. "Of course, I could spare the time," said Bishop Smith, "and the next day we went over the Word of God, and, after some hours, we were both on our knees, the archdeacon taking his place before God as a poor, lost sinner, and telling the Lord Jesus he would trust Him as his Saviour. From that time on everything has been different."

—Harry A. Ironside

BODY:

What is your greatest need? It is the same for every human being. No matter the age, position, wealth, race, nation, tribe, or language, we share this need. It is the salvation of our souls.

The Apostle Peter is writing to the new Christians who have been persecuted. They have been scattered. Some translations say they are exiles of the Dispersion. They have been driven out of their homes and out of their communities. Their whole way of life has been upended.

And, how does Peter start his letter to them? He speaks about the new birth. We normally call it being born again. Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council, came at night to ask Jesus questions. The first thing Jesus says to him, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again or born from above." The most important thing for Nicodemus to know was his need to be born again. This was a radical reorientation for him.

So, when circumstances seem to be crushing Christians, Peter reminds them, and us, about their new birth. This is to give them comfort. It is comforting because they are reminded of the

supernatural work of God. It is comforting because they are reminded that this world is not their true home – they are aliens or strangers in this world. Peter greets them, Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Do you know of God's great mercy? Ephesians 2:4–5 (NIV84)<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is **rich in mercy**,<sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Micah 7:18 (NIV84)

<sup>18</sup> Who is a God like you,  
who pardons sin and forgives the transgression  
of the remnant of his inheritance?

You do not stay angry forever  
but delight to show mercy.

Titus 3:3–5 (NIV84)

<sup>3</sup> At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.<sup>4</sup> **But** when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,<sup>5</sup> he

saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but **because of his mercy**. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

**I stand amazed in the presence  
Of Jesus the Nazarene,**

And wonder how He could love me,  
A sinner, condemned, unclean.

O how marvelous! O how wonderful!  
And my song shall ever be:  
O how marvelous! O how wonderful!  
Is my Savior's love for me!

For me it was in the garden  
He prayed: "Not My will, but Thine."  
He had no tears for His own griefs,  
But sweat drops of blood for mine.

In pity angels beheld Him,  
And came from the world of light  
To comfort Him in the sorrows  
He bore for my soul that night.

He took my sins and my sorrows,  
He made them His very own;  
He bore the burden to Calvary,  
And suffered and died alone.

When with the ransomed in glory  
His face I at last shall see,  
'Twill be my joy through the ages  
To sing of His love for me.

O how marvelous! O how wonderful!  
And my song shall ever be:  
O how marvelous! O how wonderful!  
Is my Savior's love for me!

This salvation, this new birth, is into a living hope. Warren Wiersbe explains this living hope. To begin with, it is a *living hope* because it is grounded on the living Word of God (1 Peter 1:23), and was made possible by the living Son of God who arose from the dead. A "living hope" is one that has life in it and therefore can give life to us. Because it has life, it grows and becomes greater and more beautiful as time goes on. Time destroys most hopes; they fade and then die. But the passing of time only makes a Christian's hope that much more glorious.

Think about the children's chat with the wishbone. This living hope is not like a wish based on a desire or on a superstition. It is not a fiction like the genie from Aladdin's Lamp. It is not a maybe hope, but a sure hope.

As Christians, this living hope is not a future hope because we have already received the promised

eternal life that begins in this world. It will come to fruition in the world to come. This living hope informs and transforms in the here and now. It sustains us and empowers us.

Adam Clarke preached a sermon, "The Hope of the Gospel, through the Resurrection of Christ." He contrasted this living hope with what he called a dead hope:

"This is *dead hope*—the hope that is looking for no spiritual good before death; and generally appears to be *inactive* and *unconcerned* even about them. It is the inhabitant of a *dead soul*—of a *lifeless, careless, Christless, professor of Christianity*:—one who, though he have a name to live, yet is *dead*; and who will find, when he comes to that bourne [destination] where his hope is expected to *act*, and be *realized*, that it is like the *giving up of the ghost*:—he gives up *his ghost* and *his hope* together.

It is also the *hope* of the *wicked*—they expect to find God's mercy when they come to die but the *hope of the wicked*, in death, perisheth. Of such persons, none can entertain *hope* but *themselves*."

God forbid that any person here have a dead hope.

Our inheritance, our treasure in heaven, can never tarnish, decay, or fade. It is worth more than gold



and more dependable than gold. Because of this we can rejoice. We can be filled with a glorious joy that we do not even have the vocabulary to describe.

My friends, is this your experience? If not, we need to go to the well of refreshing, the living water. Do not settle for counterfeit Christianity. Be established in the faith that moves mountains.

Our inheritance is kept in heaven. It is guarded. It is garrisoned. Because of our faith in the Lord Jesus, we are shielded by God's power until the coming consummation of the kingdom of God. Immediately, this brings to mind Romans 8, which we have used as an affirmation of faith.

Romans 8:28–39 (NIV84) *More Than Conquerors*

<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

<sup>31</sup> What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—

how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?<sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.<sup>34</sup> Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?<sup>36</sup> As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than **conquerors** through him who loved us.<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,<sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Apostle Peter tells us the prophets of the Old Testament were guided by God the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Christ. He speaks of “this salvation.” It is the salvation of Jesus Christ crucified, dead, buried, and resurrected, all according to the holy scriptures. They wrote these things not for

themselves, but for you and me. For every person on the planet.

Do not miss a couple of key points. First, all three persons of the Godhead are involved, God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of God. Second, all this is made possible through the resurrection Of Jesus Christ from the dead.

John 11:25 (NIV84) Jesus said to her, **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;”**

Ephesians 1:18–20 (NIV84)

<sup>18</sup>I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,<sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,<sup>20</sup> which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

Even the angels long to look into these things. Yes, even the angels! It is such a glorious and miraculous truth, that the Son of God would live and die for the human race. Truly, God’s ways are higher than our ways.

## Ephesians 3:10–11 (NIV84)

<sup>10</sup> [God's] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,<sup>11</sup> according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

May God be praised!

That is why our mission statement is to Preach, Teach, and Model a Life-giving Gospel. This is the good news of the resurrected Jesus who has given us victory over sin and the grave.

### CONCLUSION:

George W. Truett shares this story: "I was preaching in a distant city some time ago, and one night I made a call at the close of the sermon like this: "I wish all the men and women and boys and girls who wish to be Christians, would walk down to these three front pews, while the people sing, and then when they have thus come forward, I have two or three things to say to them in two or three or four minutes before we pray."

Numbers came to those pews, quietly and thoughtfully. Our appeal should always be to men's judgment and conscience. Christ's religion does not need any other kind of an appeal. They came, and

I noticed in the group, a girl of some fourteen or fifteen years, beautiful, and deeply serious. She kept looking back, oh, so pitifully she kept looking back, and I said: "I think now that we are ready in one moment to pray. I will wait just one moment, to see if somebody else won't come, before we pray, and sit on these pews with us, thereby saying: "I want to be a Christian." "

This girl would wait no longer, and she went back down the aisle and sat down beside him, where she left him some minutes ago. I waited. It was all rather striking. I waited to see the outcome, not knowing what it meant, but they told me later what it meant. She put her arms about her father's neck, and one sitting just behind them, heard her say:

"Papa, you and I told mother we would meet her in the better world, when she left us last year, and I want to keep the promise. I want us to settle it, papa. I went forward that they might pray for me. I thought you would come. I want us to settle it tonight. Oh, papa, I want us to keep our promise to mother, but I could not stay down there without you. Since mother died, we have been together. I have never left you except when I had to, papa. I cannot now go without you. I want you to surrender to Christ tonight, but I cannot go

without you, and I have come back to ask you if you won't surrender to Christ?"

The big, strong, trembling man—and it turned out that he was one of the judges of one of the high courts of his state—said: "Little girl, papa will go with you. You are right." Together they came, and knelt together, and when the prayer was over, she kissed him again and again.

What if he had not come? Oh, soul, wait not for somebody else, because somebody else may be influenced by you!"

Amen and amen. Let us pray.