

“Citizenship in Heaven”

1 Peter 1:3-5

(2nd in the series of studies in 1 Peter

“Resident Aliens – Living Christianly in a non-Christian World”)

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Most of us remember enough of our English history classes to recall the name, King Henry VIII, of 450 years ago.

Later a bit doggeral would sum up the love life of the king:

“King Henry the Eighth, to six wives he was wedded: One died, one survived, two divorced, two beheaded.”

This was the scoundrel responsible for the inauspicious beginning of the Protestant Church in England.

Who you may not know is Thomas Cranmer.

Cranmer became the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury.

After King Henry’s death, and the death of his son, his Catholic daughter by his first wife, became the Queen of England.

She was known as “Bloody Mary” because of her persecution of the Protestants.

Cranmer, the leading Protestant, was sentenced to be burned at the stake.

In fear he signed a statement recanting his faith and embracing Catholicism again.

In great ceremony, he was brought to Oxford where he was to publicly declare his reconversion to Catholicism.

But when he stood, instead of renouncing his faith, he denounced the Catholic Church again.

He was taken out and burned at the stake.

Eyewitnesses said then when the flames reached him, he first of all put his right hand into the fire saying “this unworthy right hand” – the hand with which he had first signed a recanting, a renouncing of his faith.

Then as the flames consumed him he was heard to say repeatedly, as the first martyr Stephen had said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

What would make a man willing to die for what he believed?

Couldn't he have signed with his other fingers crossed behind his back – like we used to do in grade school? “Didn't mean it; had my fingers crossed!”

Why would he be willing to face such a death?

Apparently he had such strong convictions of what was true that he was willing even to die for them.

Christians are not the only ones willing to do that.

- Buddhist Monks did it during the Vietnam War.
- Muslim Jihadists did it on 9/11.
- Palestinian suicide/homicide bombers are doing it today.

I suppose some are mentally deranged, but others believe so strongly in the future they envision that they are willing to give up even their lives.

Just as importantly, they live by that vision of the future.

Today we continue in our study of the book of 1 Peter.

I think one way of describing the overarching theme of the book is to say that Peter is instructing us on how to live Christianly in a non-Christian world.

As I mentioned last week, Peter's first readers were Christians living as minorities in hostile cultures.

I suspect that every day they lived with temptation to abandon their faith and succumb to the majority values and lifestyles.

Probably only seldom were they actually called out to renounce their faith like Cranmer of England.

But in a hundred little ways each day they were tempted from within themselves and from others around them to compromise—until like “death by a thousand cuts” they had effectively abandoned the faith.

Peter recognized that his readers were under pressure to compromise or even to give up.

In 1 Peter 1:6 he says that they “have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.”

But Peter wants them to withstand the pressure to compromise.

To have that steadfastness he gives them and us a vision of the future.

I think Peter’s rationale is something like this: **You can put up with anything in the present, if you are confident of the ultimate outcome in the future.**

Nearly as important as “What is worth dying for?” is the question, “What is worth living for?”

What picture of the future do we have that is worth investing our lives in?

Another way of speaking of Peter’s rationale is to say, “You will invest everything to gain the future you most prize.”

It is at least interesting isn’t it, the lengths to which some people will go to attain a goal they have in mind:

- A high school boy works from early morning to late at night, exercising, studying, and practicing to make a football team.
- A man or woman will give up family, friends, recreation and everything else to attain a promotion in their company or a bigger share of the market in their business.

What about you?

What’s your picture of the future?

What are you giving your life for and what will you die for?

Hear what God says it is.

1 Peter 1:1-5

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

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

When you became a Christian everything changed.

Oh, you may not have felt anything and you might not even have been aware of most of what happened – but everything changed.

Peter here calls it "new birth."

Jesus called it being "born again."

Our first "birth" put us in a very bad situation.

We inherited a sinful nature and the judgment of death.

Romans 5:12 "...Sin entered the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men..."

If sin and death were diseases, we'd correctly say we got them from our parents – and these are unfortunately, our parents' most enduring legacy to us.

The Bible says that by our first birth, our future is everlasting misery and immortal death.

And even if we wanted to escape that future, we are stuck with it.

But, the Bible says, by the mercy of God, we are given a new birth.

And our new Father, the holy everlasting Father, gives us a **different future** when he gives us new life.

We read: Romans 8:17 "Now if we are children (of the Father), then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ."

Theologians call this new birth "regeneration" from the Latin, the begetting of life again.

Regeneration, then, is "An inner re-creating of fallen human nature by the gracious sovereign action of the Holy Spirit (Jn.3:5-8)
 Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, p. 924

It is not the same as the reformation of a person.

A person may be disciplined enough to change his/her habits but they still have the same nature.

Michael Bremmer wrote, "The change produced by regeneration is in the very root of our being; it is a radical change, a change that affects the whole person--the intellect, the will, and the emotions. It is a change from enmity to love. It is the giving of a new heart and the removing of a heart of stone. It is such a deep-rooted change that when the gift of faith is given, we willingly receive and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Consequently, the change wrought in regeneration is not a superficial or temporary change, but is a work which ensures that the one whom God regenerates repents, believes, and whose faith endures to the end. Michael Bremmer
<http://www.mbrem.com/salvation/regene.htm>

The beauty of it is that our past actions and attitudes and even our present actions and attitudes do not merit this gift or lose it.

No matter how good or how bad we have been and are, when God gives new life it is "new" and it is "life" and it is ours!

Peter goes on to write that our new birth results in a living hope.

But before looking at this living hope, Peter tells us where we got this living hope and our new birth.

He says they are based on the mercy of God and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As I showed you last week, the motivation behind God giving us new birth is not obligation but pure mercy –

God chose us simply because he chose to choose, based only on the pleasure of his good will.

But even though he chose us in mercy he still had to deal with our sinfulness; and he did.

2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

And Jesus accomplished this by living a perfect human life and dying then not for his sins but ours.

How do we know he accomplished what he intended?

He proved it by his resurrection.

That's why Peter writes that this new birth and living hope have been brought about "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

As to our new birth God says in 1 Corinthians 15:17 "If Christ has not been raised...you are still in your sins.

As to our living hope God also says in the same verse, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile..."

But Christ has been raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20) and thus your **new birth** is secured and your **living hope** is warranted.

The new birth came because of the mercy of God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But I want to camp this morning on the results of the new birth that Peter describes.

The results are two: 1. A living hope and 2. An inheritance that can never fail.

First of all, we have been reborn into a living hope.

To be born is to enter a sphere of existence.

When physically born we enter the physical world

When spiritually born we enter into a spiritual world.

The physical will eventually end, perish, and disappear.

In spiritual birth we enter a world that will never end.

Peter calls it a "living" hope; one that is alive and full of promise.

He calls it a "hope."

In the Bible, “hope” is not a fancy but a conviction based on reality; it is not wishful thinking but confident expectation.

Most people’s hopes die at their death.

And they know it.

It is amazing to me that more people don’t exhibit the despair in which they actually live.

Some of the ancient Greeks wrote that though the sun rises and sets continuously, once our brief light sets there is only one unending night for us. (Karen Jobes, *1 Peter*, 85)

What do our contemporary philosophies offer?

The same eternal nothingness, or cosmic oneness - why not despair?

Dr. Arman Nicholi Jr , Harvard professor of psychiatry in his book *Finding God at Harvard*, asks, “How do we explain the explosive increase in depression and hopelessness within our society as we enter the twenty-first century A.D.?”

He went on to write, “Many young people today feel that their cultures fail to provide answers to questions of purpose and meaning and destiny. They feel that we fail to provide any reason for hope. The consequence is that we are now in a cultural crisis and living in what is being called “The Age of Despair.” We hear of our “spiritual vacuum” and our “crisis of meaning”. (In *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*, Zondervan 1996 p112-113)

But **WE** have been given a “living hope.”

Peter Davids says it well, “This hope is not a desperate holding-on to a faded dream, a dead hope, but a living one, founded on reality, for it is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 52)

My future, my hope, is anchored in the person of Jesus, whom I know rose from the dead and is coming again.

That changes my outlook on life.

Scott McKnight said it this way: This hope is “a fixed hope, a clear vision of what God will do for us in the future.” (Scott McKnight, *1 Peter*, 71)

Not only have we have been reborn into a living hope but also (and here most to the point of the passage):

1 Peter 1:4-5 We've been given new birth "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."

We think of an inheritance as the actual money, property or other that we receive when our parent dies and passes it onto us.

And so what is the inheritance for us who have been reborn?

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven...and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive (on earth) will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. **And so we will be with the Lord forever.**

Titus 2:13 "...We wait for the blessed hope--**the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,**

Our inheritance is Jesus!

1 John 3:2 "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, **we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.**

Revelation 21:3-4 "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and **God himself will be with them and be their God.** ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Our inheritance is Jesus and the paradise that will be ours in his presence for eternity.

Earl Palmer wrote, "A personal relationship with Jesus Christ means that our existence, and the universe itself, rests, not on impersonal laws or on inexorable principles, but on a person. The gospel does not say merely that in the final analysis the universe is friendly toward

us; it says that the God of the universe loves us... We trust in the One who upholds us even when we are too worried or depressed or excited to trust him. The ultimate foundation of our existence (and our future) is personal.” (Earl Palmer, Integrity in a World of Pretense, 132)

And how certain can we be that our inheritance won't disappear?

How many earthly inheritances have been dissolved in short order by war, fire, theft, or profligacy?

How many saw their life savings reduced to half or less in the dot-com bust of a very few years ago.

The text says that God keeps it in heaven for us, far beyond the reach of the circumstances of this world. (Jobes, 87)

And God won't squander it or change his mind.

Jesus said in John 14:1-3 "Do not let your hearts be troubled... I am going (to my Father's house) to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back** and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

But all of that raises a good question: "Maybe the inheritance is secure but what about me?"

It may be true that there is a heaven and eternal life to come but how do I know that I won't "blow it" and lose it.

What if my circumstances or my own sinfulness disqualify me?

But God says not only is the inheritance kept secure in heaven for us but **we**, the heirs, also are kept secure on earth for it. (Robert Leighton, *1 Peter*, 38)

We "who through faith are shielded by God's power."

To be "shielded" is to be protected, to be kept under guard – God is protecting US until that day.

Romans 8:38-39 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ 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.

I often hear people say in fearful response, “What if my faith fails; what if I quit believing?”

It is true that we are not saved apart from faith and it is also true that we do not remain saved apart from faith.

But thank God, He is the one who gives the faith.

Listen to Jesus in one of Peter’s crises of faith:

Luke 22:31-32 “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon that your faith may not fail.

Jesus’ prayers are answered and the Son of God intercedes for you. Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25

The Spirit of God intercedes for you. Romans 8:26

“The weakest persons who are within a strong place, women and children, though they were not able to resist the enemy if they were alone, yet so long as the place wherein they are is of sufficient strength and well manned... they are in safety; thus the weakest believer is safe...” (Leighton, 40)

So I believe that in our text, Peter in essence is saying, “I want you to live each day with a profound awareness that Jesus is coming again and when he does God’s perfect plan will be completed, and you are part of that plan.”

No more death and decay.

No more powerful sin and guilt.

No more temptation.

No more grief and pain.

Swords will be beaten into plowshares.

The lion will lie down with the lamb.

Some might say that sounds like “pie in the sky by and bye” – a fanciful dream that won’t ever be true and certainly doesn’t help now.”

That would be true except for two things:

One, that future is true – guaranteed to us by the resurrection of Jesus.

And two, it does make a difference now – we can actually engage the world because we know what the future is.

Mankind has at least three options:

One, people can whistle past the graveyard to the tune of “peace, peace” when there is no peace.

Or two, they can live in quiet despair.

Or they can believe God!

Why should I take up my cross and follow Jesus? (Lk 9:23)

Why should I endure hardships like a good soldier? (2 Ti 2:3)

Why should I give up everything to follow Christ? (Lk 14:33)

Why should I offer my body as a living sacrifice to God? (Rom 12:1)

Why should I sacrifice to give generously to the poor? (Lk 12:32)

Why should I give up my leisure time to be in church with God’s people? (Heb 10:25)

Why should I seek first the kingdom of God? (Mt 6:33)

Because “In his great mercy God has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, ⁵ 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.

By what vision of the future do you live your life?

- Do you plan no further than the next party or holiday or vacation?
- Do you plan no further than a career move, a new house or an early retirement?
- Or do you live your life around the future that God says is ours?

You can put up with anything in the present, if you are confident of the ultimate outcome in the future.

And you will invest everything to gain the future you envision and prize most.

What future do you prize?

More importantly, what future can you count on?

Abraham was told by God to go to a distant land, which God would give to him and his descendants.

Abraham went, he lived there but the land was still not his.

He was again promised that his descendants would inherit the land but Abraham was childless.

God's promised him a son and Abraham laughed.

But he obeyed!

Abraham was asked to sacrifice his only son and he obeyed, believing that God would still somehow fulfill the promise.

But Abraham died not seeing the promised fulfilled.

But he died believing. Why?

Hebrews 11:8-10 "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ **For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**

Abraham saw the future and he lived by it.

A couple of years ago I read Nelson Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*.

The year I graduated from high school, Nelson Mandela was put in prison in South Africa because of his fight against racial discrimination.

He stayed in prison for 28 years!

By the time he was released, I had completed my education, married and had three children, purchased homes, witnessed the Vietnam war, the presidencies of Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, Reagan, and George H.W. Bush.

Life went on while Mandela endured the isolation and brutality of prison.

For 28 years he waited, saw visitors ever so seldom, and learned that his home was taken, his wife imprisoned and his children virtually orphaned. He suffered deeply.

Occasionally he was offered freedom if he would abandon his quest for freedom for the black people of South Africa.

“The challenge,” he wrote, “for every political prisoner is to survive prison intact, how to emerge from prison undiminished, how to conserve and even replenish one’s beliefs.”

Years into his imprisonment he was allowed to see mother and his children.

The last time he saw his children they were babies, now his son and daughter were young adults. His mother, who was so vibrant when he left, was now old and feeble.

Mandela struggled: “Had I made the right choice in putting the people’s welfare even before that of my own family?”

Placed in solitary confinement on several occasions, Mandela said that in it he lost track of time.

His mind began playing tricks on him.

He began to question everything.

“Did I make the right decision, was the sacrifice worth it.”

He went on to write; “I have found that one can bear the unbearable if one can keep one’s spirits strong even when the body is being tested. Strong convictions are the secret of surviving deprivation; your spirit can be full even when your stomach is empty.” (Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 390, 444, 416.

At his sentencing years earlier, Mandela wrote, “History shows that penalties do not deter men when their conscience is aroused... More powerful than my fear of the dreadful conditions to which I might be subjected in prison is my hatred for the dreadful conditions to which my people are subjected outside prison throughout this country... May the court rest assured that when my sentence has been completed I will still be moved, as men are always moved, by their conscience... and I will continue the struggle for the

removal of injustices until they are finally abolished once and for all.”
 (Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 332)

As many of you know, Mandela was released in 1990 and went on to become the President of South Africa.

He led a necessary and worthy cause for which free people everywhere ought to be grateful and for which they ought to continue to fight.

But there is one cause, one future, that is more necessary and more worthy.

The Apostle Paul said it this way:

2 Timothy 2:8-11 “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

^{2TI 2:11} Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him,
 we will also live with him

Philippians 3:8,13-14 “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ... Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

And later in what could be a summary of the intent of 1 Peter 1:3-5, Paul would write:

2 Timothy 1:12 “I know **whom** I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day

What are you confident of?

What future do you see that's worth dying for?

What future do you know that is worth living for?

Other notes:

Jim Elliott “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

Ephesians 1:18 “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

In the absence of this conviction they will fall prey to the world’s values and actions.

We see it so clearly in the statements and actions of young people. They are captured by the present – what clothes to wear, what music to listen to, what subjects to talk about, who to impress and how to impress them. There is hardly thought for next year, much less 10 years and no thought for eternity.

We see it so clearly in the actions of adults.

They may not speak it but they live it – a value system and perspective on life driven by the world.

Money is spent and invested as if this life is all there is.

Energy and time are spent as if this life is all there is.

The future is next vacation, maybe next year, or for some retirement.

But who plans around eternity? Who plans around the kingdom of God? Who invests their time, money and energy as if the most important is what is to come only after Christ comes?

“Those who are at the margins of society, reviled and accused. They know how they appear in society’s eyes. They need a larger perspective, which the author provides not in psychological or sociological terms of self-esteem, but by helping them see their privileged place in the context of God’s plan for history, a privilege they had not achieved but had been granted them by God’s grace.”

(M.E. Boring in Jobes, 89)

Peter matches the form to the content – praise to God (form) for the future that is most certainly ours (content).

Imagine telling someone really good news but in a somber, defeated tone of voice.

Imagine conversely announcing the death of a loved one in limerick. Peter matches the tone to the message.

He is excited and he shows his excitement by his exclamation of praise.

I am inclined to believe the content simply because the author is so confident and joyful.

There is exuberance and joy articulated here that is contagious.

Peter had experienced this joy himself – he knew what he was writing about. He had been through times of great delight with Jesus and he had been through the darkest night and he had seen the faithfulness of God so that he believed beyond doubt the future that was his.

He had been with Jesus through it all.

He had failed (denial) and he had come out the other side by Jesus' grace. Never was there a greater "believer" than Peter.

Hebrews 6:19 "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

"Let the winds blow, and billows roll,
Hope is the anchor of my soul.

But can I by so slight a tie,
An unseen hope, on God rely?

Steadfast and sure, it cannot fail,
It enters deep within the veil,

It fastens on a land unknown,
And moors me to my father's throne."

Consider the three most used images of regeneration in Scripture: "a new creation," "the new birth," and "a resurrection to life." All convey the idea that man is completely passive. We are no more active participants in regeneration than we were active participants in our creation, physical birth, or will be in our resurrection. In other words, if we must repent and believe to be born again, then we are the instruments of our new birth. However, according to Scripture, this makes as much sense as saying we have been the cause of our creation, physical birth, or future resurrection.

Michael Bremmer <http://www.mbrem.com/salvation/regene.htm>

"Regeneration," says Dabney, "is a supernatural renovation of the dispositions which determine the moral purpose, and of the understanding in the apprehension of moral and spiritual truth; the whole resulting in a permanent and

fundamental conversion in the actings of the whole man as to sin and holiness--the flesh and God" (13). Charnock defines regeneration as, "A mighty and powerful change, wrought in the soul by the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit, wherein a vital principle, a new habit, the law of God, and a divine nature are put into, and framed in the heart, enabling it to act holy and pleasing to God, and to grow up therein to eternal glory" (Regeneration, p. 89).

It follows therefore that regeneration occurs on a subconscious level. Although the effects of regeneration are perceived (i. e. conversion), regeneration is not: "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (Jn. 3.8). "Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1.13).

Regeneration is an instantaneous change affecting the whole person. It is a rebirth from death to life (Eph. 2.5), from darkness to light (Col. 1.13). Regeneration is not a process like sanctification. We are never between death and life, or darkness and light. At this very moment we are either spiritual alive or dead in our sins and trespasses. Michael Bremmer <http://www.mbrem.com/salvation/regene.htm>

"It (regeneration) is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is (as powerful as) creation or of the raising of the dead." Cannons of Dort

The beauty of it is that our past actions and attitudes and even our present actions and attitudes have nothing to do with this. No matter how good or how bad you have been and are, when God gives new life it is "new!"

Birth is not for birth's sake – it is intended that birth lead to growth and maturity.

Cosmic regeneration

2 Peter 3:12 "That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Revelation 21:1-4 "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and

there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

"The inheritance is untouched by death, unstained by evil, unimpaired by time." (F.W. Beare in McKnight, 71)

"Faith is not our achievement but trust in God's achievement." (Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, 50)

Hebrews 1:10-12 "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

^{2CO 5:1} Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

[Q] “I was wondering if you could tell me where the phrase *pie in the sky* came from?”

[A] It comes from the Industrial Workers of the World, the anarchist-syndicalist labour organisation formed in the US in 1905, often called the Wobblies. The Wobblies concentrated on organising migrant and casual workers; one of the ways in which they brought such disparate and fragmented groups together was by song. Every member got a little red book when he joined, containing parodies of popular songs or hymns (the book had a motto on the cover: “To Fan the Flames of Discontent”). One of the early ones, predating the IWW, was *Hallelujah, I’m a Bum*.

One IWW member was Joe Hill, a Swedish-born seaman and hobo (one of the martyrs of the union movement: he was convicted of murder on dubious evidence and executed in 1915; you may recall a folk song about him, sung memorably by Joan Baez). He wrote several popular pro-union parodies for them, such as *Coffee An’ Nearer My Job to Thee*, *The Rebel Girl* and *The Preacher and the Slave*.

This last song, dating from 1911, was aimed directly at the Salvation Army, a body anxious to save the Wobblies’ souls, while the Wobblies were more interested in filling their bellies. The Wobblies hated the Salvation Army’s middle-class Christian view that one would get one’s reward in heaven for virtue or suffering on earth. The song was a parody of the Salvation Army hymn *In the Sweet Bye and Bye*:

Long-haired preachers come out every night,
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right;
But when asked how 'bout something to eat
They will answer with voices so sweet:

CHORUS:

You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land above the sky;
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

<http://www.worldwidewords.org/qa/qa-pie1.htm>

Old Greek thought reflected in Sophocles said it was better not to be born or to die at birth. (Karen Jobes, *1 Peter*, 85)