

A Lively Hope

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1 Peter 1 is where we'll read from this morning. 1 Peter 1. I trust you'll find your place in your Bible. If you don't have a Bible, I trust our people are looking around to make sure everyone has scripture to look on as we read from God's word this morning.

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Father, thank you so much for the wonderful privilege we have to know that you're all we'll ever need. Father, I do thank you for waking us up this morning and getting us started on our way. We do thank you, Lord, for the privilege we have to hold in our hands the very word of God. Now Lord, I do pray, God, that you will take me as your vessel today, that you cleanse me of sin, that you empty me of self. I do pray that you fill me with thy Holy Spirit that I might preach what thus saith the Lord. Hide me behind the cross of Christ. O God, you are all I'll ever need and I do need you every hour and this hour. So Lord, I do pray that you'd bless for one that does not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, I pray that this would be the day that that one comes to a saving knowledge of the truth. Bind Satan, keep him out of here and lift up the mighty name of Jesus for it's in his name we ask and pray. Amen and Amen.

You may be seated. Thank you so much for standing.

Rome was burned in the year AD 64. Nero, that diabolical, wicked emperor, was believed to have done it. To distract the blame from himself and to get a scapegoat so that he would not have to take credit for this horrific event, he blamed the infant church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now mind you, the Lord Jesus Christ had not long been gone, crucified sometime around AD 33, so here we are just 30 short years or so after the Lord has left earth, ascended back to heaven. He has planted this infant church, they're moving forward, they're pressing on, they're trying to accomplish great things for God, and right in their infancy they are blamed and labeled for the burning of the great Rome. As a result of Rome being burned and Nero blaming the church, he then launched a persecution on the church. I'm talking about all-out persecution. Just as the fires spread in Rome, the flames of persecution spread all over God's people. During this time, God's people were tried and tested, they were ridiculed and mocked. As a matter of fact, three years later, Jewish war broke out which led to the demise of the Jewish state so you can imagine these three years, 64, 65, all the way up to 67, were very very tough and trying times for God's people, the nation of Israel.

Can you imagine those during that time having to leave their homes, losing their homes, losing their jobs, being separated from their families, having to walk away from their friends, being ridiculed and persecuted just for their stand of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, it is believed that during these years, Paul, that great apostle, was beheaded, Peter, that great apostle, was crucified upside down, some of the great heroes of the faith, those that we read from and we learn from, they were killed during this time of Nero, this horrible time of the persecution of the church of Christ.

So when we read the first epistle of Peter, we must understand that Peter is writing during the state of religious persecution, of suffering of God's people, of a very difficult time it was to be alive as a Christian. As he's writing to these folks who are perhaps homeless, as he's writing to these folks who are living on the run, as he's writing to the folks who are in fear of losing their lives, as he's writing to these folks who are drowning in grave danger and serious turmoil, you must understand the discouragement, the disdain, the distress, and the depression that God's people were under. Many of them felt like quitting. Many of them felt like there was no reason to go on. Many of them felt like this thing of the Christian life is a pointless thing. Many of them felt like there's no reason for us really to be identified with Jesus Christ. You see, for them to say they were Christians meant they would lost their lives, for them to say that they were Christians meant many of them would be fed to lions, for them to say that they were Christians meant that they were attacked and they were ridiculed. They weren't popular being Christians.

You can imagine in the midst of this discouragement and in the midst of this sorrow, from Babylon, away from the true crooks of the persecution, God's servant could still feel their pain and Peter sends this letter to these Christians from Babylon and he sends it to them, those that are right there in the heat of this persecution, and I want you to understand that Peter is writing a letter of comfort to these folks. I want you to understand this is an epistle that's a pick-me-up, it's a pep-talk, if you would. This is Peter saying to them, "I know you're struggling, I know you're suffering, I know you're under

the clutches of Nero, I know you're battling difficulties, I know to leave the house in the morning means that you could lose your life, and I know you feel like all has been lost," but Peter writes to them in 1 Peter 1 and says, "All has not been lost. Hey, hope is not over. The battle has not ended. There's still a reason to go on."

I want you to notice with me verse 3 that will be our text verse this morning, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and by the way, that word "blessed" means – hey, listen to me – Peter said he ought to be lifted up, he ought to be praised, he ought to be honored, he ought to be magnified. Now wait a minute now, he's talking to folks that are under the foot of Nero, he's talking to those that are under the clutches of persecution but Peter says, "Guess what? I've found out some things that persecution cannot stop. I've found out some things that trials cannot shut down. I've found out some things that sufferings cannot stand against." So in spite of the fact you're going through trials, hey, we all still blessed be of God of our Father Jesus Christ, notice now, "who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again," notice now, "unto a," notice these next two words, read them with me, "lively hope." Read them again, "lively hope." Let me say that again, "lively hope."

Now you've got to understand the context here. Everything that looked hopeful had been shattered. Everything that was valuable to them had been taken. Everything that they'd worked for and labored for and longed for was gone. They had no homes. Many of them had no families. Many of them had no jobs. They had no friends. And he's writing to a people who felt like their life was absolutely hopeless and then Peter in the midst of their hopelessness, he says, "Let me point your attention back to Almighty God and let me remind you of something about God, this is a God who has begotten us, this is a God that has allowed us to be in his family, this is a God that has become our Father, this is a God that has become our provider." And he said, "When God adopted us into his family, I want you to know he didn't bring us into a dead hope, he didn't bring us into a part-time hope, he didn't bring us into a wishy-wash hope, he didn't bring us into a suspect hope, he didn't bring us into an up-and-down hope, he didn't bring us into a temporary hope, he didn't bring us into a dead hope, he brought us into a lively hope." Do you know what he's saying? "Your house may be burned down, your friends may be gone, your money may be failing, your job may be lost, your situation may be hopeless, but let me tell you about your hope. It's intact. It's alive. It's dynamic. It's vibrant. It's vital. It's awake. It's alert. It's doing just fine. It's a lively hope."

Watch it now, and it's alive because it's based on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and here's what he's saying: the reason why your hope is alive is not because you got baptized, it's not alive because you're a member of a church, it's not alive because you pay your tithes, it's not alive because you do good to people, it's not alive because you've been moral. I'll tell you why it's alive, your hope is alive because they hung Jesus Christ up on an old rugged cross and put nails in his hands and nails in his feet, they put a spear in his side, they put a crown of thorns on his head, they whipped him with a cat o' nine tails, they mocked him, they ripped his beard out. Can I tell you they put him up in between two thieves, he hung there suffering and dying of a broken heart. He gave up the ghost. He was buried in a borrowed tomb and for three days the devil partied big time

thinking he had won the battle. But early on Easter morning, the stone was rolled away and he got up out of the grave. He's saying he lives and he's saying he's able, he's doing just fine. He's saying your hope's not in Peter, your hope's not in Paul, your hope's not in the pope, your hope's not in the church, your hope's not in good works, your hope's not in your ancestry, your hope's not in Nero, your hope's not in magistrates, your hope's not in artillery, your hope's not in intellect, your hope's not in money, your hope's not in fame, but my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.

It's a lively hope and here lately I've seemed to have run into so many hopeless people. I'm talking about saved folks have gotten so discouraged, have gotten so down, and have gotten so deep into the depths of despair. We're in a failing economy. We're in a horrible real estate market. The stock market is fickle. Amen? Money you used to have is gone. People having problems getting jobs and no problems losing them. Amen. Could I tell you crime's not getting any better. The world's not getting any nicer. Our situations aren't improving. Could I tell you we're dealing with terrorism on the outside, racism on the inside. We've got all kinds of difficulties and all kinds of... Let me tell you something, this world would chew you up and spit you out. If you think this world is going to embrace you and receive you, who you thought was your friend would drop you like a hot potato at the very first glimpse of getting more for himself. You look around and sometimes those that you used to lean on, those that you used to love, those that you used to put your hope in have left you and I guarantee you, there are good, God-fearing Christians sitting under the sound of my voice today that would say, "Pastor, I've lost hope. I've lost a job. I've lost friends. I've lost family. I've lost hope." My friend, could I redirect your attention, could I refocus your psyche, could I pick your head up today, get your mind off your money, and get your money off your mind, get your mind off your friends and your situation, and can I remind you of something today? There is a hope based on the Lord Jesus Christ. He hasn't lost a step. The economy crashed, he still lives. Crime going up, he's still fine. Health going down, he's still good. Situation going crazy, he's still in his right mind. I'm trying to encourage somebody today to remind you that we may not have the things of this world but in Jesus' name we have a lively hope.

Turn to your neighbor and say, "I have a lively hope." And then say, "You have a lively hope." And I ask you a question today: if that's the case, what's your discouragement? If that's the case, what are you discouraged about? Now let me tell you about this hope. Man, I got all stuck down in 1 Peter 1 and I'm going to tell you, somebody had to throw out the lifeline to get me out of it. I'm telling you, I had a good time in 1 Peter 1. Let's see if I can invite you into that bliss with me.

Point 1: if you, my friend, have a lively hope, Peter wants to remind them of their position as God's children. Could I say that again? Their position as God's children. Notice, if you would, verse 1, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers," do you see that? "To the strangers," *parepidemos* it is in the Greek, *parepidemos*. You say, "Preacher, what does *parepidemos* mean?" Peter said, "You're strangers, resident aliens, foreigners, sojourners in a foreign land or in a strange place." Here's what he's saying, "I

know you're discouraged by what's happening on this earth but can I remind you of something, dear brethren? This world is not your home, you're just passing through. Who cares if your house burned down here when you know you've got a home over the mansion over the hillside? Who cares if you lose your job here when you know one day you're going to live forever with him in heaven? Who cares if the body breaks down? We have an earthly tabernacle that may be dissolved but if it is, we're going to get a house not made by man's hand. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." The next time you let this world get you messed up and torn apart and twisted in your mind, can I remind you one day we're getting out of here and when we get out of here, there will be no more cancer, no more high blood pressure, no more heart attack, no more stroke, no more headache, no more heartache, no more backache, no more foot ache, no more body ache. When we live in heaven, it's going to be all good.

In the meantime, you say, you're just a stranger. Strangers and he says you're scattered. We all over everywhere but guess what? Aren't you glad it doesn't matter how far out we're scattered, we're still God's children? It doesn't matter how much the cares of life may disperse us abroad, aren't you glad you came so far out of God's love? What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall persecution? Shall distress? Shall famine? Shall nakedness? Shall peril or the sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Peter said, "You may be running for your life but there's coming a day you're getting out of here."

Now let me help you with a little bit of doctrine today. Notice how Peter tells us how we got to be strangers. I love this. He takes verse 2. If you've never jumped into verse 2, you might want to put a life jacket on because you might drown in all this doctrine. Listen to me, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Did you hear that? Elect. Wait a minute, you are the elect. Do you know what Peter said? You are the elect and you were elected according to the foreknowledge, watch this now, of God the Father. Now here's our position as God's children, we're strangers and we're scattered, but watch this now, we have been selected. If you're taking notes today, now right down "selected." You're not saved because you chose God, you're saved because God chose you. Amen. I said you're saved because God chose you.

Now look up here with me just a moment because this is where the Calvinists go off astray because they misconstrue the doctrine and take the word of God out of context, because they look at this passage and say, "I've been elected according to the foreknowledge of God," and they draw the conclusion that God way back when looked ahead of time and decided he was only going to let some people get saved and he was going to send the rest to hell, and therefore it doesn't make any sense for me to really be preaching to you about Jesus this morning because if you're going to get saved, you're going to get saved anyway and I have nothing to do with it, as a matter of fact, you have nothing to do with it. Now I want you to understand that you were chosen by the foreknowledge of God but I want you to understand that God's foreknowledge was not causative nor was it binding.

You say, "Pastor, what are you saying?" I'm simply saying when he looked forward, he wasn't saying, "I'm going to only let some get saved and some not get saved, I'm going to cause some to go to heaven and some to go to hell. I'll only let him get saved but I ain't going to let him." No, no, that's not what it's saying, "according to the foreknowledge of God," do you know what he's saying? God in his wisdom and God in his infinite knowledge and God in his magnitude of intellect, he looked forward and he looked forward to every single person who would hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and he envisioned that you'd accept him, and he envisioned that you put your faith and trust in him, and he envisioned that you'd believe in the shed blood, and he envisioned that you'd come to church and get right with God, and he looked forward to every single person that he knew would get saved, that he knew would trust Christ, that he knew would accept him as his personal Lord and Savior, and based on the fact the knows now, yesterday, and tomorrow at the same time, everybody that he knew would get saved, he elected.

Now you'd better understand that. Somebody says, "Well, that don't make sense." If it made perfect sense to you, you'd be God. It doesn't have to make sense. If God said it, it's so. But let me help it make a little more sense to you by contending this with you, there are things even in the finite mind that we can know are going to happen before they happen. For instance, the meteorologist can tell you what time tomorrow the sun is going to rise. People can predict to the minute exactly what time the high tides and the low tides will come. People can tell you the next time that Halley's comet will be visible in the sky. People can predict to you exactly the time when some meteors will fall or some other astronomical happenings will take place. People can tell you the date of the next eclipse of the sun. They can tell you the date of the next full moon. These are men that aren't there yet that can tell you when something is going to happen. Now by the way, just because the meteorologist knows that the sun is going to rise at a certain time tomorrow doesn't mean he's going to get up and pick the sun up and put it in the sky. He's just letting you know it's going to rise at that time. And when God said, "I know who's going to get saved," he didn't say, "I'm going to make some of you saved and make some..." Now tell me somebody, somebody tell me how a man went to school as for a meteorologist can tell me what time the sun is going to rise and the Creator of the universe can't tell me who's going to get saved.

His foreknowledge. He elected us. I like this. The coming together of the Trinity to give me a position, selected by God the Father. Watch this now, you read in your Bible, sanctified by God the Spirit. That's in the Bible. "I don't read the Bible because it's boring." You're lying. You never read it. There's nothing boring about this book. Many of you say, "I don't understand it. I don't know how." Say that but not boring. That's not even on the multiple choice, okay? It's not boring. You explain to me how God took your sorry soul before it was even born and already figured out before you got here, when you did get here you were going to trust him. I don't call that boring, I call that off-the-chain. Amen?

I've been selected by God the Father, but watch this now, I've been sanctified by God the Spirit, "being born again not of corruptible seed but by the word of God which liveth and

abideth forever." John 6, "No man can come unto Jesus," Jesus said, "except the Father draw him." How is he drawing me? He's drawing me by the Holy Spirit of God. Do you understand that? He reproveth the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. When you come into a good church and you hear the gospel preached, it is not just your conscience or your intuition that tells you to get saved, it is the Holy Ghost of God, it is the Holy Spirit of God that sits down in your lap and gets up in your mind and says your baptism, your church membership, your good works are not enough to save you, and the Holy Ghost begins to arouse in your attention that you are lost, that you are hell-bound, that you are deprived, that you are destitute, that you are wallowing around in the dead corpse of your spiritual lethargy, but it's the same Holy Ghost that once he arouses your attention, he then by his quickening power comes in and puts the charges on your dead spirit and he wakes you up alive to be resurrected with Jesus Christ. What a mighty God we serve!

Selected by God the Father. Sanctified by God the Son, sanctified by God's Spirit. Saved by God's Son. Look now, verse 3. Go back to verse 2, excuse me, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit," watch this now, "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Do you know what I like about this thing of becoming a child of God? God was in on all of it. I said God was in on all of it. Who are you talking about when you say God? I'm talking about Elohim. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, in the plural sense, not in the sense of the plurality of God but in the sense of the singularity of God that exists as three distinct persons all together making God. In other words, God the Father is no less than God the Son, God the Son is no less than God the Father, God the Holy Ghost is no less than God the Son, God the Holy Ghost is no less than God the Father, God the Son is no less than God the Holy Ghost, God the Son is no less than God the Father. Equally coexisting. Equally eternal. Equally omnipotent. Equally omniscient. Equally omnipresent. Equally immutable. Equally holy. Equally just. Equally faithful. Equally righteous. Equally true. Equally pure. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. Selected by God the Father. Sanctified by God the Spirit. Saved by God the Son. You know what he's saying, God picked you and the Holy Ghost aroused your attention and it was the blood of Jesus that paid for your sin. God thought it, the Holy Spirit wrought it, Jesus bought it, Satan caught it, and shazam, I still caught it, amen? Hey, listen, God thought it, the Holy Ghost wrought it, Jesus bought it, Satan thought it, and you and I still caught it.

Now here's what he's saying, you have a lively hope. Don't be so discouraged. You have a position in Jesus. Secondly, you have a possession that is to come. Your position is God's children, your possession that is to come. He's begotten us to a lively hope. Look at verse 4, would you, do a little Bible study today. He had begotten us unto a lively hope, verse 4, "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven," watch this now, "for you." Turn to your neighbor and say, "Thank you, Lord."

Some of you ain't never inherited nothing. Tell the truth, raise your hand, shame the devil. "Oh, ain't nobody dead ever left me nothing." And how many of you say, some of you say, "I have received an inheritance and I wish what they left me, they would have

kept." Can I get an amen right there? "Left me a house all broke down, busted up, cost me more to keep it up than it was before I had it. They should have took the house with them to the grave." And some of you say, "I never got an inheritance," and some of you say, "The inheritance I got wasn't worth nothing." But can I remind you of something that when you become a child of God, you have an inheritance, you have a possession, you have a future prize that you're going to receive and, my friends, I want to tell you something about this inheritance, it cannot decay, it cannot be defiled, it cannot fall into default. Can I tell you, that is the revelation of this inheritance and if you're writing down this inheritance as a revelation, God has said houses break down, jewelry gets lost, money gets stolen but the inheritance that you have in Jesus Christ never decays, never defiles, never going to fall. Aren't you glad you don't have to requalify for salvation? God knows most of us wouldn't requalify because we wouldn't have ever qualified in the first place.

The revelation of this inheritance. Can I remind you of the reservation of this inheritance? Could I tell you this inheritance is beyond? Amen. And that's a good thing. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." How many of you ever got something broken into, something stolen, something hacked, something robbed from you, something come up missing? How many of you ever broke something that you really liked, stained something that the cleaners couldn't get fixed? How many of you ever run a car down in the ground where they said you might as well let this thing go? I'm simply saying that's the way life is but can I tell you, my inheritance will never break down, my inheritance will never lose its luster, my inheritance will never go bad, never go south, never go stale, never go broke. My house has lost some equity, my clothes aren't as valuable as much as they have been, the things in my house may not be worth what they used to be but the day I got saved, I got an inheritance that is beyond and that belongs to me. It's mine, mine, mine.

Hey, I don't know about you, I like stuff that's mine. Do I have a witness? And be honest, some of you have got to be honest, I don't own nothing, some of you would have to be honest, I don't. Brother King say he don't. You know, it's hard to own stuff nowadays. I mean, if you messed up before, they're going to make it hard for you to own. Some people be tickled to death about what they have in their pocket in their wallet and don't realize how much what they have is killing them. "Hm, I got this credit card." You're paying 29%. What are you bragging about? You're giving them more money than you spend. Talking about, "Hm, I got me a credit card." Yeah, you've got a bunch of debt. You know, people get bragging about stuff. "I'm the head man on the job." Do you know what that means? Everybody's problem is your problem. When they all go home, "Bye," you still there trying to figure out what they messed up. Can I get an amen? Come walk around here, "I'm a supervisor." Some folk in here became one and asked to get your old job back. Tell the truth. "I'd rather make less than to deal with these knuckleheads. I don't want to supervise nothing but my way to the car at 5 o'clock sharp. As a matter of fact, I'll start packing up at 4:57 so that I'm actually pulling out the garage at 5 o'clock. I ain't

giving this job one extra second than what they pay me to do because I hate this job." Do you know why? Because you're letting us know this life is full of headaches, even the stuff you own gives you stress. Some of you own a house and you're a landlord and you lease it, that's a hard job. When that thing breaks, they don't fix it, they call you. All the joys of ownership. Some of you say, "I liked it when I rented better. It was his fault when it broke. Now I've got to do it."

Life is that way but can I tell you that there's an inheritance that's out of this world. I'm so glad I don't have to keep it up, I don't have to maintain it, I don't have to water it, I don't have to change the batteries, I don't have to feed it, I don't have to clothe it, I don't have to insure it. It was given to me by Almighty God. I'm going to get that mansion, I'm going to walk those streets of gold, I'm going to swing on those gates of pearl, I'm going to sail on that river of life, I'm going to eat off that tree, I'm going to walk around heaven all day and can't nobody take it away from me. What a mighty God. The possession that is to come.

Now watch this now, the protection on the course. Here's what I get out of this. Here's Peter saying, guys, girls, when you got saved, you got into God's family, selected by God the Father, sanctified by God's Spirit, saved by God's Son, and that got you in on some good stuff. Can I tell you, I have not seen, neither hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. If you could see what heaven was like, you'd drop dead. You read the book of the Revelation and the description of heaven in the mere figurative in so many ways says only says so literal God can be because our finite minds cannot captivate or in any way comprehend the magnitude of the beauty of the place where God dwells. That place is so bright it doesn't need no lights, chandeliers, electricity. Do you hear that, Brother Ricky? You won't have to run no wires in no sockets and no conduits and charging no lines in heaven. Jesus is going to light up that place. You heard Sister Joan sang this morning, there will be no more night. There's a mansion there. We'll live for him eternally.

But here's the struggle for the believer. I know what I'm getting but the ride on the way. Some days I feel like getting from here to there, the car breaking down. How many of you feel some days like your spiritual car is breaking down? Come on, tell the truth, and the rest of you are lying, all right? Just nod your head. You say, "Pastor, raising my hand is kinda hard." Just go like this. Some of y'all are like, "He be saying I'm lying, I'll be nodding my head, I ain't realized my hand wasn't up." Thank you, baby. All right, so the ride, you see, we walk by faith and not by sight. So I know, I know a mansion, yeah, gold, pearls, yes, Lord, but the marriage supper of the Lamb, that's going to be some good eating. I mean, heaven, good gracious alive, I can't wait to go there. Amen? But when I wake up in the morning and go to that job, I'm not thinking of no marriage supper. I'll be ready to kill somebody. By the way, not only do I struggle on the way, but I feel in my insufficiencies that sometimes my mistakes and mishaps in life would disqualify me from that possession.

This is how they were feeling. They were under so much pressure and they messed up and the temptation of the devil, who is a liar and accuser of the brethren, John 8:44, he's a

liar and has been a liar and a murderer from the beginning, 1 Peter 5, a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, the gospel of Luke, he walketh about seeking that he may sift us as wheat. He's a liar. Genesis 3, just ask Eve when you get to heaven if he didn't lie to her, and if he hadn't lied, you and I wouldn't be here lost and separated from God, shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. And the devil begins to play with your mind and he begins to say, "You ain't getting that possession. You ain't getting that inheritance. You ain't going to heaven. You ain't going to get all that. That stuff in the Bible, that's just a fairy tale, that's Steven Spielberg, that was just in the movie, that's just to make it seem good." And then Peter comes through after he tells us the position we have in Christ and the possession we have to come, he tells us the protection on the course and he says lest ye think that between now and there, between right now and that possession, lest you think you're going to lose it or disqualify you, he comes through in verse 5 and says we are "kept by the power of God through faith." And do you know what he's saying? God ain't going let you lose your possession. He ain't going to let you mess up so that you don't.... Listen, between now and heaven, God keeps me.

That's doctrine. It's eternal security. I am kept. I almost let go. Felt like I couldn't go on. Problem made me down. Discretion all around. But he kept me so I couldn't let go. Listen, listen, listen, if it were not for the preservation of God's power, we'd all lose our salvation. Let me say that again. If it were not for the preservation of God's power, we'd all lose. You are not good enough to stay saved. "I'm gonna stay saved and I'm gonna stay saved." That song is so undoctinal it shouldn't have never even gotten published. You can't stay saved by nothing you do. I have stayed save but I was not the agent by which my salvation was secured. The same God that selected me, the same God that sanctified me, the same God that saved me is the same God that kept me. I mess up enough in an hour to lose my salvation, much less all these 20 something years. But I'm kept. Wow.

Present. The word is in the progressive tense. He is keeping me. The present, the power, kept by his power, dunamos, miraculous force in the Greek. It's strong, the same stuff that wrought the coffin and raised Jesus from the dead is the same stuff by which he keeps me. And then the presentation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Do you hear me, one day the trumpet is going to sound. I said the trumpet is going to sound. Some of you are depressed this morning. Could I give you some good news? The trumpet is going to sound. I mean, some of you are weary this morning. The trumpet is going to sound. There's coming a day you're not going back to work. You're not going back to the doctor. You're not going back to the bank. Amen. You're not going back to school. I said you're not going back to school, young people. One day you're not going back to school and all the young people say it... Amen. And all of the people that's not young but they're still going to school say it... Amen. Amen. Sister Henry, that class about killed you, didn't it? Yes, Lord. There's coming a day ain't going to no classes. Amen. But the trumpet is going to sound. Here's what God's saying, "I've got your salvation intact until I tell my Son to go on down and get them." That's good news. That's a lively hope.

Perspective during crisis. So in the meantime while you're struggling, the trial of your faith is more precious than gold, verse 7. Hey, he said, "While you're struggling down

there, keep your eyes on an upward look. You've got a precious faith." I say you've got a precious faith and the reason why we find out you have a precious faith is because you go through some purging fire. Could I tell you something? We wouldn't know if you were made anything unless God tried you. We get so mad, "Oh no, I don't know why God did this." To see if you're real. All that shouting you did on Sunday, let's find out if you knew what you were shouting about. Come on. We love to raise our hand when it's all good, then trials come, "Uh." Fall apart. No faith. "My hope has been on nothing less than Jesus' blood and, amen, pastor." We'll see. You're called into the office and they tell you you've got 30 days. "My hope is, hm." Lord, Lord. We're good at singing on the mountaintop, get real quiet in the valley.

Peter said, "Excuse me, all that hallelujah, praise the Lord when you got saved, let's see. Let's see. When a trial comes out of the blue, let's see what your faith is made of. Let's see what your faith is made of. Yeah, all that live godly shall suffer persecution." If you're not persecuted, you ain't living godly for this world is too wicked for you to be right and feel comfortable. Amen. "I just ain't had no problems this week." Well, you sure was a good ally of the devil because there's no way you went in this crazy dark world with your light on and everybody said, "We just love your little light up self." Nobody shares that. Jesus said, "They hated me and they're going to hate you." But I've told myself it's all good because the more I go through the fire, the purer my gold becomes. Job said, "He knoweth the way I take and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

I wonder if there's somebody going through a trial today that has learned from 1 Peter it's okay. God's trying to reveal my precious faith through the purging fire. How? Why? So that there will be some praise to the Father. Nathanael said, "I'm going to praise you in the storm." And could I tell you, one day there's coming a day we're going to land in heaven and we're going to go across that river and we're going to lay down our burdens down by the riverside, and there's coming a day there will be no more sorrow and no more care and no more tears. Could I tell you, there's going to be an exuberance and an exhilaration that comes out of every child of God who was down here on this earth struggling and battling and fighting, but when you get to heaven one day and you look at him and hear him say, "Well done," you didn't quit in that trial, you didn't quit in that difficulty, you kept tithing when you were broke, you kept smiling when you were jobless, you kept shouting when everything was going wrong, your spouse didn't come, you came anyhow, your children were rebellious but you gave it to God. When you look at him one day and he says, "Well done," he's going to get more praise out of you. To the glory and the praise of God the Father. Amen.

So he says this precious faith and this purging fire and this praise to the Father, bless his name, it gives me a wonderful product that's full, wherein we rejoice with joy unspeakable, full of glory. Excuse me, I don't know if joy is ever mentioned in the Bible more intentionally than it is in 1 Peter 1. Unspeakable. There is no other place in the Bible where joy is called unspeakable and full of glory. And isn't it quite ironic that the place where the loudest amplification of joy is articulated in the Bible is in the context of struggling people? Do you hear me? God through Peter told the struggling people that

they could have the biggest joy found in all of the Bible. Could I ask you a question? When's the last time you had the most joy in your life in a struggle? "Well, I mean, what had happened..." No, I'm just asking you he didn't get to joy unspeakable and full of glory until he started off talking about elect and selected and sanctified and saved. The reason why you can't muster up joy on the outside is because you have not taken account what God did for you on the inside, and if you get – you listen – if you get excited every once in a while about your internal salvation, your internal salvation might whisper in the ear of your external manifestation that God is good, and it would be hard, I say it would be hard to let your mouth sour when your heart is smiling.

When you come in here, Christian people, all messed up and discouraged, "If you knew what my week was like. I just don't know how much longer I can do this. I wish God would just take me. Why they ain't tell me it was gonna be like this?" How are you doing? "I'm kicking but I..." Great to see you this morning, brother. "Hmph." I mean, just, I think, listen, I think some Christian people stand in the mirror and practice a struggling face before they come to church. Pick up the cellphone, take a picture of themselves and say, "You can look at it in the car. Honey, do I look convincing?" No, grimace a little bit more. "There you go, baby." A brother might see us and put something in our hand. Somebody might feel sorry for me. Listen, if you're more intent on over the church seeing your limp than you are them seeing the resurrected Savior, you might as well stay home. Now some people limp for real but some people fake. I'm talking about bona fide, Hollywood, miracle mansion actors. Had to put the plug in. Pay me later. For those on the worldwide web, themiraclemansion.com.

We are so exaggerative. Peter was right, Peter told people to pick their head up who were getting fed to lions. Okay, you've got allergies, your tire went flat, you had to stay a little extra, you had to jump the car because you left the lights on, the dress you wanted to wear had a stain. Is that your persecution? Somebody laughed at you. Your boss joked on you because you're a Christian. The bulletin didn't have your name in it and when it did, it was misspelled. Is that the extent of your persecution? Somebody didn't talk to you, somebody was talking about you and you lost your joy over that? They were getting fed to lions and Peter said joy unspeakable and full of glory. Check yourself. Has God not done enough for you on the inside to weather a little bit of ridicule? "I go to my school and I read my Bible and the people laugh at me." Pfft, who cares? Why in the world would I be depressed because a mortal laughs at me when the immortal is keeping me?

That's why we're talking about for every mountain, for every trial, for every blessing. Hallelujah. For this I give you praise. And if you're not, listen, if you can't multitask and look at your beef in life without seeing your blessings at the same time, you need to get your eyes checked because it ought to be that the magnitude of God's goodness so far overshadows and outweighs the little bit of stress for our light affliction is nothing to be compared, Paul said, to the glory which shall be revealed.

So next week, get in the mirror and practice joy. I think that's noble because I think some people don't know how they look. "I was smiling. Yes, I was." No, you weren't. Joy unspeakable is, look, that's when sometimes you just laugh so loud and cry so hard and

you can't even describe how happy you are just in unabated, overwhelmed, shut-down, locked up, worried sick, ripped out of vocabulary over the goodness of God. Some of you have never been there because you've never drowned in the doctrine of 1 Peter 1 and we're going to address that, and if I went through the whole book at a later date. You might stop me and say, "Pastor, God is so good, I can't take it." That's joy unspeakable, full of glory, Shekinah glory. That's the glory of God that fills the place. There's no room for depression. God's glory has taken up all the space in my mind. "Sorry, depression, you must check into another mind. I have no vacancies. The glory of God filled up my whole mind, my whole spirit, my whole body. And I'm struggling and I've got 15 things on paper that I don't like, but those 15 don't shake a stick at the one thing on paper that says I got saved. Because of that, I have a lively hope."