

The Resurrection and Our Hope

By Don Green

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Bible Verse: 1 Peter 1:3-5
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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

On this day of all days which speaks to the hope that belongs to every true believer in Jesus Christ, we remember how much Scripture speaks to the theme of hope, hope being a confident expectation of the ultimate blessing of God upon those who belong to him. Scripture is filled with this, particularly in the New Testament. I want to read just a couple of passages to orient our thoughts and set the theme for this morning. In Romans chapter 5, we read, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And more than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Elsewhere in Scripture, in 1 John chapter 3, we read this, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." Justification, true reconciliation with God brings us to a full and living hope in Christ, because in Christ all that has happened to him becomes true of us. Christ died to sin, so also believers in Christ have died to sin. Christ rose from the dead, so also believers are united with his resurrection, filled with the Spirit, filled with new life, and one day will be resurrected physically from the dead as well. Christ has come and shown us the Father's love, he has loved us himself, and one day we will be like him because we will see him as he is and the resurrection, which we remember on this Resurrection Day, certifies the truth, the historical truth of all those facts to us and shows us that our hope is not in vain.

What I want to do this morning is I want to go back to a passage that we considered several years ago before many of you were even at Truth Community Church that emphasizes and shows us and expounds for us the resurrection and our hope. And so I invite you to turn with me to the book of 1 Peter chapter 1. 1 Peter chapter 1 and as we draw upon the hope that is given to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ, as we look forward with hope to his certain bodily and visible return, we realize that we not only appropriate that hope for our hearts, but also we give praise to God as a result of it, that God who has

graciously given us this great hope, is one to whom we are to ascribe blessing and glory and honor for endless days. 1 Peter chapter 1, beginning in verse 3, we read this,

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Peter wrote this letter to Christians who were suffering greatly, and his letter has the theme of suffering woven into it throughout the entire text. Indeed, if we keep reading after verse 5, we read that he immediately turns to the theme of suffering after having set forth the hope that is ours in the resurrection. You see, we are to grasp the historical fact and reality of the resurrection and then immediately apply it to how it informs and changes the way that we respond to the inevitable sufferings and difficulties of life so that Peter could say in verse 6, he says, "In this you rejoice." In what do you rejoice? In this hope that he had just been speaking and describing in the prior three verses, the hope of the resurrection, the hope of our inheritance, the hope of God's power keeping us throughout all of life until we are delivered safely into the salvation that he has obtained for us with his own precious blood. In that hope you rejoice, "though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials."

Don't you love the wonderful sympathy that Scripture gives to us in the fullness of its pages to speak not only of the lofty themes of resurrection and heaven and perseverance, but to take those and to help us see how they mediate and provide a healing, soothing balm to the sore trials and the scars and the open wounds that life inevitably brings to us? And we gather today, and I know that many of you are feeling the raw wounds of life right now, and if you've been around Truth Community Church in any time in the past couple of weeks, you know that that's true of me as well. And so we all need what this text has to say to us. Peter wrote to encourage first century Christians, and these Christians lived in the area of modern-day Turkey, that football-shaped area just north of the Mediterranean Sea. And you read that in the opening two verses, we won't take time to look at that. But they were suffering in many ways and Peter immediately praises God, points to the hope, and then says understand that this informs the way that you respond to trials. So much so that it not only gives you a sense of future hope, but this is something in which you can rejoice in the present. And so he says that there in verse 6, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while if necessary you've been grieved by various trials."

Look over at chapter 3 verse 14 as we again are just opening and introducing the text and seeing the theme of suffering that Peter is addressing for the sake of the people of God. He says in verse 14, "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled." He says in chapter 1, he says rejoice in your trials. In verse 14, he says don't be afraid in your trials. We go on and in chapter 4, verse 14, you read this and actually we'll begin verse 12 here in chapter 4. He says, "Beloved." I love that word. If you've listened to me preach, you know I use that word a

lot. Scripture addresses us as beloved, the beloved of Christ, the one to whom or upon whom he set his affection, the ones for whom he died, loved before the foundation of the world, loved at the cross, loved when the Spirit came and gave us new life, loved as he keeps us, loved eternally throughout all of the endless ages of heaven that await us. No wonder Scripture calls us beloved. God so loved the world and so loved his people that he gave his only begotten Son so that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life. We are surrounded above us and below us to our left and to our right and in the atmosphere we breathe, we as the people of God, the people of Christ, are engulfed in an environment of love that sweetens and softens all of the afflictions that we go through. So that Peter could say, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed." As we study the book of Revelation over the course of time, we just see again and again how Scripture points us to that Second Coming of Christ, points us to that supernatural intervention of the Son of God into the world in which he made and corrects all injustice, introduces his kingdom, reigns over his people as they reign with him, and banishes his enemies and the unrepentant into eternal suffering as the just punishment from God for their multiplied rebellions against him. When his glory is revealed, when that coming takes place, so that in verse 14 he can go on and say, "If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

Now, by way of a little bit of historical background, near the time of Peter's letter, whether it was shortly before or shortly after, the city of Rome had been burned widely and destructively in AD 64 and the reigning emperor at the time, Nero, falsely accused Christians of setting the fire; there's informed speculation that Nero may have set it himself in order to advance his own agenda. But Nero wasn't content simply to make false accusations. He was a sadistic enemy of the people of God, and as we've said in the past, Nero, as a matter of historical fact, would encase Christians in wax, hang them on poles in his garden, and set them on fire to light his garden at night and this was what he considered to be entertainment. He sewed Christians into the skins of wild beasts and then turned wild dogs upon them to tear them to pieces, Nero himself being a wild dog. And so, beloved, with just that little bit of background, what I want you to see is that death and suffering and slander and false accusations were the environment and were the lot of early Christians of our brothers and sisters in Christ from the very beginning and Peter writes to them to help them in the midst of that. And I think that if we look at those greater, more spectacular, so to speak, sufferings that our brothers and sisters were going through in the first century and would endure for the next 300 years at the hands of Roman emperors, we can see that if the word of God was sufficient to cause them to rejoice and to have hope and to endure and persevere in those more lofty, more difficult sufferings, then surely it's enough to strengthen our hearts and give us help in the sufferings that we go through. I grieve over the predominant false teaching in what passes for Christianity that God promises us health and wealth and prosperity and creating this false expectation that true Christians will know blessing and wealth and health and be protected from suffering if only they have enough faith. Those false teachers always give themselves an out, don't they? That if you're suffering, if you're having difficulties, it's

not because of my teaching, it's because you don't have enough faith and so they pile guilt and manipulation upon their hearers when life doesn't go as they promise in order to protect their little fiefdom and to insulate them from the necessary charge of being a false teacher and a false prophet as Scripture would convict them. These things are not true. What is true is that Scripture tells us to expect suffering. Scripture encourages us and helps us not by telling us that we will not go through suffering, but telling us that in the suffering that is inevitable sooner or later, there is hope found in Christ as certified to us by the resurrection. Scripture is explicit on this, that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God, Acts chapter 14 verse 22.

And so as we look around at the reality of life about us and the day in which we live, it's not that we should think that there is a strange thing happening to us because illness or poverty or death have come into our lives. It's rather, how do we respond when these inevitable things come? And is there a confident expectation that we can lay hold of that can give us the strength and confidence to walk through them and we keep walking even as the tears keep strolling down and streaming down our cheeks in the process? And the answer is yes, absolutely. We don't need fog machines to artificially stimulate us. We don't need loud music or dark rooms to crowd out the tribulations and to give us, as one church near my house says, we want you to experience Easter. You know what I want for you? I want you to know the truth about the resurrection, to know it in your mind, to embrace it in your heart, because that is what will sustain you through the inevitable sorrows of life. The experiences come and go, beloved. It's why we don't cater to that here at Truth Community Church. The experiences come and go. You can't live off experience. God intended us to live off of his truth as his people. And so whether the Apostle Peter was writing in direct response to the persecutions that Nero was inflicting upon the people of God, or whether he was anticipating them in a time yet to come, he knew that his readers were suffering and, you know, in a much lesser way, I as a pastor know that many of you are suffering and so I want to enter into the spirit of Peter, the spirit of the text here, in order to give you the hope that you need to persevere grounded in the resurrection.

Let's read our text once more, 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 3 and 5, and freshen it in our minds and then we'll go through it rather quickly, I expect, today. We find that the resurrection tells us great things about our great God to lift our hearts greatly. The resurrection tells us great things about our great God to lift our hearts greatly. Verse 3, once again, we read it. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

I want to show you three great themes about our God from this text and the first great theme about our great God is this, is that God has great pity. God has great pity, and as Andrew opened the service for us today, he spoke of the sympathy that Christ has for us, reading from Matthew chapter 11, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden." You know, one of the temptations in suffering is to... our views get distorted. We start

thinking wrongly about God, start thinking wrongly about our suffering, so that we forget this aspect of the great character of God, that he's a God full of mercy, full of pity upon us. And beloved, the resurrection points us to that great mercy of God. And you must remember what the resurrection is, it is the capstone of the redemptive work of Christ. The resurrection certifies to us that God has accepted the sacrifice that Christ made for the sins of his people, so that those who belong to Christ, their sins are forgiven, he has shared his righteousness with us so that we have full access and full reconciliation with a holy God who loves us and sent his Son in the first place to do that. Salvation was God's idea. It was the Father's idea. The Father sent the Son in order to be the Savior of the world, we read in 1 John chapter 4. The Father, knowing in advance the coming rebellion of man against him, the Father knowing the justice that would have to be dispensed against rebellion against him, looking on poor, miserable, rebel, wretched creatures like us, conceived a plan whereby he would be able to display mercy and bring an innumerable host of unworthy people into his blessing, into the realm of his love, into the realm of his protection. And what we read here in 1 Peter is that the resurrection teaches us about the great mercy of God.

Let's think about this word "mercy" for just a moment. Mercy is compassion in action. You think about the Samaritan who stopped alongside the road of the one who had been beaten and robbed and a couple of Jews had walked by, but the Samaritan stopped, saw him in his need, bandaged up his wounds, took him to a place where he could find care and provided for him. Mercy is compassion in action that relieves suffering. Mercy looks at one in pain, is motivated from within by a sense of sympathy, empathy, and care, and based on those inner realities, those feelings, if I can put it that way, does something about it in order to help the one who is suffering and unable to help himself. And what Peter is saying to us here in verse 3 is that the resurrection shows us that God has great pity upon his people.

Look at it there in verse 3 with me again. He praises God for it. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" He says, "According to his great mercy." God has great mercy. You could say he has great pity. He has had great pity on his people. Guilty and separated and dead and under the domination of Satan and rightly under the manifest revealed wrath of God, in that God looked on you and me, those of us that are in Christ, he looked on us, saw our miserable plight, saw our unwillingness to turn to him, saw our inability to turn to him, saw our inability to understand his truth. I mean, look, we were utterly lost in guilt and wrath and helplessness. Utterly, totally, completely lost and under judgment. And while we were like that, in the language later in Romans 5, while we were yet enemies, Christ came. Christ died for us. While in the course of our own lives, God had mercy and brought that person to you, brought that pastor to you, brought that book to you, brought that friend to you, who started with the help of the Holy Spirit to introduce you to the things of salvation, to the truth of God. God initiated all of that. This was not something that we sought. Scripture says no one seeks for God. There's none who does good, not even one. And so in order to enter into this hope, in order to enter into this blessing and assurance that God has for us, we start by recognizing that there is no merit in us, that we did not seek this for ourselves, this was not our idea. What we brought to the table was rebellion and unrighteousness and indifference and hostility

toward God. Many of you, like me, at one point in the past having been a mocker and a blasphemer of God, this was never our idea, beloved. And it's so important for you to understand that and to embrace it because it's only when you understand what you were really like, those of you that are not in Christ, what you are now, present tense, really like, it's only then that you can begin to appreciate the magnitude of the love of God. You know, Scripture speaks in these terms, doesn't it, that, you know, we'll help our friends, but we won't help our enemies, and our enemies won't help us. You know, while we were enemies, God had this pity and compassion upon us.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, I remind you that God had mercy on you in your sin to bring you to eternal life. God, and this just shows us the infinite benevolence of God, the infinite goodness of God, the infinite pity of God, that while we were like that, he did all of this. Look at chapter 2 verse 24 with me. Chapter 2, verse 24 and let's start in verse 21, or even in verse 20. We're not in a hurry today. Peter says, "For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." While you were in sin, Christ took on human flesh. While your rebellion was living and active, and while we were all in Adam, Christ came, lived, suffered, did not retaliate in the face of infinite provocations, committed no sin, and at the culmination of that perfect life, he offered it up on the cross of Calvary, a sacrifice. Christ, a priest, offering himself as a sacrifice to God, being a mediator for guilty people to reconcile them to a holy God before they even asked for the mercy in the first place. The recognition of this, the truth of that, should cause our hearts to well up with love and loyalty to the Lord, to realize that he is like that and how good he is, and to recognize in a surpassing way that this displays that God is a God of pity and compassion upon unworthy people.

Look at chapter 3, verse 18 and we see more in the context of suffering. We read in verse 17, "it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." Verse 18, "For Christ also suffered," Christ felt pain, Christ underwent the wrath of God, he suffered "once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit." There is the eternal Son of God, holy, undefiled, without sin, the great high priest, the Creator of heaven and earth, the eternal Son of God, Son of Man, walked on this earth with no place to lay his head, all because, all because it was his intention to redeem a people, an unworthy people like us and to bring them into the family of God, bring them into the blessing of God so that we would experience his goodness and worship him forever and ever without end. Amen. Now he's at the right hand of God and at that place of authority, after his ascension at the great right hand of God as Stephen saw him in Acts chapter 7 at the crowning moment of his martyrdom, he looked up and he saw Christ at the right hand of

God, beloved, that place of authority shows that Christ's sacrifice has been accepted by God. It is accepted by heaven so that everyone that puts themselves in Christ, everyone that turns to Christ and pleads with him to save them from their sins, to deliver them from sin, finds themselves in the same place of divine security, divine acceptance, divine safety as Christ himself has at the right hand of God. For us to have a position like that is irrefutable proof, it is conclusive proof far beyond not just a reasonable doubt, far beyond any doubt whatsoever that God is a God of pity. He's a God of mercy. He's a God of goodness on his people. That's what the resurrection shows us, that God by the power of the resurrection of Christ has caused us to be born again. He's brought us into his family to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead it says in verse 3.

And so, beloved, I want you to step back from it for a moment and contemplate your life and your suffering in light of the things that we're saying here today. We always have to put these things in a broader context. We can't just think about the immediate difficulties of today, wondering how are we going to pay this next bill? Wondering what the next report from the doctor is going to be? Wondering if our loved ones will ever turn to Christ or not? Wondering how we should have done things differently earlier in life? We've got to get past all of that, beloved. We have to, and put it in the broader context of the reality of our salvation. If you are a Christian here this morning, beloved, remember that God has rescued you from sin and hell in order to bring you into his kingdom. The resurrection affirms that truth and reminds you of his great mercy so that rather than starting with our earthly problems, as serious as they may be, rather than starting with the earthly problems and letting those cloud and dirty our eyeglasses, so to speak, so that we see God through the lens of corruption and difficulty on earth, we take off the glasses, as it were, we behold the beauty of Christ in its fullness, we set aside the problems, we set aside the difficulties, the sorrows, the questions, the lies, we set all of that aside and we just come back and realize, "You know what? I'm a Christian. God has shown mercy to me. He's rescued me from sin. He's rescued me from hell. He's brought me into his family. He's brought me into his kingdom." And it's only as we discipline our minds to think in this way that we start to see things in the proper way, the proper perspective, and the resurrection, which we remember on this Resurrection Day 2024, the resurrection affirms the truth of the pity of God, the mercy of Christ, the compassion of Christ in a way that we should never allow ourselves to forget and should always be on the front edges of our mind.

I know that, and it grieves me, I know that many of you were raised in religious environments that, you know, God's going to get you for that. You're taught to be suspicious of God. You're taught that God might take your salvation away from you if you ever had it. You know, and even in worse forms of false religion, you know, you may belong to God, but even if you die, you're going to go to a place called purgatory for thousands and thousands of years so that your remnants of sin can be burned off and you have to suffer after death to somehow supplement, I guess, the sufferings of Christ as if Christ's sacrifice was not sufficient. Out on all of that. You know, it's at moments like this where I'm just so conscious of the need of the help of the Holy Spirit, because it's very, very difficult, it's very difficult to get out from under the false teaching that you knew before, isn't it? Some of you know that by experience. It's hard to get out from under that,

to be released from that, and to enter into the truth of the certain, persevering, keeping love of God. Scripture tells us to rejoice, to remember that God has forgiven your sin and has given new life to you. In Ephesians 2, we read this, "God being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved." Grace, mercy, love. You can just see these wonderful themes as you look at Ephesians chapter 2. And it's not just grace, mercy, and love, it's that God is rich in great love.

And so rather than having these, having accusatory thoughts toward God, "Why does God allow this? Why do I suffer so?" Beloved, let your sufferings turn you to the great pity of God and rather than demanding immediate relief or immediate answers to the difficulties that life has brought to you, the sorrows and adversity that life has brought to you, thank him now, recognize now the wonders of his mercy, the wonders of his pity, and if you are in Christ, give thanks to him that you have been born again to a living hope without condition, without asking for anything else to change. "God, these things are true. They are certified to me by the word of God, certified in my heart by the Holy Spirit, and I give you thanks even if nothing ever changes. Even if that big check never comes in. If I live the rest of my life always wondering how I'm going to pay the bills, Father, I don't care. I give praise to you. Blessed be God for the hope of the resurrection and that he has caused me to be born again."

And I think I alluded to this book Friday night, I just finished reading an excellent, excellent book by James Montgomery Boice called "Christ's Call to Discipleship" written back in the mid-'80s. I commend that book to you. I commend every book by James Montgomery Boice to you. But one of the points that he was making is that to enter into the fullness of joy of being a disciple there is a sense in which we have to let go of everything. And if I can paraphrase and thereby make it less effective than expressing it as Dr. Boice did, the idea is that we have to be willing to let go, to surrender all of the conditions that we would place on God before we'll be happy. "God, I'm not going to be happy until I see my loved one come to Christ. God, I'm not going to be happy until you heal me. God, I'm not going to be happy until X, Y, Z." And in the process, polluting and clogging up true discipleship with conditions on God rather than simply being grateful to him in an unconditional, unqualified way. "Father, I praise you for the fullness of who you are. You are who you are. You are a God of pity, a God of mercy, a God of love. You have shown that to me. I am in Christ. All that's true of Christ is now true of me. Father, I just thank you and I accept that and that is enough to satisfy my soul." And not being like those in Luke 9 who wanted to place conditions, "Well, let me go bury my father first. Lord, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me. Lord, do this. Lord, do that." And the wearisome way in which we place conditions on God before we'll just open up with, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It's a very challenging, very helpful book, richly pastoral, James Montgomery Boice, "Christ's Call to Discipleship." And I thank God for bringing that book into my life when he did.

Beloved, God has great pity. The power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead that we remember here on this Resurrection Sunday, is the self-same power that gave spiritual life to you when you were dead in your trespasses and sins. It is the power of Christ. It is

resurrection, supernatural power of life that caused us to be born again, that delivered us from the deadness of our souls, our deadness in trespasses and sins, that takes to be made alive when you are dead is supernatural power from God and that's what he's done for every believer in Christ. And if you don't know something about new life, maybe you've never been born again. If you only know complaining to God, if you only know trying harder, maybe you need to come back and look fresh at the gospel of Jesus Christ. But for those of you that are in Christ, look beyond your circumstances and see this great mercy, this great pity of God, that in your sin he caused you to be born again to a living hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, and as you see it and embrace it, you respond like Peter did, "Blessed be God." Forget everything else, "Praise be to God. I set aside the fresh grave. I set aside the mountain of bills. I set aside the next doctor's appointment. I set aside all of the heartache. I set it all aside, and in a fullness of heart I ascribe praise to God simply because he is who he is. I will exalt in the Lord. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." That's where this all leads you to.

Well, secondly, as time's getting away from me again, secondly, it's not only that God has great pity, God has a great plan. God has a great plan and this just fuels our hope to realize this, that the best is yet to come for every one of us. If we're living in great prosperity and in great happiness of life and everything's going well, even then the best is yet to come. This life is not the end point. This life is not the goal at all. Here we have no lasting city, but we are seeking a city to come, and we see that theme expressed in different words in verse 4 as we read this in 1 Peter chapter 1, that he has caused us to be born again, verse 4, "to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." Kept in heaven for you, beloved, telling us explicitly that what we are to be looking for, where our aspirations and our hope and our anchor lies, is nothing in this earth, but it's in the heaven that God has reserved for us, that one day we will sit down at the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb and we will share in the joy of his triumph and we will bask in the glory of his love and the fullness of rest that he gives to us. One day, beloved, one day, quite soon enough, one day, quite soon enough, we will enter into eternal glory. We will enter into that place of peace and rest and worship and fellowship and intimacy with nothing to intrude upon it. We won't carry the baggage of this earth's trials into heaven's with us and agitate over that baggage when we're in the presence of Christ. We'll leave it all behind. We'll enter in, and the fullness of glory will be ours. And what will that be like? What will eternal glory be like? I don't know. How are we supposed to describe eternal glory in temporal tribulations? All we can do is look by faith to what Scripture reveals to us.

Look at it there again with me in verse 4. This inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you. It's imperishable in the sense that it will never decay. You know, everything that we get here on earth that's new and shiny, ultimately it decays, right? You get a nice new car or a nice piece of furniture or whatever, it's inevitable that eventually it's all going to be tossed into a garbage can or a garbage dump someplace. It's inevitable because the things on earth rot and decay. Heaven's not going to be like that. There will be no decay. There will be no diminishment. As my friend Phil Johnson once said, when you go to heaven, it's going to be as fresh and vibrant and joyous 50,000 years after you get there as it is in the first moment that you're there,

injecting an element of time into eternity simply because of the limitations of our mind to understand it. It's undefiled, morally pure, none of the corruption and the deliberate dirtying that is all around us, in life around us, there's not going to be any of that. None of the temptations, none of the sin, none of the hostility, none of the perversion, none of the cross-dressing stuff that we see, for example, to pollute and corrupt the plan and design of a most wholly perfect God. None of that will be there. There's going to be this environment of purity that is going to be like taking a fresh drink of water in the midst of a desert, "Oh, that's so refreshing."

He says it will not fade away. It's unfading. It's not going to get old. It's not going to get boring. Don't ever let yourself fall for the lies and the misrepresentations of those who portray heaven as a boring time of playing a harp on a cloud, and that doesn't sound too exciting by earthly standards. It's not going to be anything, it's not going to be that disembodied disengagement. This is going to be rich and full and glorious and more satisfying, more full than anything that we've ever known on earth. To be in the presence of Christ could not possibly be anything other than exhilarating.

And then we read in verse 4, again, "kept in heaven for you." I love this, that there is no force on earth that can keep you from receiving your inheritance. Not hostile parents, not enemies, not poverty, not life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, there is nothing that can stand in the way of a true Christian ultimately entering into that place of blessing. God himself, Christ himself has reserved it in heaven for us and this is what God gives to us in salvation. No wonder Peter says, "Blessed be God." Can we somehow fathom the greatness of the blessing that God has given us that we did not deserve and now cannot be taken away from us? Of course, all we can say is blessed be God for that. What great pity! What a great plan! And understand that God caused you to be born again. The Spirit moved in your heart to bring you into this position so that you would certainly receive it in the end without any possibility of loss.

And oh, the contrast, the contrast to life. Earthly satisfaction is temporary. Ultimately, every earthly relationship is temporary. Everything that we receive and acquire in this life, it's all temporary. "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return there." I come in with nothing, I'll go out with nothing except the suit they bury me in. And I say that just to mock the things that we put our hope in. People disappoint us. People hurt us. Temptation assaults us. Inner corruption pollutes us. Physical and financial decline come and go, and death takes loved ones sometimes before their time. And beloved, to realize that the Lord, our gracious Lord Jesus Christ, has acted to deliver us decisively from that realm of death and decay so that one day we will be with him in an environment where there is no death or decay, is the greatest hope that we could have. And going back to what I was paraphrasing from Dr. Boice's book, it lets us unclench the fist around everything in this life and say, "I can't hold on to this anyway. This is like trying to hold water and oil in my hand. It just slips right through." Of course it does. It's all temporary. It's all passing. And to realize that in the hand of Christ is grasped for us an eternal reward that cannot be taken away? You see, beloved, Scripture lifts our eyes from this fallen world and even from the ones that we love the most to something that's far better. Heaven is coming, pure joy in the presence of Christ that will be eternally fresh

never to be taken away. We're not even going to feel any sense of threat that that will be taken away from us. There won't be any sense of fear about losing it because it will just be self-evident that this place of blessedness is permanent and eternal and no one can take it away from us so that temporary suffering here on earth yields to eternal reward in heaven.

Look at verse 13. This is the way, beloved, that you are to think and to live. Verse 13, "Therefore, preparing your minds for action," we're to think about these things. The approach isn't where's the next best experience? Where's the next fake revival that I can go and make a pilgrimage to? When's the next scheduled time at Asbury? Where's the next experience at the mega-church down the road? No, no, it's not about seeking an experience. It's about thinking and studying and receiving and developing doctrine in your mind, preparing your mind for action, being sober minded. That becomes the basis upon a true hope so that we know by biblical revelation, unchanging biblical revelation, fully the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Will it be worth it? That's kind of the hundred million dollar question, isn't it? When we get there, will it be worth it? Is there any risk that we have missed and wasted the opportunity here on earth for setting our hope on heaven? None whatsoever. Scripture says he who believes in Christ will not be disappointed. The truth of the matter is the only perspective that we'll have in heaven is that we didn't set our hopes and aspirations high enough. We didn't have our expectations high enough for how glorious and great it will be to be in heaven. We weren't expecting great enough things from God because of our unbelief. That's the thing that we'll know is we didn't hope enough. There's no possibility that we will over-hope what God will give us in heaven. No possibility of that whatsoever. No possibility, beloved, that seeing Jesus Christ face to face in resurrected glory will be something less than what we hoped for.

Great pity, great plan, thirdly, finally, God has great power. God has great power. Look at 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 5. Great pity, great plan, now God's great power, verse 5, "who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." See again how it throws us to the future? To be revealed, salvation in the last time. In verse 4, being kept in heaven for you. It's all about looking ahead, looking for that which we are yet to possess and what Peter says here is that God, by his omnipotent power, God by his power to create a universe by his spoken word, Christ by his power to calm seas by his spoken word, Christ by his power to raise us from the dead, to raise Lazarus from the dead, God using all of that great, great omnipotence exercising his power, beloved brother in Christ, beloved sister in Christ, God exercising that kind of power to keep you safe until you receive the reward.

Look at it there in verse 5, "who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." It's not that you come to Christ and then you have to keep your salvation going and if you don't, you're going to lose it. That's not true at all. That's not true at all. It's not your works after coming to faith that keep you in Christ. It's not even your faith that keeps you in Christ. God's power works prior to your faith. It works through your faith to keep you for your final salvation. If it ever depended on you and me for a moment, it would all be lost. But it doesn't. The keeping, preserving

power, God has taken the responsibility for that, Christ has taken the responsibility for that, onto himself said, "They will never be plucked from my hand." Christ keeps us. Yes, your faith may be weak, but Christ is strong. It's not, we don't rely on our changing malleable faith, our hope is guaranteed to us by an immutable, perfect Savior in perfect control, who with perfect pity is executing a perfect plan by his perfect power to keep us perennially, perpetually in his care. The power of God saved you and it cannot fail. As it says in Philippians, what God has started, he'll finish. And the resurrection, beloved, the resurrection shows that God has the power to finish what he started. This can't fail. We cannot be lost if we are in Christ.

So we look at 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 10 as we close. 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 10. Oh, what a great way to end a Resurrection Day sermon, speaking to people that I know have broken hearts, here is what the word of God has to say to you. Chapter 5 verse 10, "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen." What great pity. What a great plan. What great power. Blessed be God.

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