

What the Resurrection Says About God

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I want to bring your attention back to the resurrection. It's a shame that we tend to isolate that to one Sunday out of the year when it is so vital to everything about our spiritual life, and I wanted to just continue on the theme of the resurrection and take you to the book of 1 Peter today. I'll get back to finish my exposition of 1 John in a week or two, I don't know, whenever that comes about, but I had the opportunity last week to speak at a church that I'm friends with up in Bakersfield and spoke on the resurrection there and what I spoke on there last week I want to bring to you as well. 1 Peter 1:3-5, and I trust that this is going to be an encouraging and also a challenging message to you as we try, so ever desperately, to live the Christian life in the midst of a world that crowds out spiritual affections with alarming regularity in our lives and with alarming ease the need to stay focused on the purpose of our salvation and the ultimate goal of our salvation is stronger than it's ever been.

I was reading a book last night about a sixteenth century martyr in England and just the clarity of thought that was in her mind, the clarity of spiritual reality, the clarity of her commitment to Christ even as she was walking up to the executioner's block, just convicted me and encouraged me at the same time that these truths that we preach at Grace Community Church from week to week and month to month, these things that God has revealed in his word are able to sustain us in the darkest and deepest of waters, the darkest of times, and I think in the midst of all of the distractions that we deal with in the 21st century, we lose sight of that and I want to bring your attention and the clarity of your thought back to what matters and back to the great hope that is ours because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1, I'll begin in verse 3 and go down through verse 5. That's our text for this morning where Peter said,

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Peter as he was writing this letter was writing to encourage first century Christians who were living in the area of modern day Turkey there in Asia Minor, kind of spread throughout the northern half of that little section of the world, and as you read through the book of 1 Peter, you see that these Christians were suffering in various ways. Suffering is one of the key themes of this entire book and I just want to kind of lay that out for you because it helps us understand Peter's purpose in writing.

Look for example, at chapter 1, verse 6 where he tells his readers, he says, "In this," referring back to what he had just said in our text, "In this," in these realities of eternal salvation that Christ has purchased for us through his resurrection, "In this," in the imperishable inheritance that God is protecting for you for salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." Manifold trials afflicting his readers, Peter is drawing them back to the resurrection, drawing them back to eternal salvation to focus their attention on the priorities that matter and to focus their attention on that which can give them joy no matter the suffering that they are facing.

Chapter 3, verse 14, again, I'm just wanting you to see the theme of suffering and how it's a silver thread woven throughout this entire letter. He said, "even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled," verse 17, "it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong."

Look over at chapter 4, verse 12, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation." Notice how he connects suffering with rejoicing with the glory that is yet to come. In verse 14 he says, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

Chapter 5, verse 10, we'll come to this at the end of the message. Also he says, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

Now, near the time of Peter's letter, as you know, the city of Rome had been burned in A.D. 64, and the Emperor Nero had falsely accused Christians of setting that fire and he used that false accusation as justification to begin a ruthless persecution of them. He burned them alive, encasing them in wax and then setting them on fire to light his garden for nighttime parties. He sewed believers in Christ, those of like precious faith with you and me, those with whom we would have had an instant bond if we had known them, if we had lived at that time we would have immediately united and knit our hearts together because of a common love for Christ, those Christians he sewed into the skins of wild beasts and then released wild dogs to tear at them and to chew at their flesh until they died a miserable human death. That is the kind of environment in which Peter was writing at the time. It's not entirely clear to me whether he wrote just before that

persecution or just after it, but it really doesn't matter for the big scheme of things. The point is that Peter's readers were suffering which is why he's addressing that theme so frequently throughout the letter as we've seen. Every single chapter, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, addressed the theme of suffering. If you'll read through the book in one sitting, you can see that very clearly.

But here's the thing for us today: what Peter wrote to them back in the first century, the principles, the truths that he emphasized to them to encourage them in the midst of severe suffering, is the exact same principle that we pick up today, that we meditate upon, that we trust in, that we remind ourselves to encourage us and to give us joy and satisfaction and comfort in the midst of our trials, even if they are not so outwardly severe. The disappointment and the discouragement of going through life, of seeing a world crumbling around us, the difficulty of pain and death and trials and temptations, all of that comes under the same umbrella that Peter lays out in these first three verses. His God-centered approach to suffering is what we all need to come back to in order to be able to rejoice, in order to be able to have joy. Based on the authority of God's word as it is set forth in this book of 1 Peter and countless other places in Scripture as well, let me just encourage you and challenge you at the same time, hold out hope for you that the discouragement that you may be going through right now is not a barrier to joy, it is not a barrier to rejoicing; your suffering does not mean that you are condemned to live a discouraged mediocre spiritual life until the circumstances are lifted. The whole point of Peter's letter is that the circumstances may not get lifted but even better is the fact that the truths that we own as Christians, the spiritual realities that belong to us through faith in Christ, are truths that lift our hearts up to rejoice even if the earthly circumstances don't change. It is so crucial for us as Christians to lay hold of that. It is so crucial for us as Christians to lay hold of the fact that we are not living for this world primarily anyway. This world is an incidental prelude to the eternal salvation which Christ purchased for us on the cross and we need to get our minds focused on our future home and let that shape our perspective on life here on earth rather than letting our life here on earth be that which shapes our perspective on what salvation means and what it's like. It's an abominable lie from the pit of hell and the lips of Joel Osteen that the whole point of Christianity is to have your best life now. That's an absolute falsehood. The whole point of salvation is that God has saved us for an eternal inheritance that we will certainly receive as believers one day.

Now, with that little bit of introduction, I want to draw you back to chapter 1, verses 3 through 5, and what I want you to notice is that the center of Peter's heart as he opens up the main portion of his letter, notice that he is praising God. Peter is praising God as this letter starts. The whole context of everything that we say here is designed to lift our hearts to praise.

Look at verse 3 where he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is blessing God. He is praising God as he opens up this letter. It's a God-centered focus that he brings to pass as he is writing, and so everything that we see in this text this morning should drive your heart to praise God. That's what Peter is doing and what he is doing as he unfolds as he goes on from that point, is he is just unfolding the manifold

reasons that are present in order to praise God. And at the center of this text, at the center of his praise is this phrase, look at the end of verse 3, "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Somehow in a way that I hope I'll be able to show you in the course of the next 40 minutes or so, somehow the resurrection of Christ is the foundation of Peter's praise, it's the foundation of what he is calling you to do here today, to praise God, somehow in the resurrection of Christ we see the beacon of hope that causes us to rejoice despite the sufferings of the present life. The resurrection is at the heart of that. The resurrection tells us great things that should lift our hearts in any circumstance.

The question that I would phrase or the question that I would use to frame this morning's message is: what does the resurrection say about God to us? What does the resurrection tell us about God? I'm going to give you three answers to that question which will be the structure of our message, three points this morning. What does the resurrection say about God? What does it say about his character? What does it say about his love for us as believers in Christ? What does it say about his future plans for us? That's what I want to draw your heart to this morning.

First of all, what does the resurrection say about God? 1. It tells us that God has great pity. God has great pity and in this morning's message I'm using pity as a synonym for mercy. You might say, "Well, if you're using it as a synonym for mercy, why don't you just use the word mercy instead of pity?" Well, mercy doesn't start with the letter "P." It's that simple. Now, it's not just a matter of homiletics there, you phrase things like that to make it easy to recall so that you can go back and walk through this. God has great pity, by which I mean, God has great mercy on us. The resurrection points us to the great mercy and pity of God that he has shown to believers in Christ. Mercy means to have compassion in action. It means that God has had compassion on us and has acted to relieve our suffering. Mercy uses its power to relieve suffering and Peter in this text is praising God for his ultimate mercy, his mercy in salvation.

Look at verse 3 with me again. Notice how Peter lifts up the character of God and brings it to bear on the thinking of these people who are suffering. He says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again." His mercy, his attribute of mercy is at the heart of his motivation to affect the result of our salvation. If you have been saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you should be able to find an echo in your heart that says, "Yes, no matter what else is happening God has had mercy on me. God has saved me from my sins. I deserved judgment and yet I am a recipient of eternal salvation? My sins are forgiven? The righteousness of Christ now has been credited to my account? I'm going to go to heaven when I die? Now, timeout, I didn't deserve that." That's the whole point. The whole point of your undeserving points you to the great mercy of God. The starting point for you as a Christian to understand God's mercy is to remember that you were under the death penalty for sin. You were under the judgment of God, rightfully so. Your violations of his law, your failure to love him with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind on a consistent basis throughout all of life, your failure to love your neighbor as yourself, those aren't mere mistakes, those are violations of a holy God. That is guilt at a profound

level and you deserved judgment and wrath for that, and yet if you stand here today as a Christian, God has had mercy on you in order to bring you to eternal life.

How is this tied in with the resurrection? Let's think about it this way. Before you can really get the full value of what the resurrection means to us today, you have to remember why did Christ die in the first place? What was the point of his death? Why did he die? Why did a sinless Son of God have to die at the hands of Roman executioners? Well, Peter addresses that. Peter lays that out for us with great clarity as he walks through this letter.

Look at chapter 2, verse 24. This is where you see the mercy of God set forth in greater particulars as you unfold the letter here. Chapter 2, verse 24, speaking of Christ, it says that, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." His death was a substitution on your behalf. It was a willing sacrifice by the Son of God in order that you might have the forgiveness of your sins. It was Christ taking the penalty of your sin into his body, bearing the wrath of God, bearing the death penalty on your behalf so that ultimately you might be saved. And the grandeur, the glory of the plan of God is such that this was 2,000 years before you were even born that Christ did this God and yet God had that plan established from all of eternity. He had prepared the way for your salvation 2,000 years before you were even born. Knowing your guilt in advance, he planned for your salvation. That's great mercy. That is wonderful love and compassion.

Look at chapter 3, verse 18, where Peter emphasizes the atonement again as he speaks about the death of Christ. Chapter 3, verse 18, he says, "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just," that would be Christ, "for the unjust," that would be you and me, "so that He might bring us to God." Recognizing the separation, Christ voluntarily laid down his life so that you who were separate from God under his judgment might be brought to him. Christ took our sins and suffered the penalty of God's wrath in our place on our behalf.

And now what does that say? Look at chapter 3, verse 22. What has happened since the death of Christ? He has been resurrected. He has ascended to heaven. Look at chapter 3, verse 22, Christ "is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him." That verse tells us that Christ is at the place of God's power and authority in light of the sacrifice that he made for sinners. What that tells us is, as the Bible would explain elsewhere, that tells us that the sacrifice on your behalf has been accepted. God has accepted Christ's sacrifice on your behalf and that is why Christ could be raised up to the place of power and authority. It's because the work is finished, the work is done, the sacrifice is accepted and the work of redemption is done.

So brother and sister in Christ, if you are a Christian, no matter what else is happening in your life, it doesn't matter what else is happening in your life for what we're talking about right now. If you are a Christian, God has had mercy on you. God has had mercy on yours sin-sick, guilty soul and secured the redemption. He has secured the forgiveness of your sins on his own initiative, not by works that your hands have done, not by the tears

of your repentance. At his own initiative, at the shed blood of his own Son, he rescued you from sin and hell in order to bring you into his kingdom. The resurrection affirms that truth. It tells us that the sacrifice has been accepted and it reminds us of God's great mercy. When you see it from that perspective, do you see why Peter opens up this letter saying, "Blessed be God"? Because that should be the cry of your heart as well in response to these truths. "Oh my, Blessed be God! He has saved my soul through his great mercy!"

Go back to chapter 1, verse 3. Notice what Peter says. He says, "according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." When Peter says that God has caused us to be born again, he is referring to the doctrine of regeneration. He's referring to the fact that in salvation God imparted new spiritual life to you. He caused you to be born again. Regeneration means that God has not only forgiven you of sin but he has given you new spiritual life. And those of you that were saved just a little bit later in life like I was, who had a little bit of a pattern of sin that you can look back on and recall and you say, "Man, my life changed," the reason for that change is because God did more than simply change your legal status before him, he also imparted new spiritual life to you. He imparted spiritual life to you. The Apostle Paul said the same thing in Ephesians 2:4 and 5 when he said, "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)." And at the heart of that is the resurrection. The resurrection is the ground of that new life. It is the source. It is the quality of that new life.

When God saved you, he brought you into spiritual union with Jesus Christ so that – get this, this is so important for understanding the nature of salvation – he brought you into spiritual union with Christ so that the same life-giving power that raised Christ from the dead imparted spiritual life to you and guaranteed the final outcome of your salvation. It's the exact same power that was at work. The power that raised Christ from the tomb, that bodily raised Christ from the dead, is the same resurrection power that God imparts to every believer in Christ. In fact, it's the only way that salvation could even be possible. It took a supernatural work at God's initiative. You were so dead in sin, you were such a spiritual corpse that you could do nothing to save yourself. If there was going to be life in you, if there was even going to be faith in you, God first had to impart spiritual life to you. The bridge between God and you, what connects the two, is the life-giving power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That's what he's saying when he has caused you to be born again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. God has had immense immeasurable mercy on your soul. Do you see that? That you who were guilty, you who were dead in sin, now forgiven, now alive together with Christ, now on a path that inexorably leads to heaven. Your heart should be so humbled as you think about the presence of God and your heart should be so grateful that you understand exactly why Peter opens up with these thoughts on his mind, the first things off his lips are, "Blessed be God." That is the response of every true believer.

So it's good to pause here in light of the greatness of this magnificent salvation, this unspeakably great salvation. It's important to pause here and ask: does that salvation

belong to you? Is this your personal possession, the things of which we are talking about here this morning? Because these blessings, this mercy, this spiritual life is only for a true Christian and the longer I preach from this pulpit to Grace Life, the more it grieves my heart just knowing that there are some of you in here that are still hardhearted against it even though you come week after week. I know that's true. I know that's true and so I just ask you to make this the day of your salvation. Christ himself pleads with you. Christ himself through his proclaimed word is pleading with sinners at this moment to come to Christ; that this gift of salvation is available for everyone who would repent and believe. I ask you: turn from your sin. I beg you: put your faith in Christ. Yield your life to him. Ask him to save you because he will and these great things, these great spiritual realities can belong to you and they can be yours. Turn to Christ. Believe in him.

For the rest of you that know Christ as I do, think about it. Don't let the possible familiarity of these things deaden the love of your heart for the greatness of what this is all about. You were dead in sin and now you are alive in Christ. Look beyond your circumstances. You must, you must look beyond your present circumstances. You must look beyond your past disappointments and the future obstacles that you brought into this room. You must look past all of that and see this great mercy on your soul and let that be the dominating affection of your heart. Let that be the first priority of love because when that is your dominating priority, the other things start to lose their holding power on your life and on your heart. These truths about the mercy of God transcend anything earthly that could ever happen to us and the true Christian sees in this the light that beckons him to greater and greater glory, and rather than being resentful over circumstances, he is grateful for salvation and views his circumstances from a completely different perspective as a result. God has had great mercy on us. Blessed be God.

Now, if that was all that we were going to talk about here today, we'd have more than enough to close in prayer and rejoice in the goodness of God on our lives, but this passage teaches us so much more. It's so much more than just the present forgiveness of sins, the present enjoyment of new spiritual life. Point 2 this morning, what else does the resurrection tell us about God? It's not just that he has great pity, it's that God has a great plan. God has a great plan. The resurrection does more than point us to God's work in the past on our behalf. The resurrection does more than point us to the empty tomb. The resurrection points us future. It points us forward. It decisively points us to the future as well. It decisively points us as believers in Christ to this great central truth that God has a great plan for us and the best is yet to come. The best is yet to come, beloved.

Salvation, stated differently, salvation brings hope into your life. Look at verse 4. Actually, look at the end of verse 3 again. God in "His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," here it is in verse 4, "to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." That verse 4 packs such tremendous punch of power that it is hard to unpack it all in one setting like we're going to try to do here today.

Living hope, hope for the Christian is a present certain confidence of future blessing. A certain confidence of future blessing. It's not that, "Maybe this will happen. I hope so."

Like a Cubs fan saying, "I hope that the 105 years aren't a prediction of what's going to happen this year." No, this is hope grounded in truth. This is hope that is certain. This is a living hope that says that the blessing, the inheritance is the reward that you will certainly receive when you obtain eternal glory in heaven. Salvation transcends this life. God has reserved blessings for you by name that you will one day certainly receive.

Look what Peter says about this blessing, about this inheritance, about this plan. It's a living hope. We don't have it yet but we know that we're going to receive it. It is certain to occur and so we live, as it were, on tiptoes looking forward, looking ahead to that which we are certainly going to receive. And what is that going to be like? Look at verse 4, it's an inheritance, the blessing of heaven, which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. It's imperishable, it will not rot or decay. It's undefiled, it's morally pure. You know, one day all of the tension and the assault that comes to us through living in this world is all going to be gone. Those things that tempt us away, that tempt us to sin, the false religion, the false philosophies, the defilement of the present world, that's all going to be gone and I can't wait, can you? Isn't that going to be wonderful? It's going to be undefiled. It will not fade away. It will not become, in other words, this is not going to become old or boring. Don't worry about getting tired of heaven. You won't. It's going to be as fresh and powerful and glorious 50,000 years after the first moment that you see it as when you first enter into heaven. I realize I'm injecting time into eternity but I don't know how else to express it to you. And it is reserved in heaven, it is divinely protected. No force on earth can touch it. The most valuable possession that you have is this great inheritance that is reserved in heaven for you and nobody can touch it. Your worst enemies can't take it away from you. Moth can't cause it to decay. Rust won't defile it as Matthew 6 speaks about. Follow what Peter is saying here, he is saying that God has caused you to be born again so that you will certainly receive that heavenly reward and he did it out of his mercy on your soul.

Now think about it in contrast to your earthly life and just the nature of life on this planet in general. Isn't it true that every satisfaction is temporary and passing? Isn't it true that the best of people have disappointed you? Isn't it true that temptation assaults you and that you sometimes, maybe often, fail and carry the guilt of that until you go back to Christ to confess it and receive that cleansing again? Isn't it true that physical decline comes, sometimes in very awful ways? Financial decline comes? I've talked to so many people who built their lives and built careers and now they have nothing to show for it. Isn't it true that death takes your loved ones before you're ready to say goodbye?

Listen, in light of what Peter is saying here, I want to help you think through that, when you think about the glories of salvation that await us, the great plan that God has for us, the great mercy that he has shown on us, I want to encourage you and exhort you along this line: we all, myself included, there is no doubt that in light of the greatness of this salvation that belongs to us, that our focus is so often so wrong and misguided. Think about the way that you pray. Most or at least far too great a percentage of our prayer time, is devoted to asking God to take the edges off our earthly suffering. "Lord, deal with that person. Help me here. Help me there." And look, you know, we can pray about those things, that's fine, but it is far better, beloved, to take Peter's focus. You're going to be

less inclined to even bother praying about those things when you have Peter's focus here. Heaven is coming. You're going to heaven. Pure joy in the undiluted glorious presence of Christ that's going to be undefiled, it will not fade away, it's reserved in heaven. It is so much better to focus your thoughts on that so that you don't get so wrapped up in the temporary, lousy, passing nature of this present world. Why not focus on that which truly belongs to you? Why not focus on that which gave the martyrs the strength and the courage to calmly face death as their preferred alternative to recanting the faith that they had come to know in Christ? Your earthly hopes are going to be disappointed eventually anyway so why not just start now and take the glory that's going to be ours in the future and just bring that into the present and let that be the dominating affection and passion of your heart? Why not? I mean, we'll have an open time here. Someone, give me a good reason why that's not a good idea.

You see, it's obvious and it is certain that just as Christ is resurrected and ascended into heaven, you who have been joined together with him, you will also have that exact same outcome. You're going to have the exact same result. So what I'm about to say, I say it gently, I say it with a measure of trepidation for fear of being misunderstood but, brothers and sisters in Christ, understand this, that when you see heaven for what it is, pure, undefiled, reserved in heaven for you, never to fade away, a certain possession, the ultimate outcome of your life, you have to see that the troubles of this life, the worst of them, are ultimately inconsequential. They are ultimately inconsequential. Even after 70 years of sorrow for a Christian, it yields into eternal glory as Peter said, imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. I had someone ask me recently, "Is it going to be worth it? What if it's not all that I hoped that it would be?" Listen, you are not going to be disappointed in the end. Peter himself says that. And as a result of this, you fix your hope on what is to come rather than hoping for a certain outcome to earthly circumstances.

Look at chapter 1, verse 13, as we think about this great plan of God. He says, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit," you see, this affects the way that you live and the way that you approach life. He says, "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is what you hope for, not a change in anything earthly. Listen, you fix your hope so completely on the grace to be revealed at the glory of Christ at the end of time, the glory that will be yours in heaven, that you're not even fixing your hope completely on So-and-so getting saved, that loved one being saved. Your hope transcends that.

That is where the focus of your heart should be. That is what you fix your heart on. You make heaven the object of your affections and in answer to that question, "Will it be worth it?" Take it on the word of God, chapter 2, verse 6, where Peter quoting the Old Testament says, "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone," and take this to the bank, beloved, take it to the bank, take it to the vault of your heart and deposit it there, "he who believes in him will not be disappointed." There won't be any sense of regret in heaven. There is not going to be any sense, "But So-and-so is not here. My loved one is not here." That is not going to be the focus of your thought at all. It's not even going to cross your mind. Do you know why? You're not going to be thinking about

who's not there because of who is there, and who is there is Jesus. And for the lover of Christ who loves Christ above this life, to be in his immediate presence is going to be such a transcendent glory that nothing else is going to matter. There is not going to be room in your mind, room in your affections for anything other than being completely captivated by the glory of Christ and entering into the possession of this eternal imperishable inheritance. And as a result, there is no fear in this life for the believer. There is no fear in impending death. There is no fear about, "What if this or what if that?" No, Christ will be there in heaven and we are not going to be disappointed. The glory of that is going to be unspeakably great and if you're a believer, that belongs to you now. It's an inheritance. It belongs to you. That's going to be the outcome of your sufferings and disappointments in this life.

So when you step back from that, you realize what God has done for you. Your heart should be filled with one central thought, "Blessed be God. Blessed be God for his great mercy. Blessed be God for his great plan for my life. I can only praise him. My heart is so filled with these things," you should be saying to yourself, "I can only praise him." And yeah, things are not so great right now, but do you know what? It wasn't so great for those first century Christians that Nero was using for candles in his garden either. It wasn't so great for them when the dogs were tearing at the wild skins. It wasn't so great for Christ on the cross for that period of a few hours, was it? Look, just embrace the suffering. Embrace it and say, "Okay, it's through this that God is ultimately going to deliver me into the glories that he has prepared for me." And embrace it and say, "I can accept even this. I can embrace even these sufferings and these trials and these disappointments. I can embrace it because I know what the outcome is. I see it right here in 1 Peter 1:4. This is where my life comes out. I'm glad. I'm rejoicing."

Let me just say this pastorally, beloved, don't resist that. Look, there were times in my life in trials gone by where I refused to let that comfort me. What a foolish thing that was for me to do. Why would you not just embrace the glory of that and say, "This changes everything. This changes everything. This makes my heart joyful despite my circumstances."

And one other thing that I would say about it, if I can remember what it was. This getting older thing is a bear. It is simply to realize that this glory that is going to be ours will be a culmination greater than any suffering that you could go through. This glory exposes to you, to the extent that you say that's not enough, how could it not be enough, but to the extent that that exposes it in your heart, it shows that your affections are misplaced. Let these glories sanctify your affections so that you love that which is eternal rather than that which is passing, and when you do that, it can never be taken away. You have joy unshakable, unspeakable and full of glory.

What a great plan God has for us. That hope is enough to sustain you. That hope, beloved, is all you need. It is. That's why Peter can tie it so much and say, "Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice," because he couldn't promise them better circumstances, he couldn't promise them that the wave of persecution wouldn't hit them, but he could promise under

the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that this inheritance was certainly their's. I love Christ, don't you?

What else does this tell us? What else does the resurrection tell us? Final point, it's a brief one, point 3: God has great power. God has great power. God is continually exercising his power. Get this, this is so wonderful: God is continually exercising his power to keep you safe until you receive that reward.

Look at verse 5, he says, these things are "reserved in heaven for you." Who are the "you"? It's those from verse 2 that have been saved by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, for true Christians. This is reserved in heaven for true Christians, and then he makes a statement about what is true about true Christians, he says, you "are protected," verse 5, look at this, put your eyes on the text with me, "you are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." That verse is telling you that the same God who has saved you, who caused you to be born again, who has prepared this future inheritance for you, he is also keeping you so that you will most certainly receive it in the end. Without fail, you are protected by the power of God so that you will receive this inheritance that he has prepared for you. That word for "protected" is a military term that can mean "to protect someone from danger." God is shielding you during your stay on this earth. He's shielding you in such great measure that even Satan himself cannot ultimately harm you.

You are going to receive this inheritance without fail, not because your faith is so great, not because you're so committed that you would never fall away. No, you are certain to receive the reward because the power of God is working prior to and through your faith to make sure that you reach the ultimate destination. God preserves you in faith until your salvation is revealed, until you are in heaven. He will not pull the rug out from you. Jesus said in John 10, "No one can pluck them out of My hand." You can no more lose your salvation than the power of God itself could fail. It's impossible and listen, how do we know that? The resurrection tells us that. The resurrection shows that God has the power to finish what he started. If he can raise the dead, he can keep you to the end. The resurrection points you to that power. It points you to the great plan. It points you to the great pity of God.

Listen, think about it this way: how many of you – I'm not asking for a show of hands – how many of you have buried a loved one who you said goodbye to too soon? How many of you stood at the grave and said, "Ah, I don't want it to be this way"? How many of you in that moment if it had been in your power you would have raised that person from the dead so that you had the opportunity to just spend a little bit more time with them? Listen, your utter helplessness there shows how impossible it is to raise the dead from a human perspective. You can't do it but God did. But God raised Christ from the dead. God did something supernatural to raise Christ from the dead. He has power that you don't have and the Bible tells us that he is going to exercise that supernatural resurrection power to protect you until the goal of salvation is fully consummated.

So things are hard now. Look at chapter 5, verse 10 again. Things are hard now, you are discouraged now, in light of everything that we've said here this morning, let this verse hit you with power. Chapter 5, verse 10, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ," this is what he called you to. He plucked you out of the flames, as it were, so that you would certainly receive that eternal glory in Christ. This suffering is just a little parenthesis of time that connects the eternal purposes of God with the eternal consummation of your salvation. The suffering in that little parenthesis is just for a little while. Beloved, listen to what God says, the God of all grace, he puts his own name on the line to guarantee this. He "called you to His eternal glory in Christ," he will himself, he won't delegate it, "He will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." What great pity, what a great plan, what great power. Blessed be God.

Let's pray.

Father, your mercy is great. Your purpose in salvation is great. Your power is great and you have exercised all of that toward us who believe in Christ. What thanks can we render, O God? We can only say with the Apostle Paul, "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift." We join with Peter 2,000 years later, Father, and gladly, joyfully, exuberantly proclaim, "Blessed be the God of the Bible! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Blessed be the God of our salvation!" We offer you our praise without qualification, without hesitation, with a fullness of heart that sees these blessings and, Father, with great anticipation, looks for the consummation that you have planned. We love you and, Father, we thank you for the sustaining grace through these years of life until we enter into our great and lovely eternal home. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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