

Studies in 1 Peter-02 1 Peter 1:3-9

by Dwight Pentecost

The sermon emphasizes the living hope, inheritance, and preservation that believers have through Jesus Christ, and encourages them to respond to suffering with faith, joy, and love.

Duration: 34:57

Scripture: Romans 8:18, Romans 8:32, Ephesians 1:3, James 1:2, 1 Peter 1:3-4, 1 Peter 1:8-9

Topics: "Faith And Suffering", "Salvation Through Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having faith in God's plan, even when we cannot see how things will work out. He encourages believers to respond to trials and suffering with faith and joy, knowing that God is using these experiences to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ. The speaker also highlights the preciousness of our faith, comparing it to gold that is tested by fire. He reminds listeners that our ultimate goal is to receive the salvation of our souls and encourages them to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ, whom we have not seen but love and believe in.

Transcript

Turn your Bibles to the 1st Epistle of Peter, 1st Chapter, verses 3 through 9. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. In this ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold trials, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 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, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. No man has yet been able to comprehend all of the spiritual blessings that God has provided for those who trust Jesus Christ for their salvation.

The Apostle Paul emphasizes the greatness of these spiritual blessings in the 8th chapter of Romans, in verse 31 and 32, when he asks, If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? And then in writing to the Ephesians in chapter 1 and verse 3, the Apostle reminds us that in Jesus Christ God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings, and those all spiritual blessings include everything that an God in infinite

wisdom could devise to give to those who take him at his word and accept Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. When the Apostle Peter comes to write to those whom he considers sheep in his flock, the strangers scattered abroad throughout Asia Minor because of the great persecutions upon the Saints in Palestine and Jerusalem, he reminds them in 1 Peter 1 and verse 3 of some of the spiritual blessings that God has provided for those who have been born again. As we pointed out to you in our introduction to this epistle last week, the Apostle Peter, although still a resident in Jerusalem or as a leader in the church in Jerusalem, felt a responsibility for those Jews who, because of persecution, had been scattered north to Antioch and then outside of the bounds of Antioch and Syria to Asia Minor.

They were undergoing political and religious persecution that had left them bereft of income, bereft of a social gathering place, bereft of any spiritual supervision or oversight. They were cut off from all familiar ties, and they felt their loneliness. The Apostle, as a shepherd, is writing to his sheep in order that they might be encouraged in their suffering in the trials and in the tests that come to them.

Peter, in that portion to which we would direct your attention, 1 Peter 1 verses 3 to 9, lays a foundation upon which these believers may build Christian lives even in the midst of their sufferings and testing. He begins with a foundation stone in verse 3, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us unto a living hope. The word begotten is the word for a new birth, and Peter is emphasizing here the fact that these who are scattered abroad have been born into the family of God.

Now, it is not Peter's purpose here to try to enumerate all of the spiritual blessings that have been given to us in Jesus Christ, but from among the multitude of spiritual blessings, Peter selects several that will be a foundation for a Christian life in the midst of suffering and trial. Because they have been born again, or because they have been born into the Father's family, they, first of all, verse 3, have been born unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Born unto a living hope.

We use the word hope today of some vague wish, some dream or desire that we feel has little chance of realization. But that is not the biblical or the New Testament concept in the word hope. For hope in the word of God refers to a settled assurance, an absolute, unshakable certainty that is based upon some well-known fact.

And the fact upon which this hope rests is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The most incontrovertible fact of all human history is the fact that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead on the third day. And on the basis of that fact, the believer has a hope.

It is called here a living hope. That is a hope that pervades life every moment of every day. And that living hope that is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the absolute assurance that because Jesus Christ lives, we shall live also.

You see, the danger that confronted these believers as they faced these waves of opposition and these tides of persecution was that things might somehow get out of control, and that their physical lives might be snatched away, and that that might be the end of all hope that they had ever had. These believers had the teaching of the apostles that the Lord Jesus Christ was coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and he was coming to receive believers unto himself. It is that which we refer to as the imminent hope of the Lord's return.

And those who lived in that generation had the hope that the Lord might come in their day, as you and I live in the light of that same glorious and blessed hope that the Lord Jesus Christ must certainly appear in our day. And so they had expected that they would live to see the coming of the Lord, and they as past generations would not have to pass through physical death. Peter wants to assure them that if the Lord should tarry and delay his coming, and physical death should be their portion, and they should go to be with the Lord, not by rapture and translation, but by passing through the valley of dark shadows that they went through death to life.

And so Peter reminds them that they have been begotten unto a living hope. This hope was based upon the words of our Lord himself. Will you turn with me to John's Gospel, where our Lord lays the foundation for this hope through his teaching, and frequently our Lord emphasizes this great truth in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, in verse 39 and 40, in connection with his great discourse on the bread of life.

Our Lord says, This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. When our Lord ministered to Mary and Martha at the time of their bereavement because of the death of their brother Lazarus, our Lord in John 11 and verse 25 said, I am the resurrection and the life.

He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Or again in the upper room, just before our Lord's death, in John chapter 14 and verse 19, our Lord said to the disciples, Because I live, ye shall live also.

These are but a few of the many instances in which our Lord affirmed the basis of Peter's hope, for Peter's hope was not some vague desire for immortality. Peter's hope was an absolute certainty that rested upon the oft-repeated promise of the Lord Jesus Christ. But if Jesus Christ promised men life and then died and stayed dead, and his body saw corruption in the grave, how empty is his promise.

But because Jesus Christ authenticated his promise by his own resurrection, those who believed him had the assurance of life because he was alive. And Peter wanted to remind these persecuted saints that they had been begotten through the new birth unto a hope that permeated every area of life. The hope, the assurance, the certainty that they would live.

But then the second thing that Peter emphasizes as the result of our new birth is given in verse 4. According to his abundant mercy hath begotten us to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. The inheritance to which the apostle refers here is the Father's presence in the Father's house. Not only are we given through the new birth the promise of life, we are also given the promise of a place where that life will be lived and enjoyed.

We are not to be disembodied spirits floating around alone in space like a wisp of cloud. We are to enjoy the Father's presence in the Father's house. And so Peter emphasizes that they are strangers and pilgrims here.

They are simply passing through this world. They have a destiny, and that destiny is a Father's house where the Father's presence will be forever enjoyed. Once again, this promise is based on our Lord's words.

For you will recall in John chapter 14, verses 2 and 3, our Lord said, In my Father's house are many mansions, or dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. And in these verses, our Lord points out two essential elements of his promise.

First of all, we are destined for the Father's presence, and we are destined for the Father's house, the Father's home. And so when Peter would write to encourage those persecuted believers, he reminds them that through the new birth they have a certain hope they will live. And second, they have a destiny, they have an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, that fate is not away that is reserved in heaven.

Every material thing that these believers had could be stripped away from them. Many of them were left destitute, poverty-stricken, and penniless. But that destiny, that inheritance that is given to them is incorruptible.

It cannot be corrupted. It is undefiled, can never be rendered impure and unfit for God's presence as their material possessions were. They might see all of their life savings and investments fade away, but that which God has reserved for us can never fade away, nor diminish, nor lose its value.

It is safely posited in heaven for you. Not only a hope we shall live, but a place in which that life shall be enjoyed. But then, in verse 5, he gives us a third result of our new birth.

We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. We have one who keeps us. The businessman of that day might hide the fruits of his labor by burying them in the garden patio.

He might put the results of his labors out to investors and live off the interest. He might find some banker that would take his capital gains and secure them for him. But he had no guarantee that the results of his labors would be permanent.

How easily a thief could How easily the Roman government could assess a tax. How easily he could lose his citizenship in the nation, and therefore all his rights to hold property or to hold gainful employment, so that any material thing that a man had was something about which he had no assurance, from which he could find security. The believer might think that because the persecutor could take away every material thing that he had, perhaps the adversary of his soul could take away the hope that had been given to him and rob him of the home that was reserved for him in the Father's presence.

So to those who had seen all material things disappear because of the persecutions that came to them, Peter reminds them that when they were begotten of God, they were born into the care and keeping of one who would guard them to the very end of the destiny for which they had been born into God's family. You are kept by no less of one than God himself. And what kind of a God do we have? A God of power, and the same power that could regenerate a sinner and make him a saint, guarantees the preservation and protection and safety and ultimate realization of all that has been promised to us through Jesus Christ.

Once again, Peter's doctrine is based on the words of our Lord, for you will recall in John chapter 10 and verse 28, our Lord said, I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man

pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.

And Christ there pictures the believer as being safe-deposited in the hand of Christ, and that safe-deposit vault in turn is deposited in the hand of God so that the believer is doubly secured, secured by the Father and secured by the Son. And Peter, perhaps mindful of those very words of our Lord, reminded these persecuted saints who perchance felt that they were in jeopardy of losing everything, of the truth that the one who had been begotten unto a livelier living hope and unto an inheritance was guaranteed God's preservation by his own power to the salvation for which or the deliverance for which we had been saved. All hell seeks to keep the from his inheritance, but all hell cannot prevent God from bringing his blood-bought child home to himself.

And so Peter, to strengthen those who are going through and will go through testing, reminds them of what was entailed in our new birth. But in the 6th verse, Peter reminds those believers that he is cognizant of their present suffering. He knows that they are in heaviness through manifold testing or manifold trial.

The word in some texts is translated temptation, and temptation suggests a solicitation to evil. Peter is not dealing here with the problem of temptation to sin in a believer's life. He is dealing with the problems of the sufferings and the testings that come in the daily experiences of God's children.

Peter reminds them that the hope that we have and the inheritance that we have is received and enjoyed in the midst of suffering. The hope that we have is no guarantee of deliverance from suffering, from testing, from trial, from burden. But the hope that we have is to be enjoyed in the midst of suffering.

Why? Peter does not go into the details of it here. Do you remember that the Apostle Paul on numerous occasions explains why. He tells us, for instance, in the 8th chapter of Romans, that we as believers possess as we are of the assurance of eternal life, live in the midst of an unredeemed creation.

This world is under a curse, and men apart from Jesus Christ are under a curse, and they are lumped together in the category of sinners. We live in the midst of an unredeemed creation. We as believers live in an unredeemed body, subject to disease, to physical death, to physical weakness.

We live with a fallen nature within us, for although by the new birth we have had implanted to us a new divine nature, that old nature is not removed until the time of our translation into glory. Therefore, testings may come to us from the world which we live, because the world is an enemy of Christ. These testings may come because of the nature of the body that we have today, a body subject to disease and death.

We are tested because of the old nature with which we were born into this world. That 8th chapter of Romans gives to us God's answer to these three different areas, and anticipates the redemption that will be ours when we realize our living hope. But Peter in 1 Peter 1 says, note that the hope that they have is to be enjoyed in the midst of suffering.

And Peter in the 7th verse moves on to explain to these tested ones God's purpose in submitting them to these testings. We are tested that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than a gold that perishes though it be tried under fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. And God uses testing of many and various kinds as the means of conforming His children to Jesus Christ.

In Romans 8.29, after having asserted the fact that all things work together for good, explains why all things work together for good, because God chooses those things to bring into our experience which will conform us to the image of His Son. There is no way of polishing anything without the use of abrasive. There is nothing that exists that bears a polish or a sheath without having been subjected to the abrasion.

It doesn't take much abrasion to sculpt wax. Very little abrasion to sculpt clay. A lot more abrasion if you are going to polish marble.

And still more if you are going to polish a diamond. And God, knowing the temperament of the individual, will select the abrasion to fit what the individual is. And if we become wax in the sculptor's hand, it takes very little to mold us into the image of Christ.

And if we resist the molding process of God and make ourselves as marble in His hand, then He chooses and uses the suitable abrasion. We forget that God's purpose is to conform us to Christ, and God is going to select those things that will accomplish His purpose. And so often the sufferings which God sends to us are because of our obstinance and stubbornness and resistance to His molding process to conform us to Jesus Christ.

Peter was looking beyond the immediate circumstances of their sufferings to the end product, so that Jesus Christ might be, might present us to the Father, to the praise and honor and glory of God in His appearing. Peter said, don't be surprised that these sufferings come to you. For the sufferings will come and must come.

But the sufferings are not sufferings generated by Satan. They are not sufferings generated by sin. They are sufferings generated by God, who is working to conform us to Jesus Christ, so that we might be found unto praise and honor and glory at His appearing.

Then in verses 8 and 9, the Apostle closes this portion of his instruction by pointing out the response of believers to the sufferings which they endure. There are two attitudes that they are to have. First of all, the attitude of faith.

Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not yet, believing. Will you underscore that word believing? They are to what? Verse 3, they have already believed unto salvation. They have already received Christ as a personal Savior, so he is not exhorting them to receive Christ for their salvation.

But they are to believe this fact that he has presented, that a sovereign God in infinite wisdom has chosen the very things that he knows will conform us to Christ. We can't see how this will work out. We can't see the end from the beginning.

But we must believe that an infinite God, who is sovereign over all details, has chosen these very things, and this is his method and process of conforming us to Jesus Christ. We respond, first of all, in faith. Second, verse 8, he rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

This is the counterpart of what James wrote, you'll remember, in that very strange statement when he says in James chapter 1, verse 2, My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into different kinds of testing. Count it joy when you're tested. Why? You cannot have joy without a preceding faith, for until you acknowledge the fact that this is God at work in your life and you believe that God is using this thing to accomplish his purpose, there can be no joy.

Don't try to get the joy and then believe if you have the joy. You believe and then you'll receive the joy. But the third response is given to us also in this 8th verse, Whom not having seen, ye love.

Faith, joy, and love. When one receives the love of God, the natural response is to submit to the authority of the object of our affection. When we receive his love, we love in return, and we do not question that which his love directs and dictates for our experience.

And so Peter, writing to those who have been born unto a hope and born unto an inheritance and are under the keeping power of God, even though they must live out their days in suffering, in hardship, must realize that this is God at work to conform them to Jesus Christ, and they can know joy and love for God as they believe that God is at work. Peter's generation was not the only generation to undergo testing. There really has been no generation from the time of Christ to the present time that has not had its measure of rejection and persecution in one way or another.

And while the persecutions or rejections or trials may come from some different source today than they did in Peter's day, yet our assurance is the same as that which Peter gave to his flock. We have been born unto eternal life. This hope is absolutely certain and secure.

God's purpose is to bring us into that fullness of life in his presence as those who have been conformed to Jesus Christ. So God is going to spend the years of our sojourn here, sculpting us to make us into the likeness of Christ. Since God is at work, since God holds the chisel, since God controls the mallet, since the abrasives are in God's hands, who are we to exalt our wisdom against the wisdom of God and say, I know better how you ought to work with me than you know how to work to conform me to Christ.

God asks us to believe him. Believing him entails trust. Trust entails submission and love.

And when one trusts and submits, then he knows the joy of God because he sees God at work in his own experience. God will not try to remake someone else's children into his own image. Those who have never been born into his family, God leaves alone.

And what a tragedy it is to be let alone now, to be exempt from God's sufferings now, when that exemption means we're not his. One becomes his by receiving Jesus Christ as his or her own personal Savior. Maybe life has been very easy for you, and you don't know what Peter is talking about when he talks about enduring the testing and the persecutions of unbelievers.

The reason is because you've never come into God's family. You don't have this living hope. And I say to you as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that Christ died for your sin.

Christ offered himself to God to pay the price for your indebtedness. By his death, he has paid your debt. But his death avails you nothing unless you accept him personally, and you trust his death for your salvation.

This you may do right now, if you will accept Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior. He died for you, but have you ever trusted him? We pray, our Father, that the Spirit of God who has revealed the hand of God and worked in our lives through these things that are in our experience each day, may give us faith in an infinite God and a love for him, that we might know joy even in the midst of testing. Open up these truths to us, that we might live with joy the experiences through which thou dost take us in the days ahead.

Dismiss us with the riches of thy grace and mercy and peace upon us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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