

# Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expository Journey Through **1 Peter**

**1 Peter 1:3-12**

7 Peter's Exultation of Sovereign Grace- Part 2

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October 22, 2017

**1 Peter 1:3-12**

**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.

**6** In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

**7** so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

**8** and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

**9** obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

**10** As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries,

**11** seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

**12** It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look.

To the Glory of God

When you read the Bible, especially when you read about Salvation, you come across two themes that are constant, that jump out at you:

1. God desires to receive all the Glory.
2. God wants to eliminate Human Boasting.

These are two areas that seem to mean a lot to God, and so, it seems proper that they should mean a lot to us. Now God's Passion to be known and feared and adored and celebrated are clear to me. God is the most Beautiful and Important Being in the Universe, and therefore, Love, God's Love toward us must include Him revealing Himself to us, in all of the particulars of His Holiness, so that we may marvel at Him.

But why is there so much in the Bible about the removal of Human Boasting and Arrogance and Pride in relation to Salvation? Why are there so many verses and passages in God's Word that speak about things like **Roman 3:27-28**:

**27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.**

**28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.**

Or **Romans 4:2** that says:

**For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.**

Or **Ephesians 2:8-9**:

**8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;**

**9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

The Apostle John said:

**1 John 2:15-16**

**15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

**16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.**

James said:

**James 4:16**

**But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.**

... 700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah cried out to God's people about this problem, when he said:

**Isaiah 13:11**

**Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.**

... and the Apostle Peter addressed this very same issue when he said:

**1 Peter 3:8-9**

**8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;**

**9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.**

**1 Peter 5:5-6**

**5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for *GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.***

**6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,**

So, the fact that God put so much about Human Arrogance and Self-Righteousness and Boasting in His Word, *especially* in relation to Salvation, leads us to understand that Human Pride and Arrogance and Self-Righteousness is *the* single biggest problem that human beings

have. It is the cause of all other sins, including unbelief, and it is what plagues people the most.

And that is true because Human Boasting is the outward form of the inner condition of sinful Pride. The main area where satan tempted Eve, was when he said:

**You will be like God...**

... and that which was so evil five minutes ago, that she could not even touch it, became good for food, a delight to the eyes, and the pathway to wisdom.

So, human beings seeking to "be like God" is what best defines what being fallen means. So, the inherent desire of all of the sons and daughters of Adam to be exalted and to be important and to become great is what being "lost" looks like. The desire to be worshipped and to be praised and to live our lives as autonomous, self-absorbed beings is the root cause of all the evils and miseries of the world. And therefore, Human Arrogance and Boasting must be dealt with, or nobody would ever be saved.

And one of the best areas in the entire Bible that describes what the fallen condition of lost Man looks like is found in **Romans 1:18-3:20**. So, let's go there to see just how pervasive Pride really is. In **Romans 1:18**, the Apostle as moved along by God the Holy Spirit to say:

**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,**

This tells us that Absolute, Divine Truth is available to all people in one way or the other. But this also tells us that instead of humbling ourselves under that Truth, the normal and natural response that fallen and rebellious Man has to that Truth is that we place ourselves *over* that Truth and we push it down. This is the very essence of Human Pride.

Now Pride may take hundreds of different forms, from the most petite and delicate to the most powerful and crude, but the reality is always the same:

In his arrogance, unconverted Man will stand over the Truth and accept what we like and suppress what we don't.

Now the way this is worded in the original Greek shows us that this arrogant suppression of Truth is the normal and natural outflow of fallen creatures. In other words, all lost people suppress Divine Truth in one way or another. And we aren't taught to do this, we do this naturally and normally. So, people standing above Truth and suppressing it is the normal and natural action that all lost people have. So, this is not merely about "what we do". It is about "who we are".

For example, the entire world celebrates Christians, who obey the Bible and feed the hungry and clothe the naked and set up schools for the blind and tend to widows and orphans. But those very same people will condemn Christians, who obey the very same Bible, as we reject sexual immorality and promote biblical Holiness.

So, what Truth does the lost world suppress? Verses 21-23 says:

**Romans 1:21-23**

**21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.**

**22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,**

**23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.**

So, God the Holy Spirit through the pen of the Apostle Paul says that the Truth that Human Pride and Arrogance suppresses the most is that God is greater than we are and deserves to be glorified as the greatest Treasure in the Universe. The Truth that God alone is the Giver of all things, and therefore, He should be continually thanked. And the Truth that we all are held accountable to this God, and will be judged by Him for what we do in this life.

So, it is the "Godward spirit of humility" and worship and gratitude that is missing from the heart of the lost, because of Pride. We want admiration for *ourselves*, but not for God. We want to be great in the earth and important, and we want God to make much of us. Pride

makes us chafe at the idea that we are totally dependent on God, like helpless children, for His Mercy and Grace. And that is why verse 22 says:

**Professing to be wise, they became fools,**

This is Pride. Unsaved people actually think they are being wise when, in reality, they are acting very foolishly. Then verse 25 says:

**Romans 1:25**

**For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.**

So, Pride may still “worship”. And it may even “serve”. But it will not worship God and it will not serve God. Pride worships and serve the creature and *not* the Creator. Then the first part of verse 28 says:

**And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer...**

Pride prefers not to have God in its knowledge. Pride does not like to submit to the Divine Authority of God and depend on His Mercy. Therefore, Pride *forces* those enslaved by it to reject and re-define the true God. So, in the middle of verse 30 we read that such people are:

- ✓ Insolent
- ✓ Arrogant
- ✓ Boastful

... which reveals the depth of Pride in the fallen human heart. Then in **Romans 2:3**, Paul shows the form this Pride takes in the morally vigilant:

**But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God?**

So, Pride takes on many forms. Not only is Pride manifested in willful and blatant evil, but Pride is also manifested in the legally careful and moral person. There is even the “pride of the religious

person" who uses his knowledge of God to exalt himself. **Romans 2:17** says:

**But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the Law and boast in God,**

... and this manifestation of Pride is more insidious than blatant evil, because this "religious pride" uses God and the things of God to promote itself. And this is why I warn you about the context of much of modern preaching that seeks to use God to elevate Man. It makes God to be nothing more than a tool or a means of our own "self-exaltation". And it uses God to further our own agenda.

But when Paul comes to the end of his long indictment of the human race as all being under sin (**Romans 3:9**), he sums up all that he has said with one phrase in **Romans 3:18**:

**There is no fear of God before their eyes.**

So, lost people don't tremble before God. They have exchanged the Glory of God for other things. And they have such an overwhelming sense of their own significance in the world that they can't even imagine trembling before their Maker and Judge.

And that is why the elimination of Human Boasting matters so much to God. Because that boasting is the outward form of the deep, root-problem of the human race, Pride. And so, it is Pride that is the moral corruption that lies behind all the evils and miseries of the world. And, worst of all, this pride has put us at odds with God, so that, as **Romans 3:19b** says:

**... so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God.**

So, all of Humanity is under the Judgment of God precisely because of our Pride, and all the sin that flows from it. So, how can anyone in that condition get into a "right" standing with God? Paul says in **Romans 1:18** that God's Wrath is being revealed against us. And we are "**storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God**" (2:5).

So, if we are this proud and sinful, and God is this insulted and angry, how in the world can anyone be rescued from the Wrath of God? How can people, who have so belittled and dishonored the Glory of the infinite God, ever be set right with God?

Peter gives us the answer here in the first twelve verses of his magnificent Epistle by elevating what is so despised by the leaders of the modern church:

### **The Sovereignty of God in Salvation**

Peter declares war against the sinful Boasting of fallen Man by exulting in the Sovereignty of God in every part and phase of Salvation. From the end of verse 1 through the middle of verse 2, we read that saved people are:

... **chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood**

... and then in verse 3, we read:

... **according to His great mercy [God] has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

... and now here in verse 4, we read that we are called and chosen:

**to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,**

So not only are we *chosen* to be saved, not only did God sovereignly *cause* us to be born again, but here the Apostle Peter teaches that God will *keep* us saved, all the way to Glory! That our eternal Inheritance is guaranteed!

Now for much of my Christian experience, I believed and taught that genuinely saved people could lose their Salvation. And that was a grievous error on my part, something for which I have repented of endless times. I have even gone on the radio and publicly repented of teaching something that the Bible doesn't say.



And like many who believe this, I didn't come to believe that Salvation was conditional by a deep and extensive study of the Scriptures. I developed what I believed about Salvation from what I observed and what I personally experienced. I saw people, who certainly looked saved to me, as they seem to faithfully pursue Jesus Christ for several decades, and then, suddenly, just walked away, rejecting the Savior they had once embraced. And as I saw that, I felt the need to explain it. And so, from that experience I fell into what many fall into, and that is to develop what I believe from what I see and what I *think* and what I *experience* and *not* from what the Scriptures actually say.

And this is a very common mistake, even among those who lay claim to being biblical. For example, many in the modern Church have developed what they believe about Eschatology, or "Last Things", from what they read or see happening in world events, *especially* in the nation of Israel, rather than what the Bible actually says.

Now, at the time I did this, I had not even heard of the concept of "Sola Scriptura". I didn't know how to systematically study or preach through the Bible. But I loved Jesus. I was saved. I desired to obey and follow Him. And I was sincerely trying to love and serve God. And whereas I was wrong about this issue, I wasn't *trying* to be wrong. So, I never deliberately misled anyone. I never taught something that I didn't genuinely believe was true. So, I was sincere and earnest and passionate and.... wrong.

And the result was that I was woefully inconsistent. Because, while I would categorically teach that *you* could lose *your* Salvation, I knew I wasn't going to lose mine. And that inconsistency proves that my logic and understanding and cognitive reasoning about Salvation was flawed. And it was flawed, not because I wasn't sincere enough, but because I wasn't biblical enough.

Now the main area that confuses people about the Eternality of Salvation is the issue of why believers sin. Because on the surface, it seems reasonable that saved people should stop sinning, that those who have had their natures supernaturally transformed through the miracle of the New Birth should be able to live in ongoing obedience to the Word of the Lord. And therefore, sinning indicates an *abandonment* of the New and a *return* to the Old. And through the centuries, many

aberrant teachings have sprung up from this false notion that have deeply troubled many people.

But Peter seeks to relieve us of that troubling by saying something profound in verse 4, when he says that God sovereignly *caused* us to be born again so that we may...

**... obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,**

Now we must first understand that the "Inheritance" that Peter refers to here is Heaven, or more precisely, us being in God's Presence, rejoicing forever. And here in verse 4, the Apostle Peter gives several very descriptive words and phrases to describe our Inheritance:

- ✓ Imperishable
- ✓ Undefiled
- ✓ Will not fade away
- ✓ Reserved in Heaven

Now the Greek word, from which we get the English word, "**Imperishable**" means: *not liable to corruption or immortal*<sup>1</sup>. The word "**Undefiled**" means: *unsoiled; free from that by which the nature of a thing is deformed and debased, or its force and vigor impaired*<sup>2</sup>

And these two words, along with the fact that our Inheritance "will not fade away" and is "reserved in Heaven for us" means that our Inheritance is guaranteed. It is certain. It is assured. There is simply no honest way to look at verse 4 and then think that the inheritance of those whom God has caused to be born again is anything but absolutely certain.

But the only reason that our eternal Inheritance can be *guaranteed* like this is if Salvation itself is eternal. So, by discussing our Inheritance this way, Peter is boldly teaching what theologians call "The Eternality of Salvation".

So, part of what Peter is exulting in the ten verses that Brother Andy just read to you is the Reality that the Salvation that was brought about by the decisive Act of God in *causing* us to be born again is

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<sup>1</sup> (from Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away, and is reserved in Heaven for every soul whom God has sovereignly caused to be born again! And Peter doesn't simply believe this. He doesn't simply teach it. Peter rejoices over it! And so should we.

Now my question is, *"If the eternity of our Salvation is so clear, why do so many people believe and teach that genuinely saved people can lose their Salvation?"*

I think the answer to that lies in the fact that many people are confused about two very important aspects that affect the way we understand Salvation:

1. Human "Self-Determinism"
2. God's Sovereignty in Salvation

... and these are the very two issues that the Apostle Peter was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to discuss here in the opening verses of **1Peter**. So, let's begin to unravel this mystery.

## **Human Self-Determinism**

Now most people don't call what they believe about this issue by this technical term. Most people say they believe in "Human Free Will", or simply "Free Will". But what, exactly do they mean by that term?

In my experience, many people use this term to refer to a concept that everybody knows but which very few actually understand. It seems that everybody believes in Human Free Will. It is one of the most *universal* of all beliefs. In fact, most of the people I know have never been formally taught about it, they just naturally came into believing it from life's experiences.

But when questioned about just what they mean by this term, many will say something like, *"Man is a 'free-moral agent'"*, or *"God gave us 'free-will'"*. And they are referring to our ability to choose and to make decisions. So, according to these people, humans exercise our "Free Will" to make the various choices and decisions that we make in this life, like who to marry and where to live and what color socks to wear or which car to drive.

Now some brave souls will venture deeper and link this "Free-Will" to our accountability. And they correctly teach that human beings

have to answer to God for what we do, that we are accountable to God for what we say and think and act on. And God will reward us for doing the "right thing", and God will damn us for doing the "wrong thing". But God would be "unfair" to either reward or damn us for what we do unless we are "free" to make those decisions without coercion.

In other words, if we did not have "Free-Will" and God sovereignly *made* us to sin, if He *forced* us to sin, if He brought about His Omnipotent Power to *cause* us to sin, then God would be unjust to damn us, because we only did what He *forced* us to do (against our will) and *not* what we voluntarily "chose" to do.

Conversely, if we do not have "Free-Will" and God *made* us do the "right thing", if He *forced* us to obey, if God *imposed* Himself on us to *cause* us to love Him, then God would be "unjust" to reward us precisely because we would *not* have loved and served Him *voluntarily*, but rather out of *compulsion*.

So, the prevailing logic is that without "Human Free-Will", without the creature's ability to do whatever he does based on his own choice and *not* through Divine Imposition, both eternal Reward and Eternal Damnation are patently "unfair", and thus, "ungodly". And since God is not ungodly, "Human Free-Will" must be true.

But that means that Salvation must be first *initiated* by human beings and *not* by God. If Human Self-Determinism is true, then Salvation can only be "offered" by God. God *cannot* sovereignly impose His Will on His creatures without violating their "Will". And since this view makes Human Will sacred, God can only "invite" people to be saved, He can only "ask" for their love and devotion. Human Free-Will *restricts* or minimizes or marginalizes the Sovereignty of God in Salvation to the point where God can only sit in Heaven, wringing His Hands, hoping that somebody will take Him up on His "offer" to save them. The free and unencumbered exercise of human choice and decision has to be the decisive catalyst in a scenario where Human Self-Determinism rules or else it self-destructs.

Now I will be the first to tell you that this logic makes sense on so many levels. It is easy to teach and easy to learn and appears to be patently "fair". It is universally accepted as the de-facto way in which God saves sinners. Many of the biggest names in modern Evangelicalism not only believe and teach this, they defend it, passionately.

In fact, there is really only one problem with believing that Human Self-Determinism is true. The Bible doesn't teach it. All through the 66 sacred Books, we find words and passages like the one we find in **1 Peter 1:3** that 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 to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,  
God's Sovereignty in Salvation**

So, as you begin **1 Peter**, you will notice that there are no commandments in the first 12 verses of this letter. No demands or requirements or directions. The Apostle, who walked on water with Jesus, is not telling us what to "do", but telling us what to "enjoy". He is not exhorting us to a particular behavior, he is exulting in what God has done *to us and for us and in us and through us, sovereignly*. So, this Passage is all about us *celebrating* God in saving unworthy sinners, by what He alone has done.

So, Peter doesn't begin this Epistle with commands or even instruction. He begins it with worship.

**"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

... and his goal is to move the scattered aliens of his day, and us, to bless God, and to understand that God is the greatest Treasure in the Universe. But it is so important to understand that Peter is showing us we need to bless God, *not* simply because it is the "right thing to do", but because God is the *decisive Cause* of our Salvation, our Sanctification, and our Inheritance, which informs us *why* these saints are suffering.

And Peter begins by blessing and honoring God. So, God is the center of what he says in verses 3 and 4:

- ✓ God is great in mercy.
- ✓ God causes us to be born again.
- ✓ God gives us a living hope.
- ✓ God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.
- ✓ God promises an indestructible inheritance.

- ✓ God is keeping that inheritance so that it will never perish or soil or fade.

Now you might believe all the great Truths about God in verses 3 and 4, but then worry about one crucial danger not covered there, at least not explicitly.

You may acknowledge that God is Sovereign. And that He is merciful. You may even understand that God has decisively *caused* you to be born again. You may know that God raised Jesus from the dead. And you may know that God promised to keep your inheritance imperishable in heaven. In other words, you know what God has done in the past to give you life, and you know what God is going to do in the future to give you your inheritance.

But, what about right now? What about the time between the New Birth and our Inheritance? What about all the temptations, and the pressures, and the stresses, and the weariness that we go through in between the time we are born again and us entering into Heaven? And what do we do with the persecutions, and the trials and the tests and the afflictions and the frustrations, and the sufferings, and the confusion, and the perplexity, and the fears, and the traps that we face now? Does God do anything about that? Is God Sovereign in all that?

Does God send His Son to die for our sins, raise Him from the dead to open eternal life and cause us to be born again, and then stand back to see if we will make it to Heaven? Is that how this all works? Peter is not about to leave that question unanswered, or even implicit. He makes the answer very explicit, very clear, and very powerful in verse 5, when he said those who are chosen, those whom God has caused to be born again, those who are suffering in this life right now are:

**... protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

So, there is Peter's answer: "NO!" God does *not* just stand back after He has sovereignly chosen us and caused us to be born again. After we are caused to be born again, God uses His Divine Power to *protect* us all through life for the Salvation ready to be revealed, just like He used that Power to save us in the first place.

So, what Peter wants us to see here is that God means for His people to be profoundly secure in Him. He wants us to feel that God Himself is doing everything that must be done to *guarantee* our final and eternal Salvation.

Now let me try to give you an illustration as to how this works. Try to image that your Salvation is like a chain that extends back into "Eternity Past" and forward into "Eternity Future". And this chain is an *unbreakable* chain. Wherever you look on this chain, you find links of iron forged by God Himself.

So, if you look backward into "Eternity Past" as far as you can look, you will find Sovereign Election (**1 Peter 1:1-2**): "**To the chosen aliens.**" "**God chose you from the beginning,**" Paul says in **2 Thessalonians 2:13**, "**for salvation.**"

And if you look forward into "Eternity Future" as far as you can on this chain of Salvation, you see an Inheritance that (according to verse 4) is reserved by God for you, and is, therefore, imperishable and undefiled and unfading. God took charge of your Salvation at the beginning before you even existed, and God is *securing* Salvation's great Goal, before you ever get there in the future.

For example, if you look back on this chain a couple thousand years, you will find God sending His Son Jesus to shed His Blood for your sins on the Cross (the "sprinkling" of verse 2). And then you will find God raising Jesus from the dead to conquer death and give you hope (v. 3).

And, if you look back, one or two or twenty or forty-six years as a believer, you see that great link in the chain called the New Birth, and you see from verse 3 that it is not a link forged by you, but forged sovereignly by God Himself:

**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,**

And then, if you look now at the chain of Salvation being forged this very day in your life, what do you see? If you look at the chain that connects the New Birth in the past with your Inheritance in the future, what do you see?

Well, let me first tell you what I hope you DON'T see. I hope you don't see two images:

1. The Believer Left Insecure
2. Human Self-Determinism

The first image that I pray you *don't* see is of the Christian walking along the edge of a great chasm which he needs to cross to get to Heaven. And he is holding onto one end of the chain leading into the past. And day by day, the Christian is forging the links of faithfulness as best he can with some help from the Holy Spirit (not infallible help) so that eventually he can try to connect with the chain of Heaven that hangs down from the high cliff on the other side.

But he is never really sure that he will forge the links well enough or have the strength to finish the chain. In other words, I hope the image you have of the chain of Salvation is *not* one that leaves the believer insecure and ready to fall out of faith and into destruction. And I will tell you why in a minute.

But the second image that I pray you *don't* see is just as wrong and just as destructive as the first. The second image is the Believer's Security in the Wrong Place. This second image errs in the opposite direction. It's almost the same image as the first. The Christian with the chain of Salvation leading into the past is walking along the chasm attempting with some help of the Holy Spirit (not infallible help) to forge the links of faithfulness and eventually link up with the chain of Heaven on the other side.

But in this image the Christian has a safety belt around his waist tied to the chain of Heaven on the other side so that even if he lets go of the chain leading to the past or stops forging any links of faithfulness, he will not fall to his death but be drawn into Heaven another way than by the chain.

In the first image, the believer has no security or confidence at all that he will make it to Heaven. But in the second image, the believer has security in the wrong place, it's kind of an automatic eternal security that can get you to heaven another way than by the chain of God's saving, persevering Acts revealed in Scripture.



But verse 5 doesn't reveal either one of these two images. Verse 5 points to a very different image altogether. Remember, the question we are asking is:

*"If you look now at the chain of Salvation (which connects the New Birth in the past with your Inheritance in the future) being forged this very day in your life, what do you see?"*

And verse 5 says:

**"[We] are [now being] protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."**

So, what image do you see of the chain of Salvation in that verse? Here's what I see:

Standing in the middle of this chasm which disappears into the abyss so deep no one can see the bottom is God Almighty. And under His Right Arm- He is squeezing against His Chest the chain of my Salvation that leads into the past and connects with Election, the Death of Jesus, His Resurrection, and my new birth. And under His left Arm, He is squeezing the chain of Heaven. And the end of the chain of Heaven hangs loosely over His left Forearm waiting for the eventual attachment to my life. The end of the other chain is in His Hands. And He is forging the necessary links of faithfulness that will make the chain long enough to connect properly with the chain of Heaven.

Now there are two crucial differences between this image and the other two:

The last image seems to make the Security of the believer *uncertain*, while the second image seems to make it *certain*. But the only reason the last image could appear to make our security uncertain is that there is no safety belt and the links of the chain are not connected yet. And either there will be links of faithfulness forged in our lives or we will not connect with Heaven. But we must understand that the Bible does not guarantee security at the expense of faithfulness to Jesus. And that Reality seems to make our Security *uncertain* for many in the modern Church.

But the other difference is that God Himself is holding the chain and forging the links with infallible Power. It is we who do the acts of faithfulness, the chain of Salvation is now being forged in our lives, but it is God Who:

**Philippians 2:13**

**for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.**

Now let's check this out with verse 5 to see if it is true.

**"[We] are [now being] protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."**

Now notice several things about what Peter says here:

1. **There is a Salvation ready to be revealed.** We are saved now, but our Salvation is not complete.
2. **There is an imperishable, undefiled and unfading Inheritance yet to be received.** And that means there is much more Grace to need and much more Glory to be experienced (1:13, 4:13, 5:10).

In other words, even though we are saved, we are not yet across the chasm.

So, there is danger on the way to our final Salvation in Heaven. And that danger is real. Therefore, we need ongoing Protection after our conversion. So, our Security does not mean we are "home free". There are many battles yet to be fought. And in these battles, we will need Divine Protection and Help far beyond what we can supply for ourselves. And our Protection comes from God. More specifically, from the Power of God. Peter said:

**"[We] are [now being] protected by the power of God."**

Now back in verse 3, we saw that God sovereignly *causes* the New Birth. And in verse 5, we see that God sovereignly protects His children all the way to Heaven. But that doesn't mean that there is no battle, or

that we don't have to actually *win* the battle. It only means that God has promised to fight for us with infallible Skill and omnipotent Power. But the "Means" or the "Tool" that God uses to protect us is "faith". So, Peter doesn't teach that we are merely protected by the Power of God, but we are...

**... protected by the power of God through faith.**

... so, this is a mighty and a powerful Protection. But it is *not* a sovereign Protection. Peter says there are two things at work to keep us saved:

1. God's sovereign Determination to keep us.
2. Our faith that links up with God's Will and cooperates with it.

... and both of them are necessary. Now think with me carefully about this for a moment. Just what is God protecting us from? What is it that, in the end, is the only thing that can keep us from the Salvation ready to be revealed in the last time?

Well, death won't keep us from this Salvation. Death takes us straight to Heaven. So, we don't need protection from death. And sufferings won't keep us from Heaven either. Verses 6-7 say that sufferings actually are used by God to *refine* our faith. So, that's not what we need protection from.

Now it's true we need protection from satan, who:

**1 Peter 5:8b**

**... prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

... and we need protection from overwhelming temptations and "lusts that wage war against the soul" (**1 Peter 2:11**). And that's why we should pray:

**"Lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:13).**

But why? What's the bottom line in the damage that these enemies can do? What is the one thing that cuts us off from Heaven? The answer is: Unbelief. Not trusting God. Not living...

**"by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us" (Galatians 2:20).**

So, what does verse 5 mean, then, when it says we are:

**"protected [from losing our final Salvation] by the power of God through faith"?**

... it means that God's Power protects us for our final Salvation by *sustaining* and *developing* our faith. Because the only thing that can keep us from Heaven is forsaking our faith in Christ, and turning to other hopes, other treasures. So, to protect us, God prevents that. He inspires and nourishes and strengthens and builds our faith. And in doing this, He secures us against the only thing that could destroy us: unbelief, lack of trust in God.

Now this is very different from the security of the safety belt. Some people think that, because of some past experience, they have a safety belt and can leave the forging of faith behind. They think it is irrelevant if they drop off into the chasm of sin and unbelief, and just swing low over to the Promised Land. But the Bible doesn't teach that. Anywhere. Because there is no safety belt. There is one way to Heaven: the way of "persevering faith". And this is why verse 5 is so important.

So, our Security is not in making Heaven *unconditional*. Our Security is in God's infallible Commitment to fulfill the conditions of Heaven. And nobody understood that better than Peter. So, please allow me to close with an experience that Peter had, which taught him this lesson very powerfully.

On the night when Peter betrayed Jesus, the Lord said to him:

**Luke 22:31-32**

**31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat;**

**32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."**

So, Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not utterly fail. And that is the only reason why Peter wept bitterly, and repented and turned away from his sin. But remember, both Peter and Judas betrayed the Lord. And Peter was rescued while Judas was not. And the difference between them is not in the degree of their sins, but in Jesus' Intercession.

Jesus prayed for Peter but He did not pray for Judas. And Peter was rescued while Judas failed to persevere. But to whom did Jesus pray? To God, His Father. And what did Jesus ask God to do? To not let Peter's faith come to an end. So, Who forged the link of faithfulness in Peter that awful night? God did. And who brought him back from the precipice of unbelief and gave him tears of remorse? God did.

So, Peter knows first-hand what he is talking about. Those who are born of God:

**... are protected by the power of God through faith**

... they are protected through God sovereignly *sustaining* their faith, for a Salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. So, God sovereignly *caused* us to be born again by *creating* our faith, and He protects us on the way to Heaven by *preserving* and *strengthening* our faith.

So, the chain of Salvation is a "God-forged chain". And that means it is gloriously and invincibly secure. And we should join in with Peter and exult in what God has done because we have a great God and a great Salvation!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.