

# What the Resurrection Says About God

*He Is Risen Indeed*

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**Bible Text:** 1 Peter 1:3-5  
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Last week we looked at the theme of the resurrection in the book of Romans and we saw how central the resurrection was to every critical doctrine about Christianity. The resurrection establishes the deity of Christ. Paul said that he was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection. The resurrection is central to our justification, the declaration that we stand righteous before God, he has declared us righteous with all the demands of the law met on our behalf, and that was established by the resurrection. Paul said in Romans 4:25 that Christ Jesus, "was raised because of our justification." The resurrection was a declaration that God had accepted the sacrifice of Christ on behalf of sinners and therefore salvation had truly been accomplished. The payment of death, the penalty of death, had been paid and satisfied and therefore Christ was free to rise again on behalf of everyone who would believe in him.

The resurrection also goes to our sanctification. The Bible teaches that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is the power that is at work in our life enabling us to be transformed into ever greater degrees of glory. It's the resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead that is at work in your life as a believer in Christ. You are not left alone to battle against the struggles and the trials and temptations, both outside and within you. There is resurrection power from God himself that is at work in each one of us who are true believers in Christ, and that gives you a sense of confidence, it gives you a sense of motivation, it gives you an enabling ability to overcome sin and live righteously in an unrighteous world.

These are tremendous truths all wrapped around the resurrection. And then we also saw last time that the resurrection is also central to our glorification, that great day when we will be raised again, raised again, dwelling with Christ in heaven. The Bible says that because God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, so also he will also raise those of us who are in Christ from the dead as well. So the resurrection from the beginning of your salvation to the end, to the ultimate outcome, to the very identity of who your Savior is, the resurrection is central at all of that. The resurrection is at the heart of Christianity. It's no wonder that Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, that if Christ isn't raised from the dead, our faith is in vain.

So the resurrection is no ancillary doctrine. It's not something that could be disposed of and put aside and the core of Christianity to remain. Oh, God forbid. If Christ is not raised from the dead, we are wasting our time here this morning. But the glory of it is that Christ is raised from the dead. As we sang just a few moments ago, Christ is at the right hand of the Father enthroned and therefore all that we do, all that we say, all that we seek, all the sacrifice that we might make for Christ, is vindicated and shown to be worthwhile through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, with that, we are very grateful and encouraged and motivated to pursue him knowing that our faith is not in vain.

Now, that's just a little overview of what we talked about last week. Now, here's my question as I'm looking at it: with all of those great central themes, with all of that great glorious truth, why would you just pass on into something else the very next week? Well, this is the place for us to camp. We need to come back because there is more about the resurrection to be said and that's what we're going to do this morning, and to do that, I want to take you to the book of 1 Peter in chapter 1. So if you would turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter, just after the book of James, just before the book of 2 Peter, for those of you that are keeping score at home. 1 Peter 1, and you could look at it this way in terms of just cataloging these messages in your mind: last week we looked at what the resurrection says about your salvation, your justification, your sanctification, your glorification; today what we're going to look at is something, we're going to look at it from a different perspective and we're going to consider what the resurrection says about God himself. What the resurrection says about God himself, and I am just very delighted and excited to have so many of you here and to be able to share these things with you this morning because this is really wonderful, wonderful truth.

We're going to look at verses 3 through 5 in chapter 1 of 1 Peter this morning, and let me read those together with you to set them in your mind as we begin. Peter said in 1 Peter 1:3, he 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.

That's our text for this morning.

Now, Peter when he wrote this letter, he was writing to first century Christians who were in the midst of trial and suffering; Christians that lived in the area of modern day Turkey. And they were suffering in various ways and it's important for you to see this theme of suffering that is woven through Peter's letter. In 1 Peter 1:6, for example, he says, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." Chapter 3, verse 14, he says, "I'll give you a moment to turn there. I hear those pages crinkling and I like for you to follow along. I like for you to look at the Scriptures with your own eyes. It's so important just as a foundational matter of

what it means to be a part of this fellowship; it's so important for you to see the Scriptures with your own eyes and to realize that whoever is speaking up here is not making stuff up. There is an external authority that we look to for our faith and that is found in the pages of Scripture and so it's important for you to see this with your own eyes and to realize that the authority comes from God's word, not from the speaker who happens to be up on Sunday morning. We're seeing that the theme of suffering is woven throughout 1 Peter and in chapter 3, verse 14, he says, "Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled."

One of the things that an understanding of Christian salvation does for you, one of the factors that the resurrection motivates you to do is you realize the transcendent power of God in your salvation and you realize that there is a vertical eternal dimension to your salvation and that motivates you and encourages you and gives you strength and courage to stand strong in the face of opposition; to stand strong in the face of intimidation from outside spiritual influences who might try to cause you to turn away from following Christ. You come back to the resurrection and you realize that there is a transcendent power that men cannot extinguish, and it causes you to stand firm in the midst of suffering, in the midst of trials, in the midst even of persecution. The whole history of the Christian faith that has been delivered to us is a faith that has been delivered in a river of blood; a river of blood of martyrs who suffered and died for Christ's sake because they refused to recant, they refused to step back from their testimony for Christ. Even under the threat of death, they stood firm and testified to Christ even at the price of their own life blood because they were not intimidated by those who threatened them if they refused to recant.

Well, in chapter 4, verse 14, you see that. Peter says, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." That's a Trinitarian passage, by the way. You see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit all wrapped up in that one verse. But my point, my greater point, is that Peter was writing to Christians who were suffering for the cause of Christ. They were suffering in the will of God for their lives.

Now near the time of Peter's letter, the city of Rome had burned in A.D. 64. The Emperor Nero who was a very wicked man, Nero falsely accused Christians of setting the fire and used that as justification to persecute them. And he was horribly sadistic. Nero took Christians and encased them in wax, crucified them and hung them in his garden and set them on fire in order to light the night sky of his garden. This is how sadistic he was. He sewed Christians into the skins of wild animals and then turned wild dogs loose on them to eat them and to attack them and to bite at the skins until those Christians, those noble Christians, suffered a horrible death. That's the kind of persecution that was going on. It's not entirely clear whether Peter wrote in response to those horrible events just after the time of Nero or whether he was writing just prior to them, but it gives us a flavor of what these believers had either just gone through, were in the midst of, or would soon encounter. The point is that Peter's readers were suffering at a profound level threatening their very lives. Look, these weren't just people from 2,000 years ago, these were people

of like precious faith, people of flesh and blood just like you and me. These were people that if they were here with us today would embrace us as brothers and sisters in Christ and they shared a common love for Christ that we have. These were our brothers and sisters that Nero was doing this to and one day we'll see them in heaven.

Here's what I want to see for this morning: is that Peter was writing to encourage them and strengthen them in the midst of that kind of severe awful trial, that kind of ongoing threat to the entire body of Christ in the area. What Peter wrote to strengthen them is the same truth that will strengthen you today in the midst of your discouragements and sorrows and difficulties and challenges. And also that, and I'm always mindful that we've got a lot of young people in here, what I want to say to you young people is to be mindful of the fact that what Peter says here is that which can set your aspirations for all of life, and to realize the utter nobility, the utter grandeur, the utter beauty of being a Christian and walking with Christ and manifesting faithfulness to him and living righteously in the midst of this evil age, this is an aspiration to set your life around. And what Peter says here speaks to each one of us in manifold ways. His God-centered approach to suffering is what we all need to rejoice.

Now, at the center of what Peter says is the phrase "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Look at verse 3 with me again. We'll just pick this up and then we'll go through a little more systematically through the passage. Peter said that God "has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The resurrection was front and center as Peter wrote to these suffering believers. The resurrection tells us great things about God that should lift our hearts in any circumstance. The resurrection tells us great things about our Creator, about our Savior, about our Lord, that gives us what we need to view life from a perspective that will help you persevere. It's wonderful truth. Wonderful truth because it identifies for us what God is like. The fact that God raised Christ from the dead tells us wonderful things about his character and that's what Peter does here.

So the first point, I'm going to structure today's message around three points if any of you are taking notes. The first point is this: is that the resurrection tells us that God has great pity. God has great pity. The resurrection points us to the great mercy of God. Look at verse 3 with me here at the start. Peter says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy," there it is, "has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." According to his great mercy, God has acted for our salvation.

Now, notice something really important right at the start here: the whole context of what Peter says here is a context of praise, it's a context of worship, and that is central to being able to appropriate this. We have to take our minds off of our earthly circumstances and lift our eyes, as it were, up to heaven and bless the holy name of God in the midst of the suffering that we find ourselves going through. The first word out of his mouth after his opening introduction in verse 3 is, "Blessed be the God and Father." Understand that what Peter is doing here in this passage is he is praising God. He is ascribing worth and glory to the name of God in what he says, and he says, "Blessed be God, praise be to

God, I honor God," and then as he continues on to talk about the resurrection and our salvation, he is undergirding and showing why it is that he is motivated to praise God.

So all of these things that we're going to see today, all of them should be moving your heart in one direction and that one direction is to praise God and to worship him. Worship him not out of emotional manipulation from overly loud music and emotional appeals through silly testimonies, but to be motivated to praise God in response to truth about the resurrection. It is truth that motivates true worship, and truth comes from the Scriptures. Truth comes from understanding God's word and as you understand God's word and understand the God of your salvation and understand the truth surrounding your salvation, you're motivated to a true and real praise of God. And all of the different things that happen with music and superficiality and drama and different things like that in churches in so many different locations, they're missing that and they are trying to give people a cheap substitute that substitutes an emotional manipulation for the true worship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So when Peter here says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," he doesn't crank up the amplifier, he starts to expound on the truth of salvation. That's what he does here in this passage, and he tells us from the start, "God has great pity." "Blessed be God." Why should I praise God? Because God has great pity, God has great mercy, and the resurrection points us to the great mercy and pity of God.

Mercy, that term "mercy," describes compassion in action. Mercy, get this, mercy uses its power and its resources to relieve suffering, and Peter praises God for his mercy in salvation. Look at verse 3 with me again, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy," according to his great compassion, according to this pity that he has shown to us, "has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Now, listen, that verse assumes so many things about the reality of your life and your spiritual condition before you were a Christian. It assumes whereas you were born again, it assumes that you were dead in sin. You had to be born again. You had to be delivered from your spiritual death. Being dead in your trespasses and sins and with no hope and no power to save yourself, you realized that when God caused you to be born again, he was showing his mercy to you. He was using his power, the power of the resurrection which he intrinsically has as an intrinsic part of his personal power, God exercised his power toward you when you were dead in your sins; God exercised his power, drew you out of sin to saving faith in Christ so that you would be relieved from that condition of sinful suffering, that condition of condemnation, that condition of being under the domination of the devil and doomed to suffer the wrath of God.

Oh, make no mistake, if you're a Christian, you have been delivered from a great and massive place of destruction; of spiritual slavery with no ability to help yourself at all, and no claim on God to act, to cause him to respond to you. God in his great mercy reached down and had compassion on you by name. Paul said that, "Christ Jesus loved me and gave himself up for me." First-person singular. And if you are here today as a

believer in Jesus Christ, understand that God has had great compassion upon you. Bring that thought fresh back to your mind because the starting point for understanding God's mercy is that we all were under the death penalty for sin. We deserved judgment and wrath and yet God had mercy on us to bring us to eternal life. Now, that those two things:

1. It magnifies the name of God in your mind and in your heart; and it also diminishes your own sense of self-importance and pride because you did not save yourself, God saved you, and that causes you to give praise to him for his mercy and his grace.

Now, look at chapter 2, verse 24 just to follow the thread of the thought here to see the means by which God did this, speaking of Christ Jesus. It says that Christ Jesus "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." It wasn't just an abstract mercy that God showed, it was a mercy that sent his own Son to the cross. It was Jesus Christ motivated by compassion, being the Good Shepherd who would lay down his life for his sheep. Christ Jesus exercising mercy on your behalf voluntarily took the cross upon his shoulders and walked to Golgotha and then voluntarily hanging from that cross, took your sins on his shoulders and suffered the wrath and punishment that you deserved and stood in your place in order that you might be forgiven, in order that you might have eternal life.

My precious brothers and sisters in Christ, don't ever question the love and mercy of God in light of these things. Don't ever question whether God is being good to you. Don't ever question whether God is loving toward you. He has established that in such profound ways that we simply cannot honestly question his love. We can't, not without betraying the blood that bought our salvation. God has had great pity on us.

Look at chapter 3, verse 18. You see the theme of suffering in verse 17 even. I couldn't pick up all of them for the sake of time. Peter says, "It is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong." That assumes that there are going to be times where you suffer; you're doing right and living righteously and you suffer as a consequence. That's obvious from the text. But look at this further expression of the pity of God, verse 18, "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust." We were the unjust ones. We were the sinners who had broken God's law. Christ was the perfect one who had obeyed in every dimension from the moment he was born until the moment he hung on that cross; he was perfectly without sin, no deceit ever crossed his lips, and it was that perfect sinless Savior who stood as your substitute on the cross. Chapter 3, verse 18, "the just for the unjust," he did that, "so that He might bring us to God." Beloved, that is mercy. That is great pity. Christ took our sins and suffered the penalty of God's wrath in our place.

Now look at verse 22, it says that Christ is now "at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him." He came down to earth. He condescended to human flesh in order to redeem us and once the work of salvation was done, he ascended back to heaven from whence he came, all for the sake of purchasing your salvation. If you are a Christian, God has had mercy on you. On his own initiative, he rescued you from sin and hell to bring you into his kingdom,

and here's the point for this morning: the resurrection affirms that truth and reminds us of his great mercy. You have been born again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection points you back to the purpose of salvation.

Let's think backwards on this. He was raised from the dead, why did he die in the first place? He died in the first place because he was dying on your behalf, bearing the wrath of God against your sins. Well, why did he do that? It was because it was the plan of God in order to bring you to heaven. And why would he do that? Because you deserved it? No, quite to the contrary, you and I were dead in our trespasses and sins. Well, why would he give salvation to people like that? You trace it all the way back and it takes you straight to the center of the heart of God and you see that he is a God of compassion, a God of mercy, who is good to his people. And when you see that, then you're brought to the place where Peter starts. You say, "He did all of that, that whole circle of salvation?" Do you know what my response to that is? Blessed be God. Blessed be the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ. Praise his holy and majestic name that he would be such a God of compassion on an unworthy sinner like me. So the resurrection drives you to praise because of the great character of God, the great mercy of God.

Now, when Peter says that God has caused us to be born again there in verse 3, he's referring to the great doctrine of regeneration. And in days to come, in months to come, we will consider that doctrine in greater detail, but basically regeneration for today's purposes simply means that God imparted spiritual life to us at salvation. Whereas we were dead in sin, God imparted his spiritual life to us in order that we might believe and be saved. It's a total transformation that takes place. God has not only forgiven you of sin, but he has given you new spiritual life. He didn't simply erase the penalty and leave you to continue on in your old nature. No, he gave you new life. He caused you to be born again. You have new life in you that did not exist before.

The Apostle Paul said the same thing in Ephesians 2:4-5 where he said, "God, being," actually I want you to turn there. In keeping with what I said earlier, wanting you to see this with your own eyes, I want you to see this with your own eyes as well. Ephesians 2, turn back there just a few pages in your Bible, after the book of Galatians. Ephesians 2. The Apostle Paul makes the same point, teaching the same doctrine that Peter did in the passage that we're looking at this morning.

Verse 4, Peter says, "But God," in contrast of you being dead in your trespasses and sins, Peter says in verse 4, "But 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)." Rich in mercy, Ephesians 2, made us alive together with Christ. We are the recipients of amazing compassion and pity. God brought us into spiritual union with Christ so that the life-giving power that raised Jesus from the dead, from physical death, has also raised us from spiritual death, given us spiritual life, and that resurrection power guarantees the final outcome of your salvation. It ends up good in the end. That's just wonderful. That's just tremendous, that we would have a salvation like that at the initiative of the God of the Bible, at the initiative of our Lord Jesus Christ. Despite our sin and rebellion, he reached down and had mercy and

drew us to saving faith. All we can say is, "Father, blessed be your holy name. In response to this truth, Father, I praise you."

Now, let me just stop there for a moment. I need to ask whether this salvation belongs to you. Do you know what it means to be born again? Do you know what it means because these blessings are only for true Christians. If you have never come to Christ, let today be your day of salvation to realize that God is a God of pity and compassion, and appeal to him for mercy upon your own soul if you don't know him. Christ himself pleads with you this morning, "Turn from your sin and yield your life to me," Christ says. "Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Why would you turn away from such a gracious undeserved invitation to eternal life? Ask him to save you and he will because that's the whole reason he came. Your salvation will just be another extension of his saving purpose, and all these great things of new life can belong to you as well.

For the rest of us, just to summarize: we were dead in sin, now we're alive in Christ. We were plunging down on the road toward destruction and now we're on the road that leads to heaven. Blessed be God. Look beyond your circumstances, see this great mercy, and from the depths of your heart echo, "Blessed be God." Everything else is secondary to the praise of his great name in light of what he has done for us. God has great pity.

Now, secondly, Peter shows us in this, we can also see that God has a great plan. Point 2: God has a great plan. Look at verse 4. This is so wonderful. It just keeps getting better and better as you go on. You go deeper and deeper into these things and it just gets better and better. What's the goal of what God has done? Chapter 1, verse 4, in 1 Peter if you're not there, turn back with me. He "has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," here it is, God's great plan for us, verse 4, "to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." You see, the resurrection does more than point us to the past to remember Christ's death and resurrection, it also decisively points us to the future as well. It tells us that God has a great plan for us and the best is still yet to come. Salvation brings hope into your life, the hope that is a certain confidence, a confidence that what is still future will most certainly come to pass. Hope as Peter uses it here, is a present confidence, better yet, a present certainty, an inner certainty that what God has promised, he will deliver. We have an inner certainty, not grounded from our own subjective opinions but rooted in the infallible, inerrant word of God, based on the promise and authority of God, that he is going to bless us even more in the future than he has today. And blessing in a spiritual sense, blessing in heaven, not the blessing that is falsely promised by health, wealth and prosperity preachers, tied to earthly things. When Peter talks about the blessing due to God's name, when Peter talks about the goal and the purpose of salvation, he points us to that which is reserved in heaven still yet to be entered into as our possession. That future blessing is the reward that each one of us who know Christ will receive when you obtain eternal glory in heaven.

You see, beloved, don't ever forget, particularly those of you that have been discouraged this past week dealing with tough issues and all of that, remember this: salvation



transcends this life. God has reserved much greater blessings for you that you will one day most certainly receive. All we have right now are the appetizers, the full main courses of blessings of salvation are still yet to come. As good as it is to be a Christian in this life now, to have the sense of joy and peace and to walk intimately with Christ in this life, understand that this great blessing is going to pale in comparison to what we know in heaven. God has reserved blessings for you that exceed the ability of human language to describe.

Look at what Peter says in verse 4, he saved us so that we could have this inheritance. Verse 4, what is this inheritance like? I can't see it. I can't feel it. I can't touch it. I can't hear it. So I need you, Peter, to tell me what it's like. And he tells us what it's like in verse 4, he says, "This inheritance, it's imperishable." In other words, what you receive in heaven will never decay. It will be perfect the moment you enter into that reward and it will stay perfect forever. It is imperishable. It cannot possibly decay.

He says it's undefiled, verse 4, this inheritance is undefiled. It is morally pure, in other words. He says in verse 4, it will not fade away. He has to define it in negative terms, really. He can tell you what it's not. We don't really have the capacity to understand the fullness of what it's going to be so he just tells you in negative terms what it's not.

He says it will not fade away. Do you realize that being in heaven will never become old to us? It will never become boring? Put out of your mind the false views that, you know, of playing a boring harp on a cloud someplace and saying, "Man..." That's not it. It will not fade away. The magnificence that is going to stun our senses when we first enter into our first moment in heaven, if you can describe eternity with a sense of time, the magnificence that will stun our sight in that first moment is not going to give away like every earthly joy does to a sense of indifference over time. It's going to be magnificent at our first sight of it and it's going to be just as magnificent, if not more so, 50,000 years later. And 50 million years later, and 50 million ages upon ages later, it's still going to be so magnificent that we will never tire of it. It will never fade away. It will never diminish. There's just going to be an unfolding enthrallment with the grandeur and the glory of Jesus Christ that will captivate you from the moment you first see it and it will never ever cease. You will be so captivated with Christ that your heart will never tire. There's a song that goes like that, "Our hearts will never tire of Christ and Christ alone."

And in the magnificence of heaven, in the magnificence of eternity, throughout all of the endless ages of timeless eternity, we're going to see what Scripture declares now that Jesus Christ truly is sufficient and our hearts will be so satisfied and enraptured and fulfilled and grateful and joyous and that's never going to diminish. I'll tell you the truth, brothers and sisters in Christ: when my mind goes to this mental realm of being with Christ in heaven, I don't want to go back. You know, it's hard to come back to earthly things once your mind has gone here. You don't want to think about anything else. And the mark of a true Christian is someone who is so enraptured with that, when you hear that expounded, when you see it in God's word, your heart affections go there and you realize that this is where the center of your affections really are. Oh, sure, I understand, you're just like me and I'm just like you. We lose sight of this in the midst of walking in

this world, but the mark of a Christian is when your mind is drawn and directed to this, your heart responds and says, "Oh, I want that. Oh, if we could just go there right now, that would be the greatest thing of all. To go right into the realm of that glory, never to have to leave it again? That would be where my heart would go if it could." There's a measure for whether your heart truly knows Christ or not. Is this attractive to you? Does this enchant you?

One last phrase that Peter uses in verse 4 to talk about this great plan of God. He says at the end of verse 4, "it is reserved in heaven for you." God saved you. God chose you before the foundations of the world. As it were, there is a name placard for you as a Christian that's there in heaven waiting at the table, a seat that no one else can take and that you will most certainly fulfill. God has reserved it. Listen, your salvation, the ultimate outcome of your salvation, God himself is divinely protecting it so that no force on earth, no power of hell, no demon, no devil, no nothing, nothing can keep you from entering into and receiving that inheritance that is reserved in heaven for you. God is protecting you so that you will most certainly receive the final outcome of the salvation that he has presently given to you. Hallelujah. You can thank me later I didn't scream it into the microphone like I wanted to. Hallelujah! I mean, honestly, praise God. You can see why Peter starts like he did when he says, he starts out, "Blessed be God." When you understand what he was thinking about as he started to write, you can see why his heart just burst in saying, "Blessed be God." Do you realize the greatness of this inheritance? Do you realize that God is protecting us so that we will most certainly enter into the fullness of the gift that he gave us on his own initiative?

Now, follow what Peter is saying here. It's a complicated sentence structure that just goes on with clause after clause after clause, but you can reduce the sentence clause to say this: God has caused you to be born again so that you will certainly receive that heavenly reward. That was his plan from the beginning. God planned this all. He didn't simply send Christ to die and then leave it up to us to decide whether we were going to believe in Christ or not, or maybe we'd persevere, or maybe not. No, the power of God was at work through all of that. He had a plan for you from before he created the world, and his plan was to make certain that you entered into that blessing that he has reserved for you in heaven. Before you were born, he planned it all. He had guaranteed this. Christ had purchased this with his own blood before your parents ever met. And just trace it back generations until you get to the time before Adam and you realize that God had a great plan and he's going to fulfill it, and that joy of heaven will certainly be yours. Wow. Blessed be God.

Now, I want to make this even more practical for you. Think about your earthly life. If you think about it over time, especially those of you that have moved a little further into the adult years, you can look back... the people that are laughing are the ones that that hit. I like that. "Oh, he's talking about me." Now, think about your earthly life. Look back over the course of life and you'll certainly find that satisfaction is temporary. Even the best of relationships come to an end. You have to say goodbye before you want to. People disappoint us. Temptation assaults us. Physical decline comes. Financial reversal comes. Everything that you built your life for, everything that you've invested 20, 30

years into suddenly it's just not there. That's the nature of earthly life. Listen, this is really important: Christians today, me, you, we spend too much time asking God to take the edges off of our earthly suffering. When we pray that way, we're showing that our focus is misdirected because there's always another threat to your satisfaction just around the corner. I mean, we're just one drunk driver away from having everything taken away from us, right? Far better, beloved, far better to take Peter's focus. That glory of heaven is coming. That glory of heaven is coming. Pure joy in the presence of Christ that is going to be fresh forever. Just as Christ has resurrected and ascended to heaven, so also you are going to have the same outcome because you are joined to him. Resurrection awaits you. Heaven awaits you. The glory of our inheritance is reserved, never to be taken away. When your focus is there, all of a sudden the threats of earthly loss and diminishment lose their controlling power over your mind. It diminishes fear because you realize that what really matters to you is yet to come, and what really matters to you cannot be taken away. This changes your whole perspective on life.

And with great compassion and empathy for the trials that we are all going through and the uncertainty of life that we're all dealing with in one degree or another, what I want to say to you, beloved, is this: is that when you settle the glory of heaven in your heart and you settle in your heart that that's where your final affections lie, then you'll see that the troubles of this life, I say this reverently, I say it pastorally, I say it with compassion, but it needs to be said, when heaven is your focus as Peter sets it before us here, you see that the troubles of life are ultimately inconsequential because they are temporary and they yield to this beautiful eternal glory that we are most certainly going to receive. That doesn't diminish the problems here, it shows that there's something more transcendent to set our heart affections upon. And in Christ, Christ has given us such a magnificent gift of salvation that we have something that can't be taken away; we can lay hold of in our affections, and we can set our hearts there and know that we are at rest and at peace because no one can take it away from us. Temporary suffering simply reminds you that it's ultimately going to yield to eternal glory with Christ in heaven. That's not a bad trade, right? That's not a bad trade. Yeah, this stinks for 20, 30, 40 years. This stinks, okay, but heaven is great and heaven is forever.

Look at chapter 1, verse 13. Peter tells his readers, the Bible tells us to think this way and to set our hearts this way, verse 13, in light of all of these things, the greatness of salvation, Peter says, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit," here it is, "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." It's not hope that earthly circumstances are going to change. That's not our hope. We can't think that way. We have to think differently. Our hope, our confidence, our certainty, is what's going to be given to us at that future time yet to come when Christ is revealed and we are revealed with him in glory with the Father. Make heaven the object of your affections.

Will it be worth it? Is there any possibility that it might come out badly for us? Chapter 2, verse 6, Peter says, "This is contained in Scripture: behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious cornerstone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." There is absolutely no possibility that any of us who are Christians, when that great day comes

and we're with Christ in heaven, none of us are going to be saying, "Oh man, this is such a letdown. I thought it was going to be so much better, but this is it. Man, bummer. I'm disappointed." That's just not going to happen. It's just the reverse. When you enter into heaven, it's going to be so much greater than you can ask or think or imagine. You're not going to be disappointed, and because you're not going to be disappointed, it is worthwhile to set all of your hope in that which is still yet to come.

What a great plan, huh? God planned this all, right? You get that. You remember that, right? That none of this was your idea? This wasn't anything that you thought up. This wasn't anything that you earned. This was all from God. This was his plan. This was all of him. And what can we say to that? Blessed be God. Praise be to his holy great name that he would have such a great plan for sinners like you and me. Bless his holy name.

Thirdly, finally. God has great pity, God has a great plan, third point for this morning: God has great power. God has great power. He is continually exercising his power to keep you safe until you receive that heavenly reward.

Look at the end of verse 4 with me and then we'll slide into verse 5. Peter says this is "reserved in heaven for you." He is explaining the clause here in verse 5, is describing you. This clause is a description of how you view yourself. It's an adjectival clause that is describing the object of salvation. This is what it says about us. It says you "who are protected by the power of God." We are the objects of the beneficent power of God. He is exercising his power on your behalf to protect you, "through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." So you can look at it this way: here you are at this moment in time, you're here as a believer in Christ, and the power of God is resting upon you. In the future, you're going to enter into this heavenly reward, this great plan that God has for us. In between, in that parenthesis of time, the power of God is protecting you, sustaining you, carrying you to make certain that you don't drop out of the race but that you will certainly enter into that reward.

This is so magnificent. This is so tremendous. The word "protected" is a military word that can mean "to protect someone from danger." God shields us during our stay on this earth so that even Satan cannot ultimately harm us because we are under the protecting power of God through faith. We exercise our faith but behind that faith, God is motivating, strengthening, stoking the fires of that faith through the power of the resurrection, so that you certainly enter into that reward. It's not dependent on the strength of your faith. Aren't you glad for that?

I won't ask for a show of hands but how many of you came in this morning having a sense of faltering, uncertainty, questions? Man, if it was up to our faith to sustain us for that kind of a great salvation, I would be scared if it depended on the power of my faith. Man, that rises and falls day by day, hour by hour, depending on where my thoughts are located, right? But understand, beloved, this is so wonderful, that the true power that is sustaining us for salvation is not the power of our faith, it is the power of God. That is exactly what Peter says, "You are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Here you are now, you're protected by

God. You've got another 30 years, another 30 minutes to live, you're protected by the power of God so that you most certainly enter into the outcome which is the fullness of this salvation that will come to us in the last time.

God is not going to pull the rug out from under you. You can no more lose your salvation than the power of God could fail. Look, the power that upholds the universe and coordinates the motion of planets so that we can time them to the second, the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, that is God's power and God's power is the same power that is sustaining you for the ultimate outcome of your salvation to guarantee that you will arrive at the final destination. You're not going to go off on a detour. You're not going to be sidetracked. You're not going to be shipwrecked. God's power is at work. If you are in Christ, God's power is at work in your life to make sure that you get to the end that he appointed for you to make sure that his plan is fulfilled. God has the power to finish what he started and following the line of Peter's thinking, the resurrection is the proof of that. If God can raise a dead man to life, then he can keep his child for salvation to the ultimate day.

1 Peter 5:10 says, go ahead and turn there. The sound of crinkling Bible pages will be the sound that marks this fellowship in years to come, for all the years to come. 1 Peter 5:10, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ," you see, Peter ends this letter right where he began, he "will Himself," it's emphatic, God Himself, will "perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." What do we say to all of these things? "To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen." What do we say to these things? Blessed be God.

Let's pray.

*Our Father, what the resurrection tells us about our Savior, about our justification, about our sanctification, about our glorification, what it tells us about you, your great pity, your great plan, your great power, Father, we see those things and with humility of mind, we join with Peter in saying, "Blessed be your holy name." Father, we gladly deny any credit for this. We see that this was all from your omniscient mind, all from the infinite greatness of your loving merciful heart, and we see that somehow and for reasons that only you could know, you have chosen to bring us into this realm of salvation and we thank you for it. We thank you for our Lord Jesus Christ who paid the price for our sin at Calvary so that we could enter into this life. We thank you for the work of the Holy Spirit who led us to Christ. We thank you for the power of God that preserves us. We thank you, O God, for the ultimate outcome which will be joy inexpressible and full of glory when we are with you face-to-face. Oh, the blessings that are ours in salvation, our Father, we give thanks to you for that. And we pray, and even anticipating, what lies ahead this evening as we celebrate communion, as we remember the death of our Lord which made all of this possible, that opened the doors of heaven for us. Father, we pray that as we come back together this evening that we would come with anticipation, come with grateful hearts, come with a humble and reverent heart, that have turned from every known conscious sin in our lives and could receive these elements as an act of worship, an act of gratitude toward you in a way that would be*

*pleasing to you and have a sanctifying effect upon us. Lord, we pray for your blessing upon each one that's here. Father, may the joy, the certainty, the hope of heaven, cause all of us to rejoice, cause all of us to be amazed in your presence and give us that which is necessary for us to glorify you as we walk through this life. We pray in the wonderful name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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