

# The Resurrection's Testimony to God

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We are very glad that all of you are with us this morning. We're delighted you are with us, especially if you're visiting with us for the first time or for the first time in a long time. We are so happy that you are with us but I would have you know that we are far happier that someone else is with us, we are happy that the resurrected Christ is with us as we preach his word here today and it is to him that we want to direct your attention this morning to bring into your mind the reality of what the resurrection means for your salvation, those of you that know Christ; for you to see what the resurrection testifies to what God has done for you and what God's intentions are for you. The resurrection gives testimony to God in a way that nothing else does and for those of you that are not in Christ, that perhaps have made your way in here knowing that you're not a Christian, knowing that you are not yet in Christ, that you have not been born again, it would be our prayer that the preaching of God's word today God would use to open your heart and to speak to your heart and to draw you to Christ for you need to be saved from your sins. That's the aim and the goal of our preaching here this morning.

I'm going to go back to a passage that I first preached on at the very beginning of our church back over five years ago or five years and a day, maybe something like that, to go back to a passage that I preached on the resurrection because I realize that our church has changed a lot. Many of you if not most of you were not with us five years ago and I want you to know and to understand this critical text that we can find in the book of 1 Peter and I invite you to turn to 1 Peter this morning which is after the book of Hebrews and after the book of James. 1 Peter 1:3-5 will be our text for this morning and before I read that text, I want to just give you a little bit of a word of introduction to help you understand the context of what is being said in the entire epistle of Peter. Peter wrote to first century Christians who were living in the area of modern day Turkey and these Christians who were men and women believing in Christ, just like you and me, were in the midst of difficult suffering. They were suffering in various ways and the theme of suffering runs throughout this letter that Peter wrote to them.

Look at chapter 1, verse 6, for example. Peter says that, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." So he no more than opens the letter than he recognizes the suffering and the trials that they are going through. Once again, Scripture contradicts the prevailing health and wealth and prosperity Gospel that is proclaimed today in this land. Suffering comes to Christians and

if you're suffering here today as you come to be with us this morning, I trust that that would be a word of encouragement to you from God's word, that God's word recognizes suffering, that God's word, Scripture acknowledges that suffering will often be the lot of those who are true believers in Christ. If you are suffering today, if you are under the weight of trials and discouragement, understand that Scripture recognizes that as an expected part of Christian experience. It is wrong for teachers to tell you that if you just have enough faith your trials will go away. That's not the case and there is something liberating about that. Rather than saying there is something defective in me about my trials, it forces you to look outside yourself, to look to Christ who is risen from the dead for the help that he has for you, not to get out of your trials but to be strengthened in them. There is something very sweet and precious about that. Peter wrote this whole letter to help believers understand that very point.

Look at chapter 3, verse 14 where you see this reinforced yet again. In verse 14 of chapter 3, Peter says, "even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed." He says, "You may suffer for righteousness," in fact, he tells his readers, "You are suffering for the sake of righteousness." Christ himself spoke of this in Matthew 5, that you are blessed if you are suffering for the sake of righteousness. So we just have to put aside this fleshly desire for an easy life and put aside the false teaching that has corrupted our minds and our expectations about what God will do for us if we belong to Christ. Set all of that aside and enter into what God truly says. There will be times where you suffer for Christ and in those times, you may even suffer for living a righteous life, and when that happens, that's not to be feared, that's not a cause of shame, that is a recognition that God has blessed you to suffer for the sake of Christ just as – watch this – Christ suffered for the sake of righteousness for you. To identify with Christ in his suffering is a privilege. It is a grace that God gives to us. In 1 Peter 4:14 he says, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed," you are blessed if you are reviled like that, "because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." God the Father, Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit, there is a Trinitarian blessing bestowed on those who suffer for the name of Christ.

Well, near the time of Peter's letter, these believers were suffering quite greatly. You will remember if you remember anything about your history, that the city of Rome burned in A.D. 64 and the Emperor at that time, Nero, was widely believed to have set the fires himself so that he would be able to engage his lust for building newer and better things; he had to burn out the old things in order to build new things. Well, that didn't go so well for Nero. Popular opposition arose to him and so in order to divert attention, Nero falsely accused Christians of setting the fire and that became his pretext for persecuting them, and if you ever read anything about Nero's persecution of Christians, it will sadden you to realize, in one sense, what our brothers and sisters in Christ went through. Nero blamed the Christians for the fire in order to divert attention and to give him justification for what he was about to do to them, and when you read about it, the butchery, the barbarity of what he did is almost unspeakable. Nero encased Christians in wax, crucified them and hung them in his garden and set them on fire to light the garden for nighttime activities. He burned them alive. Others, he would sew them into the skins of wild beasts and turn

wild dogs upon them; utterly depraved cruelty that he inflicted upon these believers who were like you and me.

Now, whether Peter wrote in immediate response to those horrific events or whether he was writing just prior and in the providence of God preparing these believers for what was about to come upon them, the theme of suffering is present in this letter. And in the midst of that, beloved, here's what we need to see: understand that in the severity of that suffering that goes far beyond anything that you and I know in our natural experience, we have our own trials which are difficult, we get that but there is an extremity, what Peter wrote was meant to sustain them through greater trials. Well, what he wrote to them sustains us through our lesser trials as well and what you must understand and what we need to cultivate more and more in our own body, in our own interactions with one another, is that what we need at that time is not so much human sympathy, although that is appropriate that we would weep with those who weep, but you must realize where the ultimate source of your comfort and satisfaction come from. You must know where it is that you find the power to live through your suffering in a way that allows you to triumph and rejoice despite it, in the midst of it.

You know, I am just so eager for everyone that associates with Truth Community Church to have a transcendent view of Christ and a transcendent view of God and to have a right sense of expectation about what you ask for from God in the midst of your suffering. Beloved, we are justified and God graciously receives our prayers, "God, help me in the midst of our trials"; that is a blessing that God receives our humble prayers in that way and it is a blessing that we can sympathize with each other through that, but what I want you to see is that there is something more for you that is right on the plain pages of Scripture which is really what answers the need of your heart in your difficulties; what is really the answer to the need of your heart in the midst of your physical distress; what is really the answer to your heart in the midst of relational difficulties; in an uncertain future when your world and your family and your finances have collapsed. Where do you find the strength to live through that triumphantly in the same way that these believers could face the persecution of Nero triumphantly? Well, ultimately it's all rooted in what God has done for us in Christ and the strength of it is found in the day that we celebrate today, the resurrection of Christ. We look to the resurrected Christ and find that which gives us the strength that we need.

Look at chapter 1 now, verses 3 through 5 with that introduction in mind. 1 Peter 1, beginning in verse 3.

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.

Notice the centrality of the resurrection as Peter introduces the theme of his letter to those believers who were suffering and what we're going to see through this text this morning are three great testimonies that the resurrection gives to God which you are supposed to take and apply to your heart and find hope in the midst of your distress. The resurrection tells us specific things about who God is and what he intends for those that he loves, that he set his affections upon in Christ. And this is for everyone who is in Christ. This is for the brand-new Christian maybe just a few days old in the faith. This is for the Christian who has known the Lord for decades and is moving on in life and advancing in years. This resurrection hope is what gives parents the courage to take a little one into their lives and look forward to a life of raising a family with confidence that God will bless them. The resurrection is the hope for each one of us when we are lying on our deathbeds not far from departing this life and entering into the next one. The resurrection is what gives us strength at that point as well and at all points in between. Look to the resurrected Christ and find that which answers every need of your heart no matter what the state of life may be.

What does the resurrection tell us about God? That's what we want to know today. What does the resurrection tell us about God and about the kind of God that he is to his people? What does the resurrection say to you about who your God is? Well, we're going to answer that in three parts this morning. First of all, it tells us that God has great pity. God has great pity and what we mean by that is that God is a God of great mercy. He is a God of great kindness to those who are in suffering.

Mercy is a word that refers to compassion in action, compassion that relieves suffering. And beloved, you may not have realized it in your pre-Christian days, but you were in a very bad position before God, guilty of sin, under his judgment and wrath and facing an eternal judgment, eternal punishment in hell as a result of your many sins against him and you were dead to God. You were not seeking God is what we mean by that. You were moving on in your own way and perhaps in false religion, perhaps in an atheistic worldview or perhaps just not even giving God a single thought. You were lost and you were destined, you were headed towards judgment in that condition. And what did God do? Those of you that are in Christ, what did God do for you? What happened in your life?

Well, look at verse 3 with me again and you'll see. In verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy," motivated by his great compassion upon you, God "has caused us to be born again." God did a work in your heart. God brought someone to you, brought a book to you, brought a newspaper to you in my case, brought a person, brought a friend, brought a pastor, brought a church to you who in one way or another declared to you that your works cannot save you; that God alone can save you through Jesus Christ; that Christ suffered and died for sinners just like you. He died, he was buried, and yet God by his power raised him from the dead to show that a sin offering had taken place that God accepted for sinners everywhere, and that through faith in that resurrected Christ, you could have your sins forgiven.

Well, Scripture describes this. Scripture says that God works through that message in order to do a work to open your heart to open your eyes so that you can understand your need for a Savior and to draw you to put your faith in him. That's what Peter is talking about when he says that God caused you to be born again, what he's saying is that God brought the saving Gospel of Christ to you. God opened your heart so that you could understand. God imparted new life to you and now in Christ, now that Christ has saved you, you are free from the threat of future judgment of your sin. All of your sins have been forgiven. God has given you new life in Christ and God has now put you on a path that leads certainly into eternal bliss with him in heaven.

Now, beloved, let's step back for a moment and think about what that means and what that tells us about God, what that tells us about the nature of Christ and who he is. What this is telling us is that God had mercy on you. Do you see it? That God looked at you individually by name and said, "There is one in suffering, there is one in sin, there is one under the bondage of Satan," and God says, "I will have mercy on that one by name and I will save that one and bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ." If you're a Christian today, that's what God has done for you. When you had no claim on his mercy, no claim on his kindness, no claim on him whatsoever except for a claim on his wrath, God had that kind of compassion upon you which he had planned from the beginning of time in order to bring you out of your despair, out of your guilt, and into a place of his immense eternal blessing. That's what God did for you. And Peter says, look at it there in verse 3 with me again. The agency of that blessing, Peter says you were "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Look at chapter 2, verse 24, if you would just to remember this mercy of God, this mercy of our great Savior. There is a reason why we do our best in our weakness to continually point your attention to Christ, because Christ is the one who matters, not you and me. Christ alone is the one who can save you. Christ alone is the one who paid the price and Peter says in verse 24 to these suffering Christians, he says, Christ "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." Look at verse 18 of chapter 3, "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God."

Beloved, if you realize that you are a forgiven sinner, you realize that it was in mercy that Christ went to the cross for you, that Christ had compassion on your guilty soul in order to take the guilt from you and to bear it in his own body, to bear your sins, to suffer the punishment for your sins in his own body so that you wouldn't have to, so that your guilt and condemnation could be exchanged for the very righteousness of Christ and the blessing of God in this life and the life to come. That's what Jesus Christ did for you and what that should tell you, the way that you should think about that is to look at that and say, "That was a great act of compassion on my guilty soul," and draw your heart to love him and to bless his holy name because God has great pity.

Now, beloved, it's so important to remember. You know, I cannot tolerate, it's hard for me to look upon those systems of man-made religion that feature prominently a cross with the Lord still on the cross. Do you know what? He ain't on the cross. Why are we

talking about him, why are we representing him like that? He's not on the cross. And do you know what else? He's not in the grave. The grave is empty. Christ is resurrected. Christ is alive. They took him down from that cross and they put him in the grave but by the power of God he was raised never to be subject to death again. But not only that, beloved, not only that, Scripture tells us that he was ascended into heaven, that God received him into heaven and he is now ascended to heaven at the right hand of God. Do you know what that means? Peter said that in chapter 3, verse 22, that Christ is at the right hand of God. Beloved, do you realize what that means when you contemplate the sacrifice of Christ for sinners? If Christ himself was the sin offering, if Christ himself was the priest offering himself as the sin offering for sinners like you because the penalty of sin is death, if Christ has been raised from the dead and if Christ has been ascended and raised to the right hand of God, do you know what that means? It means that God has accepted his sacrifice in full. The debt of sin is paid completely. There is nothing left to be done.

So if you are a Christian, you look at the resurrection, you look where the resurrection led him into the realm of heaven itself at the right hand of God and you can step back and say this about your soul, you can look at our blessed Christ and know with certainty that he has rescued you from sin. You can know with certainty that you will not go to hell when you die. You can know with certainty that you will not go to a false place called purgatory and burn off for a thousand years the sins that Christ didn't pay for. No, no, no, no, that is all contradictory to what Scripture says. Christ paid the price in full. Christ finished the work on your behalf. Christ is raised from the dead and therefore your soul is free and your soul is forgiven. The resurrection is the testimony that affirms that truth and reminds you of his great mercy. God forgave your sin in your salvation. God cleansed you from all of your guilt. God has removed your sin from you as far as the east is from the west. God has buried your sin in the depths of the sea never to be found again. Scripture uses those earthly pictures, those earthly metaphors, to give us some kind of sense of how far God has removed your guilt from your soul and that when he looks on you, he looks on you through the righteousness of Christ and accepts you for the sake of his beloved Son. That, beloved, is mercy. And do you see, do you understand that there was nothing that you did in order to deserve that? There is nothing that you did to contribute to that. Christ finished the work 2,000 years before you were born. Oh my, oh my, beloved, do you see it? That is great mercy. That is a profound compassion upon someone who had no claim on that God. The resurrection teaches you that.

Look at verse 3 with me again. It's not just that God forgave us when we put our faith in Christ, but he also gave us new life. 1 Peter 1:3, God "has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Ephesians 1 speaks of this also. We won't turn there for now but do you realize that, do you realize, this is so magnificent, these are revealed precious truths from God himself. Do you realize that the power that raised Christ from the dead is the exact same power that gave new life to you in your salvation? God brought you from spiritual death and the power that did that, that transferred you from death to life, that made you a new creation in Christ, the same power that accomplished that in your life is the same power that raised Christ from the dead. We look back at the empty tomb, we look back at Resurrection Day and we see

Christ raised and then we come forward 2,000 years into the present and we realize the power that did that is completely undiminished in the intervening time, and the power that raised Christ from the dead is the power that raised me from the dead, the state of my soul.

Ephesians 2 speaks of this and ties it also to God's mercy as Peter does. Listen as I read Ephesians 2:4 and 5, "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." The resurrection tells us about the rich mercy, the great pity of God, and shows us that God has done a supernatural miraculous work in Christ in order to accomplish salvation for sinners like you who could not save yourself. Blessed be God. That's why Peter opens it up with a word of praise, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It's a word of praise. You see this resurrection, you see what it means, you see the testimony to the mercy of God and you step back and you fall on your face and you say, "O God, blessed be your name for the pity that you have had on my soul!" And if you're not in Christ today, you realize that this same God that saved so many in this room offers you that same free, full, complete salvation today. Simply come to Christ in repentance and faith and he will save you. He says, "The one who comes to me I will never cast out."

So as we speak about these great and lofty eternal themes from the resurrection and the mercy of God, realize that in part Christ offers himself to you, the sinner, today and says, "I'll receive you and I will do this for you as well. Come to me and put your faith in me. Come and receive me." And Christ will make you his own and this new life and this mercy that tinges everything that Christians do can be yours as well. It's the promise of Christ and, beloved, Christ has never broken his promise. Christ has never turned away a sinner who truly came to him. Christ has never broken a promise and he never will because he's the God of truth and he is the Christ that can be trusted. That's what we remember on Resurrection Day and Resurrection Day reminds us and testifies to us anew that Christ has the power to keep his promises. If he can conquer death, nothing else can stop him and nothing else will. So look beyond your circumstances, beloved, and see this great mercy and join with the writer of Scripture saying, "Blessed be God."

Now, secondly, it's not just that God has great pity, we also see from this passage that God has a great plan. A great plan. God has a great plan for us, though not in the sense that the four spiritual laws would speak of. God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. Well, to focus on this earthly life is to really miss the point. The great plan for you in your salvation, beloved, is not that God is going to give you an immediate deliverance from that which troubles you today. That may or may not happen. Maybe God will, I would rejoice with you if he did but the truth of the matter is the Lord uses trials to sanctify us, to humble us, and he uses them in that way.

So we don't look to God for immediate deliverance in this life, we step back and realize there is a much greater plan at work. In the midst of your trials, in the midst of your sorrows, in the midst of your suffering, you must understand that the resurrection tells you that there is a far transcendent plan at work in the midst of your life that totally

revolutionizes the way that you think about the difficulties of earth, the difficulties of this life. The truth of the matter is that this life is incidental to the purposes for which God saved you. You must understand that. You must embrace that. That must become the defining aspiration of your heart to recognize the very things of which we speak right now. God has a great plan and when I say a great plan, I don't mean it in the sense of, "Oh, that was a great hamburger. Wasn't that a great movie? Wasn't that a great victory for our team?" No. We've diluted the word "great" by using it in trivial manners to refer to trivial things. No, when I say that God has a great plan, what we mean is God has a plan that is great for you if you're in Christ and the resurrection is designed to remind you of that.

One day, look at chapter 1, verse 4, this is where our hope truly lies. After all of the events and sadnesses and joys of this life have come and gone and we come to the end of this life, the greatness of the plan of God for you is only about to begin and we need to reach forward and bring the greatness of that future plan into the present day and let that inform the way that we think about life. Look at verse 4 with me. God caused you to be born again for a purpose and that purpose is expressed in verse 4, it is "to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away." And where is that great inheritance to be found? It is "reserved in heaven for you." It is still to come. It is still future. The reality of salvation is that God has appointed for you if you are in Christ, God has appointed for you to enter into a heavenly glory where Christ will be seen face-to-face, where sin will be utterly eradicated from your experience, and you will be with Christ, you will be with God, you will be with the redeemed of all of the ages and to be with them in a perfect environment of utter joy and bliss, rejoicing in the finality of the salvation that God brought to you. That is the ultimate purpose of your salvation.

Look, how long is eternity going to last? That's a trick question. Eternity is going to last forever and God is an eternal God reigning over all, who determined the course of the universe before time began, is working out that plan in time now and one day will culminate it into eternity. And we sing, don't we, in "Amazing Grace,"

"When we've been there 10,000 years,  
Bright, shining as the sun,  
We'll have no less days to sing God's praise,  
Than when we'd first begun."

Beloved, think about it from that context: endless eternity where time ceases to be. That has to be the ultimate goal of salvation, that it would be the ultimate consummation that is the ultimate purpose of God's plan for your salvation. Why would God trivialize it when making 30 or 40 or 70 years the main point of it all? It's not the main point. So God saved you, Peter says, so that you could obtain this heavenly reward that is endless and that puts this life in perspective and you say, "Okay, this is difficult right now but there is a greater context that informs the way I respond to it."

And Peter says that one day you will obtain eternal glory in heaven, my brother and sister in Christ, and what will that be like? Well, he describes it. Look at verse 4 with me again



and we'll just go through these adjectives quickly. It is an inheritance that is imperishable. When you get to heaven, things aren't going to decay, things aren't going to rust away, things aren't going to dissolve like we're used to everything in this life happening. Those of us to get a little further on in life realize that in the end gravity wins. Not so in heaven. Not so in heaven. It's imperishable and the perfection that God gives to you at the start is not going to diminish one bit. It's not going to rot, diminish or decay.

Secondly, Peter says it's undefiled. It's morally pure. You know, all of the corruption that we live with in our environment here in this life, it's all going to be gone. All of the rot of Hollywood, all of the rot of media, all of the foul people that pollute our minds, to say nothing about the corruption of our own hearts that defile us ourselves and comes from within, and the flesh of which even the Apostle Paul said, "I find that there is a principle of evil in me, the one that wishes to do good. In my own sins, in my own failures," you say to yourself, "it's all going to be gone." Everything that defiles this life is going to be absent in heaven. I don't think there is any way for us to begin to really grasp what that will be like but it will be good and it will be far better than anything we can imagine here on earth. It will be a pure environment with the loftiest and the highest of themes, the worship of God and the adoration of Christ animating everything and revolving around the worship of our glorious King.

Peter says it will not fade away. Look at verse 4, it will not fade away. You know, people who do not love Christ misrepresent what the nature of heaven will be like with coarse jokes and things like that. "Isn't it going to be boring to be just playing a harp on a cloud someplace?" they would say. Or you wonder, "You know, what are we going to do in heaven?" Beloved, do you understand that heaven will never become old, it will never be boring? It will not fade away. It's not like this, it's not like you enter into heaven and there is a burst of fireworks and it's great and then it's like the Fourth of July, "Well, that's over, now what?" Ha! No, no! There is not going to be that sense of declining disappointment, "Well, this wasn't what I thought it was, or is this all there is?" No, heaven is going to be high and lofty and great and joyous and blissful and wonderful and it's never going to stop being that way ever ever ever because it's not going to fade away. And the fullness of the kaleidoscope of that glory we can only guess at from here. The radiance that we see off the largest diamonds when light hits them and shatters into a prism of colorful glory is going to seem like nothing compared to the glory of Christ in heaven to us. And only those who love Christ will be there and for those of us who love Christ, it's going to be the wonderful culmination of the very purpose for which we were saved. That is God's great plan for you, that you would share in that glory of Christ with him forever and the resurrection tells you that that is coming, that that is the plan.

And don't miss the last clause there at the end of verse 4 that Peter uses, he says it is "reserved in heaven for you." Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that wonderful? You have a reservation in heaven and you're not going to go to the desk and have somebody typing out, "I'm not finding your reservation here. I don't see your name here. Is it possible it's under another name?" No, it's not going to be like that. God has reserved a place for you in heaven that he will certainly bring you to fulfill and somehow we will sit down at a great banquet with Christ. Don't think about that in physical sensual terms, just somehow

we are going to be at a great banquet with Christ with all of the redeemed of the ages and, beloved, here's the wonderful thing about it: you are going to belong there because Christ who owns heaven, Christ who is the King of heaven and there is no queen, Christ who is the King of heaven who owns it says, "This is what I have prepared for you." Christ came to earth to purchase that for you, to secure you for that, and it is his infallible unailing intention to deliver you there in the end and you will enjoy the glory of that banquet with him and the blessed thing about it is you will belong there.

And not only will you belong there, beloved, in a way that you have never experienced on earth, you will say, "Oh, this is home because this is what God prepared for me from before time began. This is what Christ saved me for." Heaven is not going to be foreign to us when we arrived there, it's going to be the culmination of everything that God saved us to have and it is going to be home. That's why we speak about when death is approaching, when my death approaches, the spirit of my heart whether it's the words on my lips on that moment, the spirit of my heart is going to be, "Oh, I'm going home. I'm going home. After all of these decades here on earth, a stranger and an alien passing through, now I'm going home."

And there is going to be a great family waiting for you, beloved. When you enter into heaven there is going to be a great family like nothing you've known on earth and you are going to say, "Oh, this is what it was all about. This is why Christ saved me. I belong here." And you're never going to want to look back. It's so foolish to think that truly redeemed people in heaven are looking down occupied with what we're doing here on earth. Why on earth would they do that? Why would they care what's happening on earth when they are in the presence of Christ in heaven? Who cares what's happening on earth. Are you kidding? "I am in the presence of the eternal Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me." That will occupy our attention. That is the culmination of the aspiration of our hearts. That will be glory.

To me, beloved, if you're in Christ, it will be glory to you and you will want nothing else. And when you're there, it's going to be great, it's going to be glorious and it's not going to fade away. It's imperishable. It's undefiled. And beloved, it's just waiting for you. There is a slot in heaven waiting for you who are in Christ that no one else can fill and God is gathering in of the sheep will not be complete until you are safely in the fold. What can you say to that? Here's what you say to that, "That's a great plan!" And you say, "Oh, blessed be God that he included me in that." Blessed be God.

So, beloved, whenever I preach on heaven, I never want to return. You know, mentally I don't want to leave that mental realm but let's just contrast it for just a moment for what you know by experience what life is like. Isn't it true that earthly satisfaction is temporary? Isn't that true? You take the best vacation that you could ever take and it ends and you're back in the routine. Take the highest and loftiest joys that you share with your family, they come to an end. Earthly satisfaction at its best is temporary. People disappoint us, even those closest to us. Temptation assaults us and sometimes you sin and fall short and feel the weight of that. Physical decline comes and pain wracks your body. Friends desert you. Financial decline comes. Death takes away your loved ones and

one day death comes knocking at your door. That's life on earth. What a great plan of God that Scripture lifts our eyes from that to something far better. Heaven is coming. Pure joy in the presence of Christ that will be as fresh 100,000 years into the future as it is at the first moment. That is a great plan. Beloved, your temporary suffering yields into eternal reward in heaven.

Look at chapter 1, verse 13, and you're supposed to do something with this knowledge. You're supposed to do something with this understanding about the reality of heaven and Peter lays it out there in verse 13 of chapter 1. He says, "Therefore," because all of these things are true, because of the great pity of God, because of the great plan of God, "Therefore prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit," in other words, have a right perspective on this life and as you're doing that, "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Let your fixed hope, let that which you most desire be completely and exclusively your eternal reward in heaven. You let go. You loosen your grip on the things of this world and reach forward and strain forward into the future and say, "That's what I was created for. That's what Christ saved me for. That's what I'm going to bank all of my hope and aspirations on." And that's what sustains you in suffering. This is temporary. This is passing. I have a glory yet to come that will not fail. That's a great plan.

There is a final thing that we can say. What the resurrection teaches us about God, what it testifies to about God and it's that God has great power. God has great power in verse 3 or that's the third point. Point 3: God has great power. I hate it when I stumble like that. Won't it be great to be in heaven and never stumble in what you say ever again? That's my hope. God has great power and the resurrection tells you, beloved, that God has the power to keep you, to make sure that you safely enter into that eternal reward of which we have been speaking.

Look at verse 5. Peter just said that this inheritance is reserved in heaven for you, well, what about the meantime? What about between today and when I receive that glory? What about that interim? What about that window, that parenthesis of time? What about then? What can we say about that because I still have to live through this and there is still all that earthly stuff? What about then? Peter says, "No sweat. No worries." He says in version 5, you "are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Peter says to these believers, God speaks to us through his word today to hear these very things. If you are in Christ, understand that the power of God is going to keep you all the way and safe until the end. You will not drop out. God won't allow you to flunk out. God isn't going to allow you to slip through the cracks. God hasn't forgotten about you and he will not forget about you, rather – oh, sometimes I just marvel that my sinful tongue is allowed to speak of such great glories as this – understand that the God who saved you and the resurrection which testifies to his pity and to his great plan, the same power that raised Christ from the dead is now keeping you to make sure that you don't fall out along the way. God is protecting you. The power that raised Christ from the dead is not only the power that gave you new life, it's the power that is protecting you. Resurrection power cannot fail. God intends to keep you and deliver you safe into that heavenly reward. Blessed be God. Blessed be his holy name.

Beloved, understand this, understand that you are not keeping yourself. It's not your faith that is preserving you safe until heaven. Beloved, you don't want it to be that way. You don't want it to be, "Well, Christ started the work and now I have to finish it." You don't want that because if that happens to any of us, we're all going to fail, we're all going to fail out. No, by contrast, no, the God that loved us enough to establish this plan from the beginning, the Christ who loved us enough to come to the cross, the God who loved you enough to save you in the first instance and impart new life to you, don't you see there is this great plan and great power of God at work in your life that will carry you like a massive ocean tide until you're safe on the other shore? He'll protect you and it is God's power that is at work to keep you for your final salvation. It is God's power that saved you and God's power cannot fail and that means that he will finish what he began. Philippians 1:6, "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." The resurrection shows us that God has the power to deliver on that promise.

Look at chapter 5. You say, "Well, what about Satan? What if Satan injects his bony red finger into the midst of it and I lose out to Satan?" Oh, beloved, stop. Don't even talk that way. Don't you think God is sovereign over Satan? No, no, of course not. Of course not. So Peter addresses even that potential concern and he says in chapter 5, verse 8, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Is he an evil, wicked, supernatural foe? Yes he is. Will he prevail over true saints in the end? Absolutely not. Impossible. No way. Don't go there. Verse 9, while you are in this earthly tent, "resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." And in the culminating verse of the whole epistle, Peter says, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself," you see, he places it on himself, "will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen."

What great pity. What a great plan. What great power. Blessed be God.

Let's pray together.

*Father, on this great day in which we remember the great resurrection of Christ, we thank you that it was in furtherance of a great plan manifesting your great pity upon us and executed with great unconquerable power. We thank you, Father, for the certainty of the culmination of our salvation in heaven. And Father, for those who do not know Christ, we pray that you would use that same great omnipotent power of your Spirit to open their eyes to the truth of the Gospel that today and even now there might be many in this room who would come to Christ for salvation and be saved. Thank you that you keep us. Thank you, Father, for the wonders of our salvation that are yet to be unfolded before us. And yes, we suffer for a little while in this life, we suffer in this body, we suffer in the realm of relationships or other difficulties but, Father, we thank you that we can look up to our ascended Christ, to the resurrected Christ at the right hand of God and know that you have it all planned out, that you will keep us to the end, and that the ultimate success*

*of your work in our life is guaranteed, not by our power but by the power of the risen Christ. So with that in mind, we rejoice, we thank you, we praise you, we commit ourselves to persevere and pray for your grace as we do. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.*