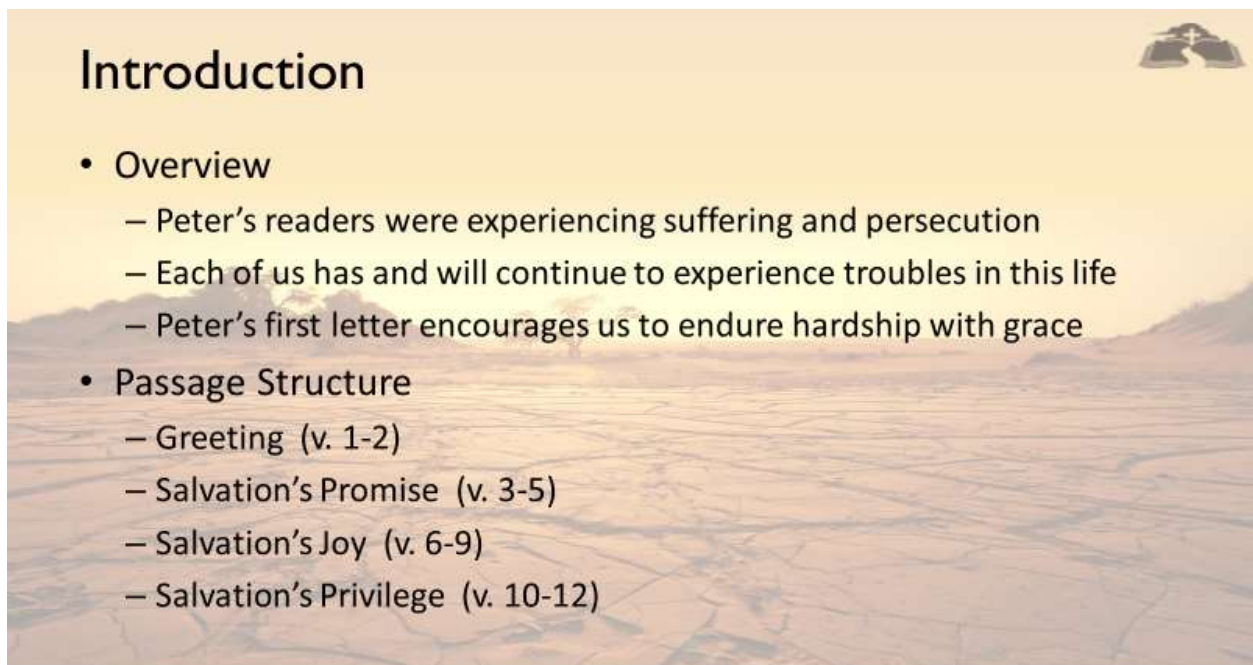


Clearcreek Chapel Pulpit Ministry



April 28, 2019 PM Message

Slide - 2

Good evening. Tonight, we begin a new series out of the book of 1 Peter. The central theme of these messages will be on finding hope and help in the midst of hard times. It is our hope that these messages will provide a spiritual lens to bring clarity and make sense of the trials we face as we go through life. Peter will remind us that suffering is to be expected. Struggles are a means by which God helps us to grow and trust more in His provisions. The focus of these messages will be on how we are to respond when God allows troubles to come into our lives.

As we get started on this new series tonight, let me provide a quick overview for Peter's first letter. He is writing to believers in several Roman provinces located in what is now northern Turkey. These believers were a part of churches in that area made up of both Jews who have been dispersed from Judea and Gentiles from the area who had come to follow Christ. We also know from the content of this letter that Peter's readers were experiencing suffering and persecution. While we don't know specifics, it is likely that the persecution was on a local level and consisted of mistreatment, discrimination, and various hardships because of their faith.

Just as it was 2,000 years ago, Peter's message is powerful and relevant to us today. Each of us in varying degrees and in different ways, has and will continue to experience troubles in this life. We will experience the emotional pain of broken relationships, rejection from the world, and disappointment in those we have come to trust. We will experience the physical pain of sickness, accidents, and growing older. Our faith will be tested. As believers, we must not view ourselves as immune from such afflictions. In fact, Peter tells us to expect them so that God's glory may be revealed in us.

As we study Peter's letter over the next six messages, listen and look for God's purpose and intent for our suffering. Suffering will come. The real question is how you and I will respond to it. Peter's first letter encourages us to endure hardship with grace. We accept suffering because God is sovereign and uses trials to strengthen our faith. We hope in spite of trouble because God promises to blessings in this life and beyond. We embrace trials because through them we show that Christ is more to us than the comforts of this world.

[opening prayer]

This evening we will begin the series by looking at the opening of Peter's first letter. Our focus for this evening will be on the first 12 verses of Chapter 1. Before we read this passage together, I'd like to review the structure of this opening section of verses. What we find is the typical opening or greeting followed by an encouragement in recalling the blessings of salvation.

Peter's greeting is quickly made in the first two verses. After his opening, he reminds his readers of the blessings of their salvation in verses 3 through 12. These verses fill three important purposes. First, they provide a connection and transition into the body of his letter. Second, they introduce the theme of enduring suffering and hardship with hope. And lastly, they provide the foundational truths that establish the basis for our response to the trials we face.

Verses 3 through 12 break down into three sections. In verses 3 through 5, we see salvation's promise. We are reminded of the hope and promise of God's redeeming power. Next, in verses 6 through 9 we have salvation's joy. We are reminded that the wonderful truth of these promises bring joy even in the midst of faith being tested through hardship and trouble. Finally, in verses 10 through 12 we have salvation's privilege. Peter reminds his readers that we are privileged to live on this side of the cross. We live in the knowledge of Christ and in the power of His spirit. His grace is sufficient to sustain our faith through the testing and troubles of this life into the glories of eternity with our Lord.

Please open your bibles to 1 Peter, Chapter 1. Please follow along as I read God's word to us – 1 Peter 1, verses 1 through 12. *"1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."*

Greeting (v. 1-2)



- Peter's Credentials (v. 1a)
- Peter's Audience (v. 1b)
 - He writes to the elect
 - He writes to those who are exiles
- Peter's Explanation of Election (v. 2a)
 - Chosen according to the foreknowledge of the Father
 - Through the sanctification of the Spirit
 - To live in obedient submission to Jesus and cleansed by His blood
- Peter's Affection (v. 2b)

April 28, 2019 PM Message

Slide - 4

Peter's opening to this letter, though brief, is theologically packed. As we would expect, Peter identifies himself in verse 1 as an Apostle of Christ. He writes with authority to the church. Next, he identifies his audience. We see three important ideas here. First, he writes to the elect. To those who are called and chosen by God. Second, he writes to those who are exiles. He is writing to those who are strangers or pilgrims in this world. Some would be exiles who were displaced out of Israel and fled to the areas of Asia Minor that Peter refers to. But there is also the greater sense here that Peter refers to all of them as exiles, because their faith has caused them to suffer and be mistreated by a world that is hostile to Christ.

Verse 2 continues by building upon the idea of elect exiles. There are three key points condensed into this expanded thought that center around the Trinity. First, Peter refers to believers as the elect who were chosen according to the foreknowledge of the Father. Peter is emphasizing God's sovereignty and His initiative in our salvation. We are the elect because the Father has placed his promise of love upon us. Second, we are elect through the sanctification of the Spirit. We are a holy people set apart for the work of His kingdom. Third, we are the elect to live in obedient submission to Jesus and cleansed by His blood. Tying these three thoughts together, Peter is reminding his readers that they are the elect, because of the Father's choosing and promise to love us, through the setting apart of the Spirit as a holy people, resulting in lives of obedience and righteousness through Christ.

Peter concludes his opening with a quick expression of his affection for his readers and his desire for them to be blessed. His desire is that they experience an overflowing measure of God's grace and peace. The saying "grace and peace" was often used in letters. The phrase was an affirmation of hope for undeserved blessings, kindness, harmony, and goodwill. Peter's love for them is expressed in this strong desire for their well-being, likely focused in relationship to one another and in a right relationship with God.

Salvation's Promise (v. 3-5)



- Praise to the Father from whom goodness flows to us (v. 3a)
- According to His great mercy
 - Caused us to be born of a new life to a new hope (v. 3b)
 - Given us an eternal inheritance (v. 4)
- Guarded by God's power to be revealed in the final day (v. 5)

April 28, 2019 PM Message

Slide - 5

Let's move on to the main section of our passage. The remainder of our passage centers around the theme of the believer's blessing in and through salvation. In the Greek, Peter expresses these blessings in a single complex sentence that flows as a stream of thought, expressing praise for the marvelous work of salvation in the life of the believer. As we noted in the introduction, this section of praise for salvation breaks down into three parts.

The first part is made of verses 3 through 5. The first aspect to the blessing of our salvation is its promise. We praise God that the promise of our salvation is certain. Let's look at these verses again. Follow along as I read verses 3 through 5 of Chapter 1. *"3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."*

The opening words of verse 3 express the overriding theme of the entire passage. Peter writes, blessing and praise be to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The focus here is on the Father from whom goodness flows to us through His Son. And the reason for this praise is a reflection on our salvation.

Peter begins his explanation of the Father's goodness in the last half of verse 3. This great blessing is given to us according to His great mercy. We deserved the fullness of God's wrath. But instead of judgement we have been blessed with the Father's kindness and love. Peter gives us the first of two results of this marvelous mercy. He reminds us that he has caused us to be born of a new life to a new hope through the resurrected life of His Son. The key word here is "hope". For Peter's readers who were facing persecution and suffering, they can look forward to the living hope of salvation's eternal blessing. Believers have a certain hope of a

resurrected life and ultimate triumph over suffering. Brothers and sisters, when our faith is tested, hope triumphs over trouble. Do not forget it. Hope will triumph over trouble.

Peter continues in verse 4 with the second result of the Father's great mercy. We have also been given an eternal inheritance. This is not the physical inheritance passed on from generation to generation. This is a spiritual inheritance that is as perfect as it is pure. And it is ours in Christ both now in the present and as an unfading promise that will be realized in full when we reach our journey's end and go home. While the trials of this life may not come with relief or justice we desire, we are confident of a future glory in the presence of Christ. Our tears and pain are only temporary in comparison to the eternal inheritance that awaits us.

Peter seems to anticipate the natural question of his readers in verse 5. How can we be certain of this salvation, hope, and inheritance? How? Because it is guarded by God's power to be revealed in the final day. Believers are not exempt from the trials and testing of this life. But our salvation includes the promise that God will keep us and carry us through our suffering. He will sustain our faith and give us strength to endure trials for the glory of His name. True believers will draw near to God and cling to Christ in the midst of suffering. Just as we will rise up over death to life eternal, we will rise up over suffering to persevere in faith and hope.

Salvations' Joy (v. 6-9)

- The reason for their joy (v. 6)
 - The truth and hope of salvations' promise
- The reason for their trials (v. 7)
 - It reveals the authenticity of our faith
 - It reveals the value of our faith
- The essence of our faith (v. 8-9)
 - We love Christ whom we have not seen
 - We believe and rejoice in Christ whom we have not seen
 - The assurance on the certainty of our salvation

April 28, 2019 PM Message

Slide - 6

The second part of Peter's praise for salvation is found in verses 6 through 9. In these verses we find the second aspect to the blessing of our salvation which is its joy. We praise God because as we reflect on the promise of our salvation it fills our hearts with gladness. Let's look at these verses 6 through 9. Follow along as I read. *"6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and*

rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

Peter begins this part of the passage pointing back to the previous three verses. What is it that they rejoice in? It is the truth and hope of salvations' promise. In verse 6, we see that this rejoicing fills their hearts *even though* they are experiencing sorrow and different kinds of troubles. Note the phrase, "for a little while". Peter is **not** saying that our trials will not last long in this life. Suffering and pain may indeed last our lifetime. But believers can rejoice in the midst of testing and trials because with eyes of faith we know that in comparison to an eternity with Christ, they are brief.

But what is the reason for our trials? Why does God allow us to go through suffering and sorrow? We find the answer in verse 7. Notice the "so that" which starts this verse. Every time I see a "so that" in my bible I underline it. Because what follows it, provides the reason to what came before. Believers can rejoice in their troubles because it reveals the authenticity of their faith. When genuine faith is tested, it is proved to be real. It provides to us a confidence and assurance of the saving work of God's grace in our lives. And that faith, like gold, will not perish, does not fade, and through trials is being refined in its purity. The crucible of suffering has a way of removing the corruption of sin and pride from our lives. Trials reveal to us the value of our faith. We are to treasure our faith as we consider the great value it brings both in our present struggles and on the day of judgement as the promised glory of the presence of Jesus Christ is revealed.

Peter answers one more question in verse 8 and 9. What is faith? Hebrews 11:1 tells us that faith is the assurance of that which we hope for and the conviction or belief in things which we have not seen. Here in the first part of verse 8 Peter commends the faith of his readers in that they love Christ though they have not seen Him. Even during suffering and loss they continue to love Him. In the middle of the darkness and discouragement of hard testing, Christ remains near and dear in our hearts.

The last half of verse 8 continues explaining our faith by noting the belief and rejoicing that it causes in our hearts. Though we have not seen our Savior, we believe in a way that rejoices beyond expression. And in verse 9 we see that suffering does not defeat us. When tested, genuine faith is strengthened and will reflect with assurance on the certainty of our salvation. We can endure trials with hope and love and joy because in Christ we have overcome to the glory of His name. We rejoice in the midst of testing because our future is firmly anchored in heaven with Christ where one day, we will enjoy Him forever.

Salvation's Privilege (v. 10-12)



- The prophets foretold our salvation (v. 10)
- The prophets inquired of our salvation (v. 11)
 - The person and time
 - The suffering and glory
- The prophets would never see what they predicted and foretold (v. 12)

April 28, 2019 PM Message

Slide - 7

The third and final part of Peter's praise for salvation is found in the last three verses. The second aspect to the blessing of our salvation is seen in its privilege. We bless God as we reflect on the privilege and honor of our salvation and setting up our following in the example of our Lord. Let's look again at these verses 10 through 12. Please follow along as I read.

"10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

In verse 10, Peter begins a new thought by reflecting on the foretelling of our salvation. He reminds us that the salvation which we have the privilege to experience in the present was prophesied long ago. The Old Testament prophets foretold our salvation and the grace and mercy that was to come for us. They searched diligently and with great care to understand it. Yet their great passion and hard work was to understand a salvation that was in their future. They would never have the privilege of knowing it in the way that Peter's readers, and even more so, that we do.

In verse 11, Peter continues this reflection on the prophets of old. He notes that they inquired two things of the Spirit. First, they wanted to know the person and time of God's salvation. They wanted to know the who and the when. But what was revealed to them was shrouded and spread across time. Those of us who have experienced salvation this side of the cross can see Christ and the timing of our salvation with so much greater clarity.

Second, the prophets foretold of the suffering of Christ and the glories to come. I believe it is important here to see the connection that Peter makes between suffering and glory. While not

directly indicated in this passage, Peter is going to set this up as a pattern of following in Christ's example. He was a stranger to this world. We are strangers and alien to this world. He suffered at hands of this world. We will suffer at the hands of this world. He overcame and was glorified. We will overcome and be glorified. We have this pattern as a privilege to walk with Him and experience salvation in a way the prophets could not.

Finally, in verse 12, we see that it was revealed to the prophets that they were serving a future generation through their ministry. They would never see what they predicted and foretold. While they anticipated and even hoped for the coming of salvation, it was intended to be revealed to us in the person and life of Jesus Christ. They could only see vaguely the coming of the gospel. We have experienced the privilege of seeing the fulfillment of the gospel. We have been incredible blessed to live in a time where we can see God's plan more fully. In fact, as Peter tells us, so great is the gospel that even the angels long to reflect on it. What the Old Testament prophets saw from afar, the angels near to it gaze into with wonder.



Reflect & Respond

- Human tendencies of dealing with suffering
 - Defeat
 - Self pity
 - Wrong expectations
- God's way of dealing with suffering
 - Hope
 - Help
 - Biblical expectations

April 28, 2019 PM Message Slide - 8

Sheila and I recently were able to get away for a weekend in a nice private room with large windows that overlooked the city below. Unfortunately, this room came with a number of challenges. A person in the room across the hallway was a bit noisy and there was noise in the hallway fairly often. The room service food was healthy, just not very tasty. And we were often interrupted by people coming in to our room asking us questions. In fact, I was poked, prodded, and made uncomfortable in various ways. While the staff was very kind and understanding, they often interrupted our sleep to check on us. And every 15 minutes a blood pressure cuff on my arm would squeeze tightly to record my vitals.

Many of you who have gone through a stay at a hospital understand exactly what I am talking about. Why would we put up with such treatment? The simple answer is that we know that the testing, discomfort, and pain of being treated and cared for, is for our good. We believe

that the outcome of treatments and caring attention will result in a stronger body and better health. It is no different when God allows suffering and testing to enter our lives.

Trials and suffering are tools by which God helps us to become stronger and trust more in His provision. There are several human tendencies that we must resist when going through trials. It is all too easy to consider times of testing as something negative. We are prone to become defeated. We forget God's sovereignty and the hope of our salvation. We forget that we are strangers in our journey through this world. We focus on the temporary and lose sight of the eternal. We forget that when our faith is tested, hope will triumph over trouble.

Another battle with the flesh is to have pity parties in our head. We focus on ourselves instead of Christ and our salvation. Pity is a path to a descending spiral of harmful thinking that keeps us from seeing God's grace and goodness in the midst of testing. When this happens, we lose our sense of joy and understanding of God's purposes in suffering. We focus on the pain and hurt rather than the greater purposes God has for us.

Another human tendency in suffering is to have unbiblical expectations when it comes to testing and trials. Our flesh has an expectancy for an absence of trials in this life. Our hope is to avoid the pain and suffering that often comes with the trials of life. We forget that they are the means by which God allows our faith to be revealed and our faith to be strengthened. We also have a wrong expectation that trials will come and go quickly. In God's plan, that may be true some of the time and for some people. But we must remember that our suffering does not always come with the relief or resolution that we desire. God is at work in our lives. And our hope and confidence must be in a future glory in the presence of Christ.

Let me wrap this up by contrasting God's way of dealing with suffering that we have seen in Peter's opening in his first letter. First, hope is key to dealing with suffering. We are to look beyond our present condition to the hope of our salvation and inheritance in Christ. We live with hope and joy because Christ has overcome our greatest enemies of sin and death. We rejoice in the midst of testing because our future is secure in heaven with Christ.

Second, we see that suffering is a help to us. We must view the fire of suffering as a way of to purify us from the corruption of sin and pride. Trials have a way of helping us value our faith. Suffering becomes a means to strengthen our faith and bring glory to God. Our salvation brings the promise that God keeps us and carries us through our suffering. His power will sustain our faith and give us strength to draw near to Him.

Lastly, we must go through testing with biblical expectations of suffering. As strangers to a hostile world, suffering is to be expected. We live in a fallen world that brings suffering to our physical bodies. Sin corrupts relationships and brings hurt and pain to our lives in profound ways. And as believers, the world will be in opposition to us. We may experience various levels of persecution and difficulty because the world does not accept Christ. Suffering and testing are a natural part of our lives. But as believers, we are to embrace trials because through them we demonstrate to others that Christ is more to us than all the comforts of this world.

Not that any of this comes naturally to us. But Christ, who is our strength, will surely sustain and keep us as we place our hope in Him. As children of God, we are called to stand in the power of the strength and grace He has given. Troubles may bring discouragement, but we will not lose faith in God. Suffering may crush us, but we cling to Christ our rock. Trials may cause us to doubt, but our trust in God will hold true. Hardship may cause us to long for the temporary comforts of this world, but we know that our hope is in the promises of an eternal home. May God be pleased to use our trials for the glory and honor of His name.

[Let's pray]

"Unless otherwise designated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved."