

Kept: Preservation of the Saints
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Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, I thank thee, O Lord, for this time that you have sanctified, that you have set apart. Lord, may it be for thy holy use. May you be pleased this hour, Lord, and the hour to come to meet us in our souls that thou would be pleased to reveal to us our standing with thee this day. O Lord, may you bless this time with the fullness of thy Spirit. May you search our hearts. May you reveal thy work. May you reveal, Lord, thy finished work. May you be pleased, Lord, to lead thy people unto thee this hour and the hour to come for succoring for nourishment, for love, for all, Lord, that thou has stored up in thyself. Lord, may we be led out of ourselves and led unto thy feet to be instructed by thee. Lord, I pray that you be upon me this hour, that you would discharge this burden that thou has put upon me and that thou would be pleased to deliver this message to the glorying of thee and thee alone. O Lord, search our hearts and reveal the true matter this day. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Please turn with me this morning to the first letter of Peter, chapter 1. By way of introduction, we will read the beginning of this chapter until we get to our text this morning where we will camp there as the Lord permits.

“1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,” and then our text this morning, “5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

I'll read that one more time. This is our text this morning, “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” A couple of weeks ago when the Pastor was preaching a message about what living in the kingdom of light

truly is, it was impressed upon me then in that hour and has stayed with me throughout that time what a difference it is in this life, how far the kingdom of heaven is from your head to your heart. There are many head professors out there. There are many people in this life that profess to know the living Lord. As we read this passage this morning, I'm struck by the particularness of the Lord's word. As I said, a few weeks ago when we looked at Romans 8:28, how particular that truth was to them who were called, to them who were chosen. The Lord's word is for his sheep and his sheep alone. There is a lot of feeding that goes by the word of religious right today. A lot of people will come to this book and they'll feed upon the words.

Today, I want to talk about the importance and what it means to be kept by the power of God. I want to refute the idea that many of us may have what that means and I want to look at what the word of God tells us what it means and may the Holy Spirit instruct us today, what is in our hearts, what is in our minds, what is our understanding of this Triune Lord. It is a difference of the heart and the head. When I read my dear brothers of old whether it be Philpot or Bradbury begin a couple of my favorites, they have a term that we call religionist of our day. They called them nominal professors. I read that all the time and finally I looked up what it meant. I thought I knew what it meant but do you know what nominal professor means? The word "nominal" means "in name only." That's what I want to talk to you about today. I want to talk to you about the word of God and where it sits with you. To the nominal professor of faith or religion, he receives the doctrine because it's God's word. You say, "Well, wait a minute. That's a good thing, right?" No, he receives the doctrine of all of the word of God because it is God's word but the living soul, the living soul that's been quickened into life, receives that which the Holy Spirit takes and reveals to his soul. It's not in the head. The head knowledge and the head understanding that we have of the gospel and the truths that are outlined in these Scriptures is just that. It will always stay in the head.

That's what a nominal professor is: it's somebody in name only and that's as far as it gets. "I'm a Christian. I love the Lord. I love the Triune God." What does it mean? Does it have any effect in your life to say that? Is it lived out in your soul? For the living soul, it is because it's Christ living in them, it's Christ working out of them. But to the nominal professor, he's satisfied with the dim view of the gospel blessings that are found here in the word. He looks at them and hears them and he says, "Oh, that's good. God loves me. Oh, Jesus Christ died for me." And on the surface you think, "Well, that's really good. That's really grand. That's a wonderful thing." Many came to Christ to hear his message. Many of them did but many of them stopped following him. The nominal professor always has this notional head knowledge of who the Lord is but the living soul can be satisfied with nothing, nothing short of the witness of Christ in his soul, in his very being. When he goes into the workplace, Christ is on his heart. When he goes out into the marketplace, Christ is on his heart. When he goes to vacation, Christ is on his heart. When he goes anywhere in this world, Christ is on his heart. Why? Because the Lord resides in him. It's not a notional thought or what we term today as a Sunday religion, that we come here and we sit around the word and we have a good couple of hours and we feel warm and fuzzy inside and then we go right back to the muck and the mire, we go

right back to our lives. What is that? It's defined as "in name only." It's a nominal belief. There is no heart work. There's no soul work.

When we come to this doctrine or this truth today of being kept by the power of God, the nominal professor will come to this and he says, "I'm satisfied with that. I read that right there and I say I could myself in that number. I count myself as being kept by the power of God. I am kept. I know it. I understand it as a doctrine that if the Lord takes his hand off of me, I'm plunged headlong into whatever." But as I said, what we have here is a notional understanding. We all can have that understanding. Children, listen: you are all being raised to have a notional understanding. You have all been indoctrinated upon the truth. You all can sit here and say, "Yes, I understand what it is to be kept." But the nominal professor has no knowledge, no knowledge of the dangers and the difficulties that are in the way of the child of God in this life. He lives above it. He lives above it because it hasn't touched his soul. He's not exercised in the dangers that lie so next to us. Not only next to us, but are in our face, that are right next to us every hour of the day. That's what an exercised soul is. The child of God on this earth will always be an exercised soul.

Are you starting to understand the difference between a nominal knowledge and soul work? I can't impress that upon you, only the Holy Spirit can examine your heart today and say, "Listen, what is my life? Do I just profess to know these things or am I exercised in them?" That was one of the things that I took from that sermon that was so impressed upon me, that kingdom life is truly a day-by-day life experience, it's experiential living. It's experiential living what these words mean. It's not just picking up your Bible and reading it every day. What does it say to your soul? Does the Holy Spirit take these words and make them alive in your soul? Does he question you? When you look into these words, is it a mirror to your soul? Is it? Are there any dangers to you in this life? Are there any agonizing fears that you go through? And I'm not talking about the fear of snakes or the fear of death, I'm talking about a fear of you being lost, a fear that Christ is not in your soul. Is that fear present? For the nominal professor, it never has been and it won't be unless the Lord opens his heart to what truth really means.

But the living soul, the living soul arrives at this truth of being kept but do you know how he gets there? How he's brought there? Because it's a necessity. It's a necessity to his soul. He has to know that he's kept because he falls so much in this life. Sin is revealed to him as being terrible. Sin is revealed to him as being an enemy to his Lord. The enemies that we will discuss today, the world, Satan and the flesh, are dire enemies. We could stand up here until we're blue in the face and tell you about these enemies but until you experience them, there's an emptiness. There's an emptiness in your soul. The living quickened soul knows that by necessity this doctrine, this truth of being kept by the power of God is precious to him because he knows if not kept, if not kept by the power of God, the allurements of this world, the entrapments of this world, the desires of this world, he's going to run headlong into them. That's the reality of the necessity of needing Christ in the soul.

And not only is it a necessity but it's suitable. Do you understand that? The child of God's soul is conformed to Christ where he's suitable to him in everything. When the child of God goes into this life whether it's the work life, whether it's the social life, Christ is suitable to his soul. Not the world. Not the treasures of this world. Christ is suitable. I read that in a sermon last night where Philpot was speaking about Moses and he said, "I want you to understand what Moses came from." Moses who was the second in command if Pharaoh would have died, Moses would have led all of Egypt. All of that at his finger tips. But he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater than all of that. Do you know what that is? That's a living soul. That's a quickened soul, quickened to Christ. A weaned soul.

The treasures of this world will get me nothing. The desires and the fulfillment in this life gets me nothing. It doesn't fill my soul and it's surely not going to be there for me when my life is over. How much do you think of that? How much is that impressed upon you? Is Christ Jesus and the Triune Lord suitable to your soul? Does it suit you that he is your life? Your walk? Your everything? And the easiest test to that is: what if you lost the dear thing that's so dear to you that comes from this world today? How would you be without it? And we all have them. We all have our indulgences in this world, in this life. Is Christ suitable to your soul?

This truth that kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time is a truth that the Lord brings to his children throughout their lives. It's not learned just once. It's applied by faith to the soul. That's the dire need. That's the necessity of this hour we're talking about today. Is Christ suitable? Is the Lord suitable? The keeping of the Lord, what does that mean? We all have to answer before the Scriptures this morning, who are kept, are you one who is kept and how are you kept? How are you kept from the world? How are you kept from Satan? How are you kept from yourself? Do you experience that keeping? Enemies, that's what we're kept from. Kept here means garrisoned. It means put a hedge about. The Greek word for "kept" right here is "guarded." Guarded. Who are guarded by the power of God.

Against what? Against what enemy? Who is your enemy today? Is the world your enemy? That's the first one we look at because to the nominal professor, again, this enemy is just here. It's just in his head. It's not in his soul. It can hear a message like this and he can assent to it and say, "Yes, the world is an enemy. I keep hearing that. The world is an enemy. The world is an enemy." But the world is no enemy to a nominal professor. Do you know why? Because he's not an enemy to the world. It's a two-way street. The world is not an enemy to a nominal professor because he's not an enemy to the world. He has no tender conscience to know that he can be trapped by it. None. There is no worry. There is no quickening there. There is no, "Hey, watch out for the world. It can entice me." He lives above it. "I've got the world right where I want it. I've got it by the tail," and he may even say, "Because my Lord conquered it. My Lord put it under his feet." We're going to get to that. No conscience to know that he's trapped by it because he and the world are agreed upon matters. Think about that a minute. How much do you agree with this world? How much do you agree with those that are in this world? How much do you agree and walk together with the things in this world?

I think the saddest point about the nominal professor is that his religion does not offend the world. How well do you fit in? How well do you fit in this world because your religion, what's in your head, does not offend this world? Because if it is in your heart, it will offend this world. It was at enmity against our Lord. It will be at enmity against you. What kind of profession do we have? But the nominal professor or the religionist or the empty professor, whichever way you want to look at it, he's not touched by the finger of God. He's not touched by the finger of God in his soul to know that the world is an enemy because it was an enemy to the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, to the living soul, the child of God who has been quickened, the child of God who is zealous for the name of his Lord, when he lives in this world and he partakes in this world and he goes out in this world, the world is not something he wants more of.

I was reading another sermon by Philpot this week and that one actually was on "love not the world," and one of the comments he made about the world and the child of God was that the child of God, as far as the world is concerned, should not have anymore dealing with the world than absolutely necessary. We must work in it, we must buy groceries in it, we must go and get gas in it, we must do things like that but where is your heart? Where is your soul? What is void in you that desires something more than Christ because he's not found in the world. The living soul knows perfectly well that unless he's kept by the power of God through his faith, the allurements, the desires, all the lusts that are in this world will get him. They'll trap him. He must be kept. Kept from this powerful enemy.

Two verses this morning about this enemy, two of the most, I think, that are the most powerful ones against the world. Galatians 1:4 says this, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." Oh, I hope the Holy Spirit opens our soul to that and bares our soul to that word right now. Look at the price. As Paul wrote this, he said, "This present evil world and for you to partake in the world, it cost the blood of Christ." That's what this says. "Who gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world." Deliver us. He didn't give his life, he didn't pay the ultimate price so that we can indulge in the world but to deliver us. And look what he calls it, "from this present evil world." How true that is. This is a powerful, powerful verse if the Holy Spirit brings it home to your soul. As he opens our eyes to the dying Lamb upon the cross, as he opens our hearts to the painful death, the sacrificial death that was made and for what? What was it for? Just a nominal notion in your head again that he died for my sins? Or does it produce agony in your soul when you sin against this Lord? When you find yourself backsliding? When you find yourself reaching out to the world? Is there anything in you that's a conflict? Or, as I said, you just live up there in your pride and you're so far above all of this it can't touch you. That's what this word today, "who are kept by the power of God," that's why it's particular. We may all lay claim to it. We may all, "Yeah, I'm kept. I'm kept." Are you kept? Are you truly kept? Are you kept by the power of God? Are you kept from the world?

And of course, 1 John 2:15. We can all quote at least the first part of this verse, can't we? "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." And if that's not plain enough, the second part is, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." John could not have said that any plainer. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. That encompasses every bit of it. I don't care how you try to justify what you do, as you stand before the Lord, as you stand in your conscience and it may just be in your mind. That's the problem. In our mind, we can justify anything. We can find any Scripture, the devils knew the Scriptures. We can do anything to justify sin in our mind but to the living soul, that's the one I'm talking to today, the living soul. The living soul can't do that. The living soul feels his need for his Savior and his need not to offend his Savior. His need not to betray his Savior. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. That's pretty straight and to the point. If your soul desires the world, it's because the love of the Father is not in you. Absolute fact of the Scriptures.

But there are two other enemies: Satan being one of them. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:14 that this enemy comes as an angel of light. What does that mean? Have you experienced this enemy come to you as an angel of light? I jotted down some things here. You know, this enemy is always trying to cast spells upon our eyes. He's always trying to throw something in our eyes that's going to get our eyes off of the truth. He tempts us to call evil good and good evil. Now think about that a minute. Isaiah put it this way, he said, "bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." Think about that. Satan tries to take the things that Christ has shown, that Christ has said and make them into something evil. You say, "Well, I would be aware of that, I think. I think I would know," but he tells us that sin can't harm us. He tells us, "Oh, it's just a little sin," or that it's not sin. He tells us that gratification is good. Remember, he was more subtle than anything. He tells us that pleasure is allowable, "Oh, the Lord, he wouldn't have made us this way if he didn't want us to pleasure ourselves this way." That's what I mean, he turns evil into good and good into evil.

What about holiness? He replaces the holiness of Christ and the godliness that's spoken of in this word by creature holiness. That's subtle in itself. No longer are you looking to what the Lord's life was or what the Lord's example is, or what the Lord's power, what the Lord has done, what the Lord's finished work is, you're looking at your own. You're looking at your own righteousness. You're looking at your own holiness. You're looking at your own way. You're looking at your own path. "This has to be good, Lord. Let me tell you why. Oh, the door must be open because it hasn't closed yet so I'm just going to keep going this way." Have you ever considered why the door is open? We can't do that without him. Totally dependent.

But, you know, this enemy also could come as a roaring lion. This enemy comes at times to say, "Curse God and die." This enemy comes at times and produces some very hard thoughts of the Lord. You might be having them right now. You may be having them right now because of the things that have been said today. You might be having them right now because you reject the Scriptures; you reject what godliness is; you reject the narrow way because of that love and that bind that the enemy has over us. So I say, "Have you ever realized how strong this enemy is?" Of course, the answer to that is no.

Not unless the Lord opens your eyes to it, to see that these enemies will carry your soul to hell.

And then the last enemy which I deem to be the worst enemy and that's the one within. Oh, all the justifying thoughts that we have, the carnal mind. The carnal mind that's at enmity. Has that ever sunk into you? That your carnal mind will never choose Christ? That your flesh will never do something holy? That that part of you will never seek the Lord? Will never seek what's glorifying to him? And that leads us to the next question: is there another part to you? Is there a new man? Is there a new creature in Christ Jesus? I can't answer that for you either because, you see, all of those notional thoughts and the things that we have in our mind, those nominal "in name only" things, they won't stand. They won't stand before this holy Lord. They won't stand. They'll be consumed in his wrath because the Lord rejects every form of worship that's not his. "They must worship me in spirit and in truth." You're not going to come to him with false worship. You're not going to come to him with a false notion that, "I can live on Sunday for a few hours and sit here and listen to this and then go out my way and go right back to the world where I'm comfortable." You will perish. It's just as plain and as sober as these Scriptures are.

That throws us back to this question this morning: are you kept? The keeping that Christ has done in your soul? I'm not talking about your walking across the street and you stop before a car hits you. I'm talking the Lord nurturing your soul to keep you from eternal damnation, keeping your soul from following down in this life these enemies that I just named. Oh, we're going to battle with those enemies and we're going to lose some of those battles but the Lord has won the war. The Lord is the revealer of himself. He's faithful. That's what the last part of this passage means. Which one of us in here can know the strength of sin that's within us if we've never been led captive by it? If we've never fell prey to it? None of us. You know, I say this reverently but this word of God here is full of sinners. It is. Their sins are put on paper. Their sins are put there right in front of us to see. Why? So we can point the finger at them? So we can say, "Oh, I'd never do that"? Well, you're a nominal professor. To show you that the Lord is faithful when we are not. The Lord saves to the uttermost and that he came to save sinners.

Now we need to talk about how we're kept. We're kept through faith, by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Faith, we know, is a gift of God. The faith of the Son of God is Christ himself. Think about how powerful that is. His faith is the grace in our soul to keep us. Think about that. Do you want to know if you're kept? You are a possessor of his faith. He has imparted that to you many times, over and over as he sees fit, to keep you from falling. His faith is the eye of our soul and it lays hold of Christ. It sees Christ in the marketplace. It sees Christ wherever we go. It sees Christ as the one not to offend. It sees Christ as the one to exalt. The faith of Christ hides us in Christ. He hides us in the cleft of the rock which is him. That's what being kept is.

Now, you might be with me and you might be sitting there saying, "Hold on a minute, I have a lot of trials in this life. I have a lot of fears. I have a lot of temptations. How is this being kept? How is this being kept when I have this life of what we heard a couple of weeks ago about tribulation? How is that being kept?" Well, dear ones, he doesn't keep us

from tribulation, he keeps us in the tribulation. Isaiah 24:15 says this, “Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires, even the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea.” Glorify ye the Lord in the fires. Do you know what that tells me? Have you ever been through the fires? Have the fires that the Lord has led you to, have they tried that faith? Have they revealed the faith of the Son of God? Has he shown you that he has kept you in those fires? Isaiah 43:2 says, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” That's the Lord keeping us in the tribulation. That's the Lord keeping us in the storm. I've said this all day, it's not a notional thought that he kept me from this and hours later, “Oh, that's nice. Yeah, the Lord kept me from that.” Oh, but when he reveals what he's kept you from, are you as relieved when he keeps you from a sin? Are you relieved when he keeps you from danger? I'm talking soul now, soul danger.

Isaiah 48:10 says, “Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.” Wow. Maybe you don't want any of this Lord who keeps his people in the furnace of affliction. Maybe this is too hard of a path for you. Listen, I understand that thought. I have that thought a lot. I have that thought a lot. David had that thought a lot. My wife and I have been reading through the Psalms every day as the Lord gives us that time and David, too, looked many times out at the enemies and looked at the prosperity of the wicked and he would fall prey to that at times and say, “Lord, how long will they prosper?” as to say, “I'm not prospering. I'm the one that's sorrowing here and I'm a king.” You and I, we're priests and we're kings if we be the children of God but yet we suffer because that's the way. That's the way of the cross. That's the way that the Lord has ordained in this life.

John 16:33 says, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” How can we be of good cheer? Because he succors us in the trial. He keeps us by the power of himself through faith unto salvation. And listen, salvation was done before the foundation of the world. Is that what it means? Is that what it means that it keeps pointing to a past event? No. He keeps revealing to us what he saves us from. He saves us from ourselves. He saves us from this wicked world. He saves us from Satan. He has saved us from certain death and he has saved us from sin. That's what being kept is. It's in the soul.

Finally, Acts 14:22, “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” As was said, I echo whole-heartedly, we are living in the kingdom of God. We must through much tribulation. It will be, dear ones. Listen, don't start ticking him off. Don't start taking score. “Yes, I've had this bodily affliction. Yes, I've had this loss of money. Yes, I've had this loss of house. Yes, I've had this go wrong for me.” Oh, we can make so many mistakes when we talk about experience. We think that's experience. When God brings a whirlwind, that's an experience. When he brings a hardship, that's experience. When he brings something that's very sorrowful to us, that's experience. That's not experience. It's only experience when you experience Christ in the soul. The Lord brings the tribulation to experience Christ in the soul. That's what keeping is.

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” What about that last phrase? Let me say a few things about it. “Ready to be revealed in the last time.” I love that word “ready.” When it refers to my Lord and it can only refer to my Lord who is an ever present help; who is always ready to succor; who is always ready to reveal. “Revealed in the last time.” Peter wrote this right on the cusp of 70 AD. His wrote this between 65 and 69 AD so, yes, it was a very present reality to him. It was a very present reality of that great tribulation that was coming, to use that word. And it was. But, you know, what does that mean for you and me today? Because we're not as we've been hearing, we're not facing that as an event to look forward to but, you know what? Presently, we are. Presently, we live in the kingdom. Presently, we have tribulation. Presently, we deal with these things.

And the Lord says this keeping is “ready to be revealed in the last time.” I desire in my soul to be revealed the last time, the next time and the time after that because that's needful because we're going to have those times in this life. Not just once as I said earlier. This truth of the Scriptures here for the child of God is a living truth. He lives in this reality as the faith of the Son of God reveals it, that it's a daily keeping, it's a daily nurturing and it speaks of the faithfulness of Christ. It's experiential. It's a daily visitation of the Lord for the child of God needs him every day and every hour in his soul.

The last place I want to take you to is John 10. Let me read something to you in John 10 to accentuate this point on keeping. Look at verse 24, “Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.” There are those notional religionists again. “Just tell us plainly. We'll believe it. Just tell us plainly. We'll hear what you say and we'll process it in our mind and that's where it will stay.” And “Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not,” because faith is a gift of God, “the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not,” because faith comes by the power of God, “because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” That's keeping there. That's the power of God to keep us from being plucked out of the hands of our Lord by this world, by Satan or by the flesh. Are those enemies a reality to you? Or do you take something like this and say, “There you go, the Lord said no one would ever pluck we out of his hands so I don't have to worry about anything and I won't worry about anything.” “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.” How many stones do you take up? Are you taking up stones now in your mind to cast them against the truth of this word today?

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” Because that is a particular truth to a particular people for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the glory of the Triune Lord and he will not have us to worship anything else and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, may you add thy power and thy clarity and, Lord, may you search our hearts. Reveal to us this hour, Lord, if we are kept. Lord, what that means. Make a present reality of how these enemies are to us. Make them enemies, Lord. Only you can. Only you can take the veil off our eyes to show us, Lord, the necessity and the suitableness of thee over all things in this world. Bless this word, Lord, as it pleases you to the glory of thee. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.