

A Gift of a Lifetime, part 2

1 Peter 1:3-12

(preached Pine Grove 8/4/19 Sun PM)

Introduction

Take your Bibles and 1 Peter 1..

We are really just beginning this letter that Peter wrote to the church in 64 AD.

He was trying to encourage believers who were struggle with Roman persecution.

And he wanted them to find strength by pointing them to the reality of their salvation..

Let's read this to start tonight beginning in verse 1 down to verse 12..

***1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who reside as aliens, scattered
throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia,
and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the
foreknowledge of God the Father, by the
sanctifying work of the Spirit, [a]to obey Jesus
Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace
and peace [b]be yours in the fullest measure.
3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy***

has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various [c]trials, 7 so that the [d]proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which [e]is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and [f]full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of [g]your souls.

10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, 11 [h]seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories [i]to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to [j]look.

Cars today are incredible.

When I was a kid, a car with all the features simply meant air conditioning, leather seats, power windows and locks, and even power steering.

Yet, today I want you to listen to some features offered in today's new cars and trucks..

Massaging seats.

You heard that right.

You think heated and cooled seats are nice, there are now seats that will massage your back while you drive.

There are also now a feature called adaptive cruise control.

In cars that have it, there are sensors installed in the front of the car measuring the distance and speed of cars ahead.

If those cars slow, the cruise control will automatically adjust.

It even offers feature when you are in bumper to bumper traffic.

You set it and it will use the accelerator and brake on its own to keep you from having to stop and go yourself.

For those in colder climate, a new feature on some cars are heated steering wheels.

Then there is the nudging seat feature.

Mercedes has developed a seat that will actually fold and move your body to the center of the car if a side impact is about to occur.

According to their engineers, the nudge seat lessens the impact but pushing passengers away from the impact moments before it occurs..

Needless to say, car features are too numerous to name.

The same could be said about all the features that accompany our salvation.

Too often, we sell the salvation of God short.

Too often, we forget the blessings of what it means to be saved.

Our salvation comes with many features and blessings and realities, but we fail to take advantage

of them and we fail to declare these features to the world..

Well, the opening 11 verses of 1 Peter details the glorious realities and features of salvation.

Yes, salvation is the glorious gift of God to man, but what makes it so grand and how should we live as a result of enjoying God's gift to us.

Well, Peter is going to help us in both of those areas..

Last week, we looked at what we called the realities of salvation.

What are some truths, some foundations, some facts about salvation.

And we noted this..

Salvation brings the new birth.

God doesn't just forgive our sin, he changes our life.

If you think about it, God could have just provided a safety net with salvation.

But understand.

He saved us and provides a safety net, but he also how to walk the tightrope.

We won't die and go to hell because we are saved, but we also learn how to live a life pleasing to God.

Saved people are changed people.

We have been born again.

Salvation also brings hope.

In a very real sense, the world around us changes when we are saved.

We still live in the midst of sin and despair in a fallen world, but we are no longer a part of that world.

We have hope.

We have hope in the future, but we also have hope in the present.

That is why Peter calls the hope of salvation a "living" hope.

We live with hope.

We are people of despair.

Yes, we feel the weight of a sinful world, but we know the hope of a God who rules and reigns and saves.

We also spoke of the great reward of salvation, which is probably where most people's minds go to when they think of being saved.

And the reality is that heaven is a reward for those who are saved.

We will go a place that is undefiled, imperishable, and never fades away.

Our great reward for repenting and trusting in Christ is spending an eternity in a place that is free of sin, free of rust, and free from destruction.

And the final reality of salvation is that it is not dependent upon us.

As God chose us in the past, he saves us in the present, and he keeps us to the future.

Romans 8 puts it this way..

***28 And we know that [k]God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of***

His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

That is the great chain of salvation from God's perspective.

God chose, God saves, God will glorify.

Now to be clear.

Man is responsible to believe.

And man must keep believing.

The great paradox of salvation is that God is sovereign but man is fully responsible for his choices.

Yes, God keeps us, but we also continue on in the faith..

That is the great paradox that the Bible teaches, and very frequently those two truths are taught side by side..

Let me take you to a passage and there are many like this, but this is a great example..

John 6:41-47

Jesus is out ministering during his time on earth and the Jewish leaders are grumbling..

41 Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." 42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?" 43 Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

There is another clear statement on God's sovereignty in salvation.

No one gets saved unless God calls him.

This is Jesus saying this.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

That is clear as a bell.

God's chosen are the only ones who can come to Christ.

God's elect are the only ones who can come to Christ.

And that was settled in eternity past.

And Jesus affirms that here..

But let's keep reading..

45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. 46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. 47 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

So Jesus is clear that no one comes to him unless God has elected and salvation, but then he ends with..

He who believes has eternal life.

Right there in a span of a few verses is the sovereignty of God in salvation and the responsibility of man to believe.

And Jesus never reconciles the those two truths.

He tells the Pharisees that they can't be saved unless God calls them but a few moments, He says that they need to believe in Him.

I follow that same model in preaching.

I affirm God's sovereignty in salvation.

It is all over the Bible.

Election, predestination, choosing, calling...

These are how salvation is described.

But while I affirm that truth, I also call people to repent and believe.

I never stand and tell people...

"Well, good luck."

"I hope you are chosen and elect."

I have been here for 5 years and yall have never heard that out of me and you never will.

Instead, I beg with repent and believe the gospel.

I plead with people to put their trust in Christ.

I urge people to turn from sin and turn to Christ.

No, do I understand that no one will do that unless God draws them?

You bet I understand.

But I also understand that man is responsible to believe.

I also understand that I have no idea who God has chosen or elected for salvation.

Ultimately, I have to preach as Christ preached.

I have to affirm the sovereignty of God, but I also have to affirm the responsibility of man.

Both are equally true and necessary in gospel preaching...

The only problem is when preachers get out of balance..

Some never call people to believe and put too much emphasis of God's sovereignty.

And others bypass God's sovereignty and put salvation completely in the hands of man.

Both are equally harmful.

Instead, I will stick with Jesus' model of ministry and hold sovereignty and responsibility side by side.

Now, that was a little rabbit trail, but I realize that the sovereignty of God in salvation is hard for people to grasp.

It is hard to understand the nature of election and God's choosing of people for salvation.

It took me a while to understand, but ultimately, you can't get around it in Scripture.

God is sovereign over everything, and that certainly includes those who will be saved.

We may not be able to make sense of it, but we better not oppose it or change it to how we would like it to be..

God can do as He pleases and then even includes the issue of salvation.

Now speaking of salvation, let's get back into our text.

We see the realities of salvation, but let's look at what we will call the results of salvation...

How does the truth of salvation impact our lives as believers...

II. The Results of Salvation (6-9)

Let's begin in verse 6 tonight...

6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various [c]trials, 7 so that the [d]proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which [e]is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

The first result of salvation is rejoicing..

That makes sense to us.

Salvation brings joy to our hearts.

I will never forget the joy when the Lord saved me.

I was on cloud 9.

I told everyone.

It was an overwhelming sense of relief and joy..

And so as Peter begins verse 6, he writes,..

In this you greatly rejoice

What is the "this" that we are rejoicing in?

We are rejoicing in the truths of salvation that he already presented.

We rejoice that we chosen, that we are born again, that we have hope, that we have an inheritance, and that we are kept safe and saved by God.

Everything in that list should bring joy to our hearts.

But that joy is mixed with sorrow..

And what is the sorrow?

In the sorrow of being saved but living in a fallen world.

For those reading Peter's letter.

They were safe and sound for all eternity, but they were very much in danger in the world in which they lived.

This is the great paradox of being a believer.

We have 100s of reasons to rejoice to go along with 100s of reasons for sorrow.

Peter writes that believers are often distressed by various trials..

The word for various in the Greek is poikilos.

It means that is diverse.

It was used to describe something that varied greatly.

Greeks used to describe the spots on a leopard.

They are all spots but they are not all the same.

They also used it to describe the patterns in a piece of marble..

The point is simple.

This world presents trials to the believer, and no two trials are exactly the same.

One day your health is bad.

One day a relationship in your life is bad.

One day the money is tight.

One day the job is stressful.

One day a loved one is sick.

One day someone sins against you.

There are trials as various as a leopard's spots in the life of a believer..

Yet, we rejoice in our salvation.

We rejoice on one hand because things will not always be this way.

For Peter's readers, Nero is not going not to be their forever king.

For us today, we rejoice because there is a better word coming.

But we also rejoice in trials because those trials prove our faith.

In fact, that is what Peter is talking about here..

Verse 7 says that trials serve to prove our faith.

What does that mean?

Simply put, trials prove our faith when we go through them and our faith is still in tact on the other side.

Peter uses the example of gold.

To purify gold, you heat it up.

The gold doesn't change.

The melted state is still the same amount of gold, it is just in a purer form..

The impurities have simply been burned off.

The same is true of our faith.

Trials and sufferings and afflictions purify our faith.

They burn off the impurities of our faith.

They don't change the amount of our faith.

They don't destroy our faith.

They purify it....

IF...

BIG IF...

If our faith is the real thing.

Look, when you experience trouble and you endure it and you arrive on the other side of it, your faith is changed by the trouble.

But it is changed in a good way if you are truly saved.

Look, there are people who call themselves believers only to lose their faith when trouble comes.

The reality is that they were saved.

They didn't lose their faith because they never had it.

That may sound harsh to say but it true.

If trials destroy your faith, your faith isn't genuine.

Look, the trouble of living as a Christian in the Roman Empire in the 1st century was real trouble.

The threat of being killed for your faith was real.

The threat of being tortured for your faith was real.

The threat of being mocked for your faith was real.

But all those threats were blessings as well.

They were blessing because they revealed the true believers.

No one is going to be mocked and threatened and tortured for something they don't truly believe.

Many so called Christians have given in under duress and distress but those who are truly saved make it through the trouble with a purified faith.

Look, you are seeing this in our world today.

It is not becoming more costly to be a Christian.

Now that the culture has embraced homosexuality and transsexuality and feminism, it is going to cost people something to stand in opposition to either.

As a result, people who call themselves Christians now face a couple options..

One option is to renounce your faith.

Just recently, a former pastor of a mega church in Maryland announced that he was leaving the faith.

Joshua Harris is his name, and you can read his story on the internet..

But long story short, Joshua Harris pastored a large church in Maryland for over 10 years.

He was a conservative Bible teaching pastor.

He wrote a very influential book on Christian dating which sold over a million copies.

However, 3 years ago, he said he was wrong about what he wrote in his book.

Then a few months later, he left the ministry to go back to seminary.

Then in mid July of this year, he announced that he and his wife were divorcing.

Followed by this statement a few days later..

"The information that was left out of (the) announcement (about our divorce) is that I have undergone a massive shift in regard to my faith in Jesus. The popular phrase for this is deconstruction, the biblical phrase is falling away. By all the measurements that I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian (any longer). (I have also changed how I think about) the teaching of my books, my views of women in the church, and my approach to parenting."

And then he added this...

"To the LGBTQ+ community, I want to say that I am sorry for the views that I taught in my books and as a pastor regarding sexuality. I regret standing against marriage equality, for not affirming you and your place in the church, and for any ways that my writing and speaking contributed to a culture of exclusion and bigotry. I hope you can forgive me."

It is a sad story.

It an example of someone who went through the trials of the world's belittling of him, and instead of surviving the trial with a greater faith, Joshua Harris proved that his faith was real.

The great blessing of that (if there is a blessing) is that Joshua Harris now realizes that he was never a Christian.

He was never saved.

The trial purified him by showing that his the gold of his faith was actually fold's gold faith.

It looked like the real thing but it couldn't survive the fire of the world's trials.

Joshua Harris' story is known because he is well-known, but there are 1000s of stories like him.

And they are becoming more and more frequent in our world now the culture of our nation and world is opposed to the teachings of Christ.

The church will survive because Jesus said that it would.

But the church will continue to be purified more and more in years ahead.

The world sees it a people leaving the church.

We understand that this is simply the impurities in the church being burned off, and what we will find is that a lot of supposed “golden” faith was really fool’s gold.

Peter says we rejoice in our salvation because it reminds us that we are born again and have hope and will receive an inheritance.

But we also rejoice in our salvation as we endure the trials of the world and prove the genuineness of it.

One more thing to note tonight in at the end of verse 7..

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

Why do we value the proof of our faith?

Why is it a blessing to know that our faith and salvation are real?

Because the end result of that is the reward of an eternal inheritance..

But also there will be the reward of heavenly praise.

God is the only One deserving of praise, honor, and glory and He receives it on a continual...

But God will also offer praise and honor to those who have faith endures the trials of life..

Some argue whether the end of verse 7 is describing praise, glory, and honor that go to Christ when He returns or whether those 3 things are given to those who endure to the end.

I would say that the context of these verses is focused upon the believer.

In verse 3, Peter uses the word us..

In verse 4, we see the word you.

In verse 6, we see the word you twice.

In verse 7, we see the word your

Verse 8, the word you appears multiple times

Verse 9 uses the word your.

It seems that the focus of these verses is on the believing reader of this letter..

Which I why I think that of the rewards of true salvation is praise from God..

Now this doesn't mean that heaven is a place of man-centered praise.

Far from it.

Heaven is a place of God-centered praise..

Yet, that doesn't exclude believers from being praised by God.

“Well done good and faithful servant” is certainly a form of praise...

And I think we see that there will be honor offered to those whose salvation proves to be genuine.

So many people do all they can to earn the praise of men.

Some work overtime to receive a pat on the back from a boss.

Some sacrifice their own desires to earn the praise of family and friends.

Let me tell you church.

Don't kill yourself earning the praise and honor of people.

But I would tell you to give up everything in order to earn the praise and honor of God.

Those who salvation is tested and proven true will be those who are honored by the Lord at the appearing of Christ.

If there is one compliment that I want to hear, it is the Lord of all creation telling me that He is pleased with my faith.

Conclusion

We will have to finish up verses 8-12 next week..

Let'e end with a few thoughts.

1- Joy is the fruit of true salvation.

So many verses speak of the the joy of believers.

And there are many reasons to rejoice as a believer.

However, the primary reason for your joy is your salvation.

I say this based on Scripture, but no joy reveals no salvation.

How can a saved person live in misery?

They can't.

If you are saved, you have every reason to rejoice.

2 - Trouble is the fruit of the world.

Christians experience trials in this world.

It is unavoidable.

Yet, trouble doesn't remove the joy of salvation.

Trouble simply reveals the genuineness of salvation.

You will have trouble in the world.

The question is..

Will you have faith after the trouble is gone?

My prayer for you is that you will.

My prayer for us all is that we won't take for granted the salvation we have in Christ.

Let me offer this.

A regular part of your prayer life ought to time spent simply thanking God for the truth of salvation and all the blessings that go with it.

Let us pray.

III. The Renown of Salvation (10-12)