

1 Peter 1 (Part 2) :3-7 • Born Again to a Living Hope

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1 Peter, Chapter 1:3. We're going to read down through verse seven, so follow along with me as I read.

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.(ESV)

I'll have you stop there and let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we get into your word this morning, it is always our great need to call upon your Holy Spirit, to open our eyes, our ears, our hearts, to the things that you want to say today. So, we pray that you'll speak to us and minister your grace. We love you Lord, and we ask you to fill our hearts today in Jesus' precious name, Amen.

I want you, if you would, just for a moment to put yourself in Peter's place, because this was not an easy, necessarily, place to be because he's writing a letter to believers who are going through some really challenging times. They're being persecuted simply because they've put their faith in Jesus Christ.

So, I want you to think about what you would say if you wrote a letter to these people. How would you start it? What kind of things would you say in it? How would you encourage them in what they're going through? Would you just kind of say, “oh man, I'm really sorry you're going through that. We'll pray for you.”

Or would you tell them to write a letter to their senator? Maybe start a public protest? Well, it's interesting, you think about that, and you think, what would I say? And then we look at what Peter says in here, and what we're going to see throughout the course of this letter is that really, it's a very wonderful example

of how to address people who are going through really hard times. I mean, who are suffering, dealing with suffering and challenges because these people need a boost to their hope, and that's what he's going to do in this letter. And practically everywhere that we read, he's doing just that.

He will acknowledge their suffering. He's not going to downplay it or make it seem like it's not a big deal. He is going to acknowledge it, but he's also going to explain why they're suffering. And, that's always one of the biggest issues with people when they're suffering. They want to know why is this happening? When it comes to suffering for the Lord, that's a fairly easy one to answer. But he's also going to remind them, and this is very important too, that their suffering is a large part of what it means to simply be a believer, to simply be a child of God, to simply be someone who has declared their allegiance to and devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Suffering goes with that declaration, and that's something we don't always hear about. Or perhaps we need to be reminded more often about it because everybody who's suffering needs hope. They need to be reminded. And there's some great wisdom and great insight in this letter that is to be gained.

And we're going to see what that is here. I want you to notice the very first words that Peter gives here in verse 3. Verse 1 and 2 are really kind of just an introduction. That's what we covered last week. But as he gets into the letter here, he begins with the words, "*Blessed be*", or if you have an NIV, your Bible says, "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*".

And whenever you start a conversation about our salvation, which is what he's going to do here in these opening verses, it has to begin with praise to God. Because if we don't praise God, I mean He did all the work in your salvation. If you had anything to do with your salvation, I suppose we could begin by praising you. Hey, good job man. Good job being a righteous person. But that's not us, is it? We're not righteous people and we didn't do anything to earn our salvation. And so, when we're talking about salvation, we have to begin by praising God. And that's exactly what Peter does. He says, "*praise God*". We have to remember; we are just the happy recipients of what God has done by giving us salvation in Christ.

But I want you to recognize and really take note of the wording. Of Peter's praise here in verse three, because it really deserves our attention. He says, "*blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*", and I want you to see that He's not just our God and Father. He's also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's very significant, particularly in light of the fact that last week we were just talking about the Trinity. You guys remember last week I was talking about how in the first couple of verses Peter used that Trinitarian kind of statement. You guys remember. It was in verse 2. Look with me. Look with me earlier in your Bible in verse 2, remember he said, he talked about according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, how we've been chosen *“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ.”*

And we discussed the Trinity last Sunday and we talked about how the Bible reveals that there is one God, but three persons who make up the one God. That is the biblical idea of the Trinity. And so, we talked about the fact that in, in the Trinity we see that we, we have co-equal persons who are all God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Three persons, one God. Don't ask me to explain it to you. I can't in any sort of a comprehensive or comprehensible way. But we talked about those things. And now just another verse later, Peter, in verse 3 tells us that God, the Father is also the God of Jesus, our Lord Jesus.

And that just really tweaks a lot of people. I got to tell you right now. I mean, a lot of people really messes with their mind this whole idea that Jesus is God and yet the Father is his God, and they're kind of like, okay, how exactly does that work? And the deity of Jesus is an ongoing challenge. In fact, one of the most common questions that I get by email has to do with people working through that very issue, that very question.

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“If Jesus is God, why do we see Him praying to God?”

Here's one of the questions I get quite often. If Jesus is God, why do we see him praying to God? Have you ever had anybody ask that question of you? Yeah, it's one of those things that we need to be able to respond to. When I get a common question, I usually put it in my blog so that I can refer people to it.

In fact, [here's what the blog page looks like](#). And the question this person asked was, if Jesus is equal to God and is God, then why does he pray to God?

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Q&A: If Jesus is equal to God and is God, then why does He pray to God?



QUESTION: "If Jesus is equal to God then why does He pray to God?"

There's nothing surprising about struggling with the mystery and majesty of the incarnation, but the question itself *assumes* several things. Here's one of the biggest:

Assumption: Prayer implies subordination. Subordination implies inferiority. Therefore, if Jesus prayed to the Father He was subordinate and therefore inferior to the Father.

But here's what people forget:

1. As the Son of Man, Jesus willfully subordinated Himself to the Father. (See John 14:28 and

About Pastor Paul



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And frankly, it's a good question. Whenever you have a good question, you've got to go back to the beginning. And that's what we do when we go to John's Gospel.

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John 1:1 (ESV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And I'm not going to have you turn there, but I'm going to show you here, John 1:1, which starts with, "*In the beginning*", and he's going to talk to us about Jesus, but he's not going to refer to him as Jesus. He's going to start by referring to Him as the Word. And he says there "*In the beginning was the Word and the*

Word was with God. And the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”

Four things I want to bring out about those first couple of verses in John chapter 1, very important things. The very first thing is we see that the Word was in the beginning, and that means from all eternity, from the beginning of the beginning. Really fundamentally, there is no beginning. That word is kind of put there for you and me because like we said in the past, we're the prisoners of time, not God.

But in the beginning, was okay, the Word, and we're also told here that the Word was with God. Okay, well, it's understandable, I guess. Then he tells us in this mind-bending sort of a verse, the Word was God.

That's what John's saying, right? Isn't that what you see there? The Word was God. And then John does this interesting sort of a thing where he breaks the rules of grammar. Because you have to understand that Word is what we call neuter in grammatical language. It doesn't have gender, it doesn't have personhood, right?

And yet John goes on and he applies the masculine personal pronoun to the Word and says He was in the beginning with God. Okay, well that's interesting. I don't know that it really, I mean, it's starting to tell us some things, but we need more information.

So, we go on to the next verse and we see that all things were made through Him, and we're talking about the Word now that we've already recognized and affirmed as with a masculine pronoun.

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John 1:3 (ESV)

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Well, what did we learn here? The Word created all things. Now at this point, somebody might take offense or issue with that statement and say, “Well now wait just a minute here, Pastor Paul, I’ve got a Bible too. And I go back to Genesis 1:1 and it tells me in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”.

Exactly. And how did He do it? He spoke it into being and God said, “*let there be*”. And it was. Well, what comes out of your mouth when you speak? Your

word. Same thing with God. His Word went forth and created all things. The Word is the creator. Okay, well this is what John is telling us. *“All things were made through Him and without Him was not any thing made that was made.”(ESV)*

It's interesting. We've learned some interesting things about this Him whom John refers to as the Word, but John still hasn't given us the identity of the Word. We know, but he hasn't told us yet. For that we've got to skip down to verse 14 where he says:

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John 1:14 (ESV)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Well, we know this is talking about Jesus. And we notice also that John in the course of those verses, goes from referring to Jesus as *“the Word”* to coming over here and saying, *“begotten of the Father.”*

Right? So what happened between referring to Jesus as the Word and referring to Him as the begotten Son from the Father? What happened? Well, the incarnation happened. And the incarnation is the word that we use to describe God becoming a man in the person of Jesus Christ. When the Holy Spirit moved upon Mary and she conceived apart from any human conception, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. So, what we have here, is God in the person of Jesus Christ becoming a human being. And so, in his humanity, God the Father became His God. I know it's kind of a mind-bending sort of a thing, but it's something God told us was even going to happen in the Old Testament, Psalm chapter 2.

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Psalm 2:7(ESV)

I will tell of the decree: the Lord said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you.”

And what that verse tells you is that there was a point in time when God the Word became God the Son. *“Today I have begotten you.”* One of the reasons I'm pointing this out to you is because that there are a good many Christians who believe in a teaching, I don't even know if you would call it a doctrine, I

suppose you would. It's called the Eternal Sonship of Jesus. And I'm not necessarily going to argue with anybody about it, but I don't believe it. I don't believe in the eternal sonship of Jesus. I believe this because John calls him the Word. He doesn't refer to Him as Jesus prior to the incarnation.

He says from the beginning, the Word was with the Father, and the Word was God. So you see, it doesn't matter. Jesus is and always has been God. But He from all eternity was the Word of God. He's still the Word of God. John in the Book of Revelation says, when he sees Jesus returning to the earth, what's written on his side? The Word of God. He is the living Word of God, always will be. He has now just been made human. So, you know, this is the relationship that we're talking about that Peter is dealing with here in between verses 1 and 2 where he talks about the Trinity and then gets into verse 3 where he talks about God the Father as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's how that relationship got going. Let me show you how the writer of Hebrews kind of explains it. Now he's quoting Old Testament here, but he begins by saying telling us how God the Father speaks of God the Son.

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Hebrews 1:8-9 (ESV)

But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

This is a fascinating passage because in it, God, the Father refers to the Son as God and then says, your God has anointed you. Okay, I'm not going to try to tell you how, explain all this to you from the standpoint of comprehending it. All I'm telling you is this is what's revealed in the Word of God and if it messes with your mind, so be it. I say that because there's a lot of people out there who say, "If I can't understand it, I'm not going to believe it." Well, listen, we don't believe things in the Bible because they're comprehensible. We believe them because they are revealed. And there's a big difference.

There's a lot of things in the Bible that are comprehensible. I can figure some of those things out even with my pea brain but there's a great deal that I can't, but I don't reject it. See if somebody goes around and says, "I reject that because I can't understand it", that's arrogance and pride. Okay. In other words, "God

better be understandable by my brain, or it isn't true". Well, that's a problem. All right?

I want you to notice as we read on, as Peter begins this word of praise, blessed be, praise be to God and so forth. We're going to look here and see what the praise is based on. He says, again verse 3, "*according to his great mercy.*". If you underline things in your Bible, that's probably a good thing to underline, "*according to his great mercy.*"

That's how Peter starts off here. He's about to talk about all the good things that we have in Christ. He's about to talk about the blessings of our salvation. What is it predicated on? It's predicated upon the great mercy of God. I want to remind you of something about mercy. Mercy is defined as not getting what you deserve. Because the bottom line is we are all under the curse of sin, but in Jesus, we don't get or receive that curse because of what Jesus did for us on the cross and our acceptance of it.

But that doesn't change the fact that we still frankly deserve it. But because of God's mercy. We don't get it. And I find mercy to be one of those interesting things related to God's nature that we not only have a hard time understanding, but people have a hard time accepting. I find people have a hard time accepting God's mercy. I talk to people on a regular basis who are going through their Christian life believing that they are on God's last nerve. And they are just one sin away from God, turning around and saying, "That's it. You're done. I'm finished with you." And they literally go through their lives thinking that's the way it is with God. And that is kind of their relationship with God. And yet, let me show you what A.W. Tozer writes about the mercy of God:

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Mercy is an attribute of God, an infinite and inexhaustible energy within the divine nature, which disposes God to be actively compassionate. Nothing that has occurred or will occur in heaven or earth, or hell can change the tender mercies of our God. Forever His mercy stands, a boundless, overwhelming immensity of divine pity and compassion. – A. W. Tozer

Does that sound like that kind of rings true in your understanding of God's mercy? I find that for most people it does not. We don't go around talking about God's boundless, overwhelming immensity of divine pity and compassion. We often talk most of the time about God's judgment. And, his justice is very, is equally as much an attribute as his mercy. But do we understand mercy?

Because Peter begins here saying again in verse 3, “*according to his great mercy.*” And then he goes on to say, and I want you to notice what he goes on to say, “*He has caused us to be born again to a living hope.*” And the reason I'm taking my time with verse 3, you guys, is because it's so critical that you understand what Peter is saying.

I want you to notice that he says, “*according to his great mercy, he has caused us*”, notice that salvation, first and foremost, is caused by God. He is the cause of our salvation, our life, our forgiveness, and so forth. We have to remember that. And secondly, he says, you've been born again, or as the new King James puts it, you have been begotten again.

I like that. But I like more what he says concerning our being born again. He says, you've been born again to a living hope. And I want to take some time here this morning a little bit to talk about this idea of what this living hope is all about. And frankly, this whole idea of hope. The reason I feel the need to kind of emphasize it is because our modern definition of hope can actually get in the way of us really understanding what the Bible is saying. I don't know about you, but I hear people saying fairly regularly things like, “I don't feel very hopeful.” And they'll talk about their circumstances or their marriage or their job or the weather or whatever, and they'll say, “I don't feel very hopeful”.

And we hear that over and over. And over a lifetime we begin to kind of come to this conclusion that hope is defined as a good feeling about something that is supposed to happen or not happen, or something like that. Can I tell you something? In the Bible, hope is not a feeling at all. It has nothing to do with how you feel. Biblically speaking, hope is the confident expectation that whatever God promised He will carry out. Let me say that again. Biblically speaking, hope is the confident expectation that whatever God promised He will do, He will carry it out. Emphasis on He will do it.

You've got to remember that's the thing about hope, it always refers to something that is still yet to come. It's always talking about the future. Paul talks about this when he writes to the Romans.

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Romans 8:24-25 (ESV)

Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Hope that is seen, that isn't any hope at all. And Paul even asked the question, who hopes for what he already has? There's no kid in the world who has a bike and then says, "I sure hope I get a bike." You don't hope for what you already have, right? But he says, "*But if we hope for what we do not yet have we wait for it patiently.*" Well, what is our patience based on? Our patient hope is based on the fact that He who made the promise is good for it. I can take it to the bank when God says He's going to do something, He's going to do something, and I don't have to worry about it. Right?

So now we can talk about this reference or this interesting word. This adjective that Peter connects to hope. He calls it a living hope, and that's an important word to think about. And frankly, it's a kind of a favorite of Peter's because he mentions hope 6 times in this letter alone. So, what does he mean exactly when he's talking about a living hope. Well, the answer to why he calls our hope, a living hope is right there in the rest of the verse. So, let's read now the whole verse 3.

"According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope" okay, here's the answer, you guys, *"through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"*. There's your answer. So, the reason that we have a living hope is because Jesus is living. Because He's been raised from the dead and because He's alive right now, our hope is also alive.

And you can see how important this was as a message to give to people who are going through great suffering. But it's an important message for all of us related to the hope that we have in Christ. Because without the resurrection of Jesus, where's your hope? What are you going to put your hope in?

Do you understand people, why the resurrection of Jesus has been so attacked over the centuries? There are all kinds of theories that people have come up with. Do you notice nobody ever denies that the tomb was empty? That was, that's just an established fact. All they would've had to do to ruin the idea of the resurrection was to produce a body. That's all you've got to do. All you've got to do is come up with a body and you're good to go. Right? Well, they never did that. Never ever found a body. All they found was an empty tomb. Well, that's an established fact. Nobody's denying it. Even the Jews of that day didn't deny that the tomb was empty. They just came up with their own theories.

I loved the one they gave in the scripture. No court in the world would accept this testimony.

Guards coming up and saying, “Yeah, the disciples came and stole his body while we were sleeping”.

Any attorney worth his salt would walk up to the guard and say, “Really? How would you know if you were sleeping?”

“Um, let me get back to you on that.”

It is a ridiculous theory. And people have come up with other theories over the years: He swooned, He didn't really die, and He came back to life, and on and on it goes. Why is it so attacked? It's where our hope is. This is where our hope is, you guys.

It's a living hope because He's alive and seated right now at the right hand of God. So, this is the reality of the situation. And again, this is such an important reminder for people going through intense suffering in their lives to speak to them about such things, but he's not done. As Peter continues to refer to these people and talk to these people about their suffering, he wants to talk to them next about their property. Because it was a common thing for people to have their property confiscated when they were being persecuted for the cause of Christ. I want you to notice what he goes on to talk about in verse 4. He talks about an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, and lastly, it's kept in heaven for you.

In other words, whatever you have in this life, we all know that those things can easily get lost or fade away or get stolen. He's telling these believers, Peter is reminding these people that they have an inheritance, they have property, belongings, blessings in Christ Jesus that are not subject to any such loss.

And again, this is important. Do you guys see what Peter is doing here? It's very important because this is a key. I asked you at the very beginning of this, what would you say to someone who is going through great suffering in life? What would you say? Well, this is what you say.

It's exactly what Peter is doing in this letter. He's lifting their eyes from the temporal and setting them on the eternal, and that's what you do when someone's suffering. Because you see, when somebody's going through a time of suffering, we get fixated on just what's happening in life right here, right now. At least I do. When I'm hurting, when something's happening in my life, I have this great tendency to zero in on it and focus on it. And I need to have my eyes lifted away from that and get them on a different perspective.

That is exactly what Peter is doing. It's kind of like he's saying, I know you're losing things because of the persecution. Perhaps some of you have even lost your life. Some of your family and friends have died because of this and most certainly property is being confiscated. Sure, that happens. But I want you to understand we have a living hope in Jesus. And there is an inheritance that you have with Him that can't be stolen or taken away or anything like that.

Moving our eyes away from the temporal to the eternal is so critical. I remember a long time ago; we had just started the church here in Ontario. This was about 30 years ago, and we had a gal in our fellowship who not terribly long after they started attending, she contracted leukemia, and it was pretty bad.

And she went through all of the chemo junk that goes with the illness. That's terrible stuff. She wasn't doing very good and the chemo didn't really help. And she was just in a really bad way. And I knew that I kind of needed to go do my pastoral duty and go visit her and inject some kind of hope.

So I thought, okay, I'm going to go give her some hope. And I laugh a little bit because I walked away and she made me hopeful. I sat down with her and I'm trying to say some things, in my stupid kind of halting way, but she just looked at me and she smiled this big smile, gums all black because of chemotherapy. But this big smile nonetheless. And she said to me, I'm going to see Jesus.

I was like, wow. She was sitting here smiling about the fact that she is just about to go to be with the Lord. And it didn't take long after that she went to be with the Lord. She was excited. Not bummed out or bitter or angry about what she had lost in this life, but what she was gaining in her life to come with Christ.

I was blown away. I walked away. I was just like, thank you. I'm leaving now because I'm encouraged. I'm really glad I came. What a useless piece of pastor I was at that moment, but I was encouraged by the fact that her perspective had moved beyond. Her perspective was right where Peter is trying to get these people's perspective, moving beyond the temporal, moving to the eternal. Seeing things from that perspective and when he talks about your inheritance, see, that's where our focus is supposed to be.

We're sitting, oh, how much time in the day, every day do we fuss with our stuff on this earth? Our stuff. We have all these things in here. We got our clothes and our house and our car and our stuff. And it's just temporary. And we forget. We think this is all there is, and when we lose it, we're angry and we want to try to save it.

And that's mine. You can't have that. And because our perspective is on this earth, Jesus comes along and says things about our belongings, and we don't understand them because we're so fixed and focused on the things of this life. And Jesus comes along, and He says something like this from Matthew chapter 5.

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Matthew 5:40,42 (ESV)

...if anyone takes you to court to sue you and to take your tunic, (which is something they sued people for back then. He says, fine) let them have your cloak as well. (Give them the tunic and then give them your cloak as well.) Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Now, that doesn't make a lick of sense unless your perspective has changed. Do you get it? That sounds like something stupid. Give them more? Why in the world would I do that? Because it doesn't matter. Because you have an inheritance that goes so far beyond this life that you can't even begin to think about the depth of it. Suddenly when you have a different perspective, an eternal perspective, the Bible starts making sense. But I'm thinking about it as my in terms of my earthly inheritance, and that's why sometimes the Bible doesn't make sense.

Now I want you to notice the first word of verse 5. Can I do that? Can I point out just one single word? It's the word Who, at least in the ESV, it begins this way. It says, *“Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”*. Now, let me explain to you why I focused on the word who, because the direct context of this verse, the verse that came before it is talking about our inheritance in Christ.

You would assume that the context is inheritance, but it's not. You see that because Peter starts this sentence by saying who. If he was talking about your inheritance, he would say which is being guarded through faith. But he's talking about the person who receives the inheritance. He's talking about you.

So, let's read verse 5 again because he's talking about you. *“Who by God's power are being guarded through faith. What for? For a salvation that is to be revealed in the last time.”* All right. This is very interesting. Now, again, this is what you tell people who are going through suffering. I want to get your perspective off your current circumstances and onto eternity.

I want you to understand that you have an inheritance outside of this world. I want you to understand that you are, your inheritance is being guarded, and you are being guarded as well. All right, now we have to ask the question, what does he mean by that? What is he saying when he says you are being guarded by faith through God's power?

Well, interesting. The word guarded. Is a military term. It used to refer to a garrison of soldiers within a city that were there to protect and keep the peace and so forth. And that's what Peter is saying, you are being guarded. So not only is your inheritance safe, but you're being kept safe. Is Peter saying nothing bad is ever going to happen to them? No. He's writing to people who have bad things happening to them already so that would be kind of stupid, wouldn't it? "Don't worry guys. Nothing bad is going to happen to you." They could write back and go "Pete, buddy. It's already happening right now. So, what are you doing here?" No that's not what he's saying.

And that's why he goes on to say what he does in verse 6. Look in your Bible. Very important. "*In this*", and the word "*this*" refers to what I've just told you about your inheritance. The fact that God is guarding your inheritance and the fact that I've told you God is guarding you for his salvation. "*6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials(ESV)*".

Notice here Peter acknowledges the grief and the difficulty and the pain of what they're going through, but you'll also notice that he refers to them correctly as lasting for a little while. Did you catch that? He says, "*though now for a little while*". Why is that important? Well, it's important because when we're going through a time of suffering and difficulty, it feels like it's going to last forever, doesn't it?

It's like when I have a man cold. It's funny, when women get a cold, they just carry on with work. When I get a man cold, the world stops spinning. I think I'm going to die. And you know what, Sue always tells me the same thing every time I get a man cold. Here's what she says. You won't always feel like this. And I go, really? Are you sure? Because I'm a wimp. When you're sick, don't you feel like you're always going to be sick? I've been sick forever. You go to the doctor and the doctor says, "How long have you been feeling this way?" And you say: "About 10 years. I don't know. I always forget. It feels like it's been forever".

But there's a much-needed perspective when you're talking to people who are going through suffering. And you need to be able to confidently say, this isn't going to last forever. It's not going to last forever. It will come to an end.

And then Peter goes on to speak of the benefit of the suffering. Look what he says in verse 7. It's very important. *"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."*

He uses this example of gold. You guys probably know gold is a fairly soft metal, but it can have impurities in it that are not gold. You can get dirt and all kinds of other things with the gold. And so the way you get those out is you put the gold in a thing called a crucible, and you heat it up like an oven, and it burns away the impure elements leaving just the pure gold.

And may I say to you Christians, that this is an apt description many times of the suffering that we go through. This is something we also encourage people with when they're going through suffering. We encourage them with the fact that there is a work that's being done in their life whereby the impurities of their faith, just like the impurities of gold, are being burned up and burned away, so that what is left is pure devotion and pure faith in the Lord.

What Peter is doing here is something that he's going to do throughout the course of this letter, and that is to remind them that there are redemptive purposes to suffering. Let me tell you something, God does not allow suffering in your life for no reason. There is a wonderful promise that says He is working all things together for the good of those that love Him and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28), and that includes your suffering.

He will use it in your life, and it will produce praise and glory to God and a benefit to you and to me that we can't even begin to understand today. All we know is that He tells us there's going to be a benefit.

I want to end this morning with just a couple of statements that are made by the Apostle Paul, and I've put them into one single passage here to share with you. They're from Romans and 2 Corinthians, where Paul writes this:

(Slide)

Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (ESV)

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For this light, momentary affliction is preparing us for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, (that means they're just passing through) but the things that are unseen (but that God has revealed to you in His Word) are eternal.

I opened this morning by asking what you would say to someone you were writing a letter to if that person was going through terrible suffering. This is it. You need to get your eyes off your pain and off the cause of your suffering, and you need to understand that what you're dealing with right now can't even be compared to the glory that will one day be revealed in us and to us. Because all these things that we go through in life are going to account as a bump in the road compared to eternity.

But the things that God gives us in His word and the promises that are laid out to us, those are the eternal things, the important things. That doesn't diminish the difficulty of what you're going through. It just puts it in the right perspective. Amen. Let's stand together.

If you need prayer this morning, we'd love to pray with you. You can, after we're done here, you can come out up front. We'll have some folks up here pray with you. If you'd like to know more about Jesus and what it means to accept him as your savior, then we'd love to talk to you about that as well.

Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank you so much for giving us your word and the incredible and much needed perspective that your Word gives us to keep our hearts focused on the eternal and not on the temporal. Lord, we can do that. We can sit and focus on our pain, and we can become angry and bitter and resentful, but where's that going to get us?

Help us Lord, to remember that you're using all these things in our lives to bring about the purpose for which you created us, that we might be formed into the image of Jesus Christ. Now, Lord, I want to thank you for the biggest thing that you've done for us, and that's sending our Lord Jesus to die on the cross and to bear the penalty that we deserved.

We accept that free gift of forgiveness, and we thank you for it. In Jesus precious name, we pray, and all God's people said together. Amen. God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.