

Born Again to a Living Hope (1 Peter 1:3-12)

INTRO

You heard the Scripture read and the key phrase was “Born Again to a Living Hope”.

Have you been born again? Are you “saved”? I hope you are but if you’re not, today is the day you should do something about that. Today is the day you should respond to the message of the gospel: “**that Christ died for your sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to**” many after his resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

How does this happen, you might ask, what must you do to be saved? I’ll answer with the same words that Paul and Silas said to the Philippian jailer. “**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...**” (Acts 16:30-31). If you don’t already believe, I hope you will believe today.

And if you already believe, I’m glad about that! And I hope that you realize that being saved is both a one-time event and an ongoing transformation. “**For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God,**” it says in 1 Corinthians 1:18. And again in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2: “**Now I would remind you, brothers [and sisters], of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word...**”

We have been saved; we are being saved; we will, finally and permanently, be saved. This morning’s section of First Peter is about all three of these realities.

Summary

God in his mercy, Peter says, has caused us to be born again. He has given us spiritual life. While we were sinners, Christ died for us. When we were dead in our sins, he brought us to life and without his mercy, no one would be saved.

And once we are saved, we can expect an inheritance. This inheritance is nothing less than God himself, to live and experience joy in his presence for eternity. We already enjoy this inheritance in part but one day we will experience it in full. And we do not just *hope* for an inheritance—it is guaranteed!

We rejoice in all of this even while we live out the days assigned to us enduring various trials, but even these trials have a purpose. As we faithfully endure them, we are refined and praise and glory are given to Christ. And once we are his, he will ensure that we make it through the trials of this life without losing the salvation he has given us as a free gift.

Peter is preparing his readers for some difficult instruction and so in this first chapter, he reminds them that the glory ahead will make their present trials seem like mere trivial discomforts. This is the same perspective we will adopt if we hope to find joy in the midst of our sorrows and light in the overwhelming darkness of our times.

1. Our Merciful Regeneration (v3-5)



[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,

To be born again is to experience regeneration. “Regeneration,” says Matthew Barrett, “is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit of granting spiritual life to dead sinners.”¹ God is said here to have “caused us to be born again,” stressing the initiative that he takes in the giving of our new life—our regeneration.

Regeneration—this new life—is not something we deserve or produce. It is, instead, a free gift of God because of his great mercy. We don’t regenerate ourselves or bring ourselves to new life. Only God

¹ Matthew Barrett - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/regeneration/>

can do that, which is good because that removes any possibility of our boasting in what we have accomplished.

“Born Again”

Peter here uses the term “born again.” What does the Bible say about this phrase? The concept of the new birth, of being born again, originated with the teachings of Jesus. In John 3:3-7 we read this:

“Jesus answered Nicodemus, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”

Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’

Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born again.’”

And how does this rebirth happen? John writes (1:12-13):

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, **not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**”

This tells us that: We become the children of God *not* decisively by our own will but by the will of God.

We must receive him and believe in his name in order to be his children. He gives us the gift of adoption - we become his children - and when we receive this gift and believe in his name we are saved.

James also writes of this in James 1:16-18:

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers [and sisters]. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. **Of his own will** he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

We can see clearly from these scriptures that, regeneration happens as an act of God’s will. And it is not something we can achieve any more than we can achieve our own physical birth. In other words, we did not initiate our new birth any more than we initiated our physical birth.

And there is a reason we become born again, we become children of God by his will and not ours. Eph. 2:1-10 tells us that it would be impossible for us to will ourselves to be saved for this reason:

“**And you were dead [dead, dead, dead] in the trespasses and sins** in which you once walked... and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...** For by grace you have been saved through faith. **And this is**

not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Dead people can't will anything to happen; they are dead. And you, if you are spiritually alive today, were dead in your trespasses and sins before God brought you to life. Similarly, in Col. 2:13-14 it says:

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses... God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

God made us alive and brought us forth of his own will. And this is what Peter means when he says that God “caused us to be born again.”

To a Living Hope

Further, we are “born again to a living hope.” Where once we were dead, we now share in a new life through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and we will share more fully in this resurrection in the future.

Paul puts it like this in Romans 6:4-5:

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death

like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

Praise God! Because of his mercy, we have been born again. We are born again to a living hope when we are rescued from spiritual death, from the dead hopes of the flesh. He provides this life through the resurrection of Jesus. He provides us with a pure inheritance that will not fade or perish. We have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus (which we will be celebrating together two weeks from today)!

But that’s not all! He goes on...

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,**

Not only are we born again to a living hope, but there is also an inheritance involved. Now the word “inheritance” would have been familiar to the Jewish Christians. They would have associated it with God’s many promises to the Jewish people to give them land as their inheritance. Those promises were fulfilled.

We read the following in Joshua 21:43-45:

“Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had

sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. **Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.**”

We also have an inheritance, but a far greater one - much greater than the promise of land. And even with this greater inheritance, at the end of human history, the same will be said of God that was said of him in Joshua 21:

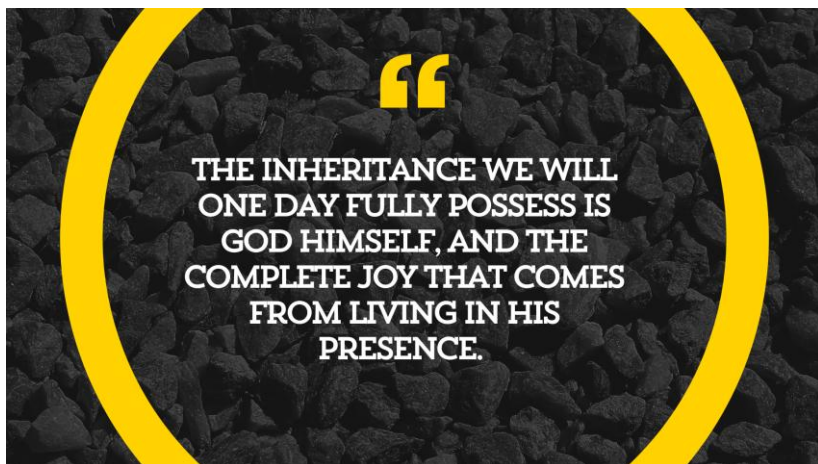
“Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.”

We can rest assured that we will see these promises fulfilled and that we will receive in full the inheritance that God has promised.

We often think of an inheritance as something we may possess someday. Many of us, at some point, will receive an inheritance from our parents, but that’s not guaranteed. I joke with my dad sometimes that when he buys something, “Hey. Go easy, you’re spending my inheritance!” But who knows what might happen. What our parents have might all be gone by the time they pass away. We can’t count on that inheritance; it is not guaranteed.

But the inheritance that is ours from God isn’t like that. The inheritance that will be ours is *completely secure*

and is being kept in heaven for us. When God speaks to us of our inheritance it means we have a secure



possession.

The inheritance we possess today and will one day fully possess is God himself, life with him, and the complete joy that comes from living in his presence. We are in partial possession of this inheritance now, but we will be in full possession in the future. When you look out on dark days, remember this: For the people of God, ultimately, things do not get worse - they get better!

We are born again... [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.

This inheritance is kept in heaven for us, and we are described as those "who by God's power are being

guarded through faith.” The promised inheritance is guarded and protected by God, and so are we - the recipients of his great promises - so long as we persevere in our faith, continually placing our trust in God’s sovereignty and submitting in obedience to his will.

Guarded By God

Keep this in mind as you endure wave after wave of affliction, as you feel under attack: God is your protector. Nothing gets past his line of protection except that which he allows, and then only in the infinite wisdom of his will in order to, in some way, ultimately impact us for good. But remember this: your inheritance is not at risk, no matter how badly things go while we live on this earth, our inheritance in heaven is secure! We will reach that new and better “Promised Land” and once we reach it we will never leave.

What is the salvation Peter mentions here? What are we guarded for? What is ready to be fully revealed in the last time? It’s our deliverance, our safety. Salvation is God’s great gift that rescues us from destruction and delivers us into his eternal safety. We are protected today by God’s power, but in this world, we will still have a lot of trouble. But someday his protection will ensure that we will never have any trouble again.

Peter H. Davids paints the scene like this:

“God will protect them, not like a guard watching prisoners who will, in the end, be

condemned when the judge gives his verdict, but like a soldier guiding and protecting people as they move through hostile territory toward the freedom of friendly lines.”²

That’s a beautiful picture of our lives in this world... As Peter told us, we live as exiles - this is not our home - in a land that is increasingly hostile to the wisdom of God. We are in enemy territory, but every day God leads us closer to our true homeland. As Paul says in Romans 13:11 - “For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.”

2. Our Purposeful Suffering (v6-9)

2

**OUR PURPOSEFUL
SUFFERING
(V6-9)**

“You have been grieved by various trials, **so that** the tested genuineness of your faith... may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

**FAITHFUL
LIVING IN A
FALLEN
WORLD**

[5] a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. [6] In **this** you rejoice, Peter says, though

² Peter H. Davids - p54

now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,

What is the “this” we are rejoicing in? We rejoice in the reality of our salvation, our inheritance, the great and eternal and permanent good that we will someday enter, even while, at this moment, in this time, we are going to face all kinds of trials. Death and disease, betrayal and backstabbing, abandonment and desertion...

We are confident in the security of our inheritance AND in the sovereignty of God—but we still have these things called emotions! We are humans and hope in the promises of God makes us even more human; it does not suddenly turn us into blocks of wood that feel nothing. If anything, as our hearts are softened by the gospel, we feel more and we feel it more deeply. I’ve been discovering this by personal experience as I minister in some hard situations...

The better we understand the gospel and the reason for the gospel, the more attuned we become to all the evils and sufferings in this world - both in our own lives and in the lives of others. When you become a follower of Christ and you understand all that Jesus has done and is doing for you, you will feel a steadfast, immovable, permanent joy. But at the same time, you will feel grief, you will feel the sorrow of suffering. And yet even when this suffering is extreme it cannot extinguish the flame of joy that burns now permanently in your heart.

You will feel various degrees of joy on different days. On some days you will barely see the flame of joy and on other days the flame will be all you see. It's like the pilot light on a furnace or water heater. The pilot light that is the Holy Spirit is never at risk of being extinguished in our lives. It is guaranteed to remain lit! This flame remains ignited and ready like a pilot light that is impossible to put out. "For Christians," Peter H. Davids writes, "persecution and trouble are not the end; beyond lies the glory, and in the hope of that glory they can endure anything that life brings to them."³

Our trials are like exercise, which is meant not to make us so tired that we collapse, but to strengthen us so that we are better equipped to endure the challenges we face. From exercise, from testing the limits of our strength we become stronger. "Trials are meant not to take strength out of us but to put strength into us."⁴

And so its true that we are being grieved by various trials, but there is a "so that"...

[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.**

³ — The Letters of James and Peter (The New Daily Study Bible) by William Barclay
<https://a.co/bf7H8G3>

⁴ Lost the reference. Maybe Blackaby?

“So that” - when I come across the words “so that” in my Bible, I take note of them and circle them or put a box around them. [I encourage you to do this in your Bible as well] These are important words as they explain the flow of the author’s thoughts. We are going to be grieved by various trials, yes, but the “so that” means that there is a purpose to the grief of these trials.

“So that the tested genuineness of your faith... may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

We face various trials, but we do so with a purpose: When we are caused to be born again, when we are given new life, it is as if we have been made into a metal that is precious in God’s sight - a metal like gold. But when he recreates us, gives us new life, causes us to be born again, we are not instantly made of pure gold. There is still that which is impure and mixed in with our genuine faith. And yet he desires for our faith to be as pure refined gold. And therefore we require a refining process.

How does he accomplish this refining in us? What does it mean to have our faith refined? Well, how is gold refined? The answer is: Extreme heat! If you watch a video about gold refining you will see that unrefined gold is mixed with other metals. In this state, it is not very shiny, not very *golden*. It looks like this...

UNREFINED GOLD



But if you expose that unrefined gold to extreme heat, other metals are burned away leaving a

REFINED GOLD



purified, shiny, golden gold.

Our faith here is compared to gold and is refined in the same way - by extreme heat. What is the extreme heat that refines our faith and what does it

mean for our faith to be refined? In the same way that gold is mixed with other metals and needs to be refined, our faith is impure. We place our trust in God but not completely in God. But as our faith is refined we trust more and more fully and purely in God. Until our faith is tested and refined, we trust God but we also tend to trust money or sex or power to provide us with what we need.

So what purifies our impure faith? Heat. The fiery trials. “Beloved,” Peter writes in 1 Peter 4:12-13, “do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”

Suffering can refine our faith and fiery trials can purify our desires. Suffering and fiery trials reveal areas of our lives in which we are lacking in trust, in belief, in confidence.

And God is so good at this! He knows exactly what trial needs to be brought into our lives that will graciously expose our various faults and idols.

If we place too much faith in money, he graciously provides a financial crisis to reveal that fact.

If we begin to think that our power and influence are decisive in the success of some mission, he is gracious in providing the measure of failure that will cause us to place our trust again in him.

If we are proud of the job we've done as parents, thinking that we've engaged in a foolproof process of raising our children, he is gracious in providing a trial by fire that will humble us and turn us again to place our trust in him and not in ourselves.

These are the fires that refine our faith, that burn off the impurities and make us more fit to see and enjoy the glory of God. We will give glory to God when we understand how he works for our good in all our trials.

So glory and praise and honour will overflow in his direction, from us to him, but also - I didn't see this at first - it will flow from him to us as well. Peter is talking here about the time he calls "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Peter is talking about the time when Jesus returns; when our earthly work is done; when our struggle with sin is over; when our war with the powers of evil is complete. It is then that our Master, Jesus Christ, will say to us: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." (Matt. 25:21,23)

Notice this and rejoice in anticipation: the tested genuineness of our faith will result in Jesus praising us for a job well done. And at that moment we will **not** be filled with pride because we will know that it was only by his mercy and grace that we were even able to first respond to his call and then be faithful in following

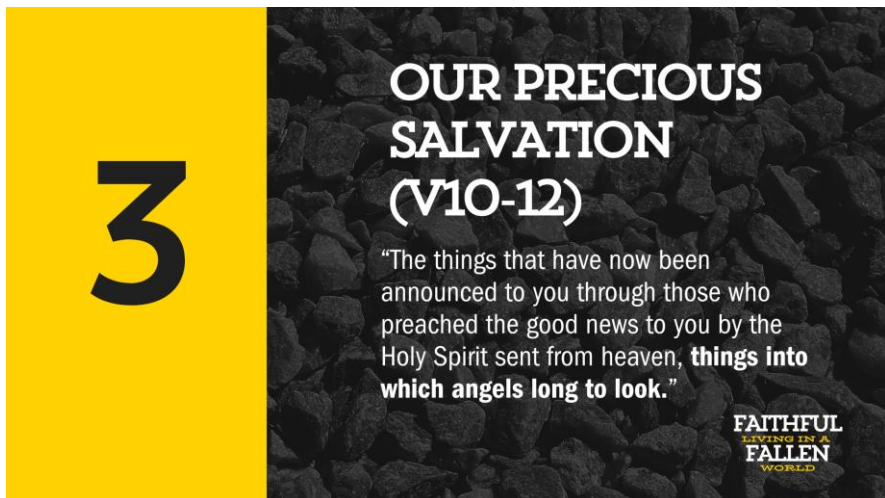
him. All that we give to him is first given to us by him. It is ALL gift and he will praise what he gave to us that we stewarded well.

Peter writes next that:

[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.

These are verses that confirm the tested genuineness of their faith. They love Jesus even though they've never been in his physical presence. They believe in him and rejoice with inexpressible joy. And as they do this - as they are saved and being saved - they will finally obtain the outcome of their enduring belief and trust in God, the final and permanent salvation of their souls.

3. Our Precious Salvation (v10-12)



[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.

Although we read much about the OT prophets warning and rebuking and chastizing the people of God, this was not really the most important part of their job. What was far more important was their assurances of a

future day of salvation and deliverance. William Barclay notes that:

“Preaching is the announcement of salvation. Preaching may at different times have many notes and many aspects, but fundamentally it is the proclamation of the gospel, the good news. Preachers may at times have to warn, threaten and condemn; they may have to remind people of the judgment and the wrath of God; but basically, beyond all else, their message is the announcement of salvation.”⁵

This is what the prophets of old looked forward to, but none of them were able to know the details of the life of Jesus Christ or to witness all that he accomplished. We need to realize, then, that we stand in a far more privileged position today! What they longed to know, we actually know! What they longed to see, we actually see. The prophets were able to speak of things to come because the Spirit of Christ was testifying of these things to them. But today we know who came, and we have his Spirit living in us, teaching us of the one we already intimately know.

We see things into which angels long to look. Peter H. Davids explains that:

⁵ — The Letters of James and Peter (The New Daily Study Bible) by William Barclay <https://a.co/1qIUUVB>

“The sense is not one of idle curiosity but of a longing to see the fulfilment of God's promises. Great as they are it was not to them or for them that the fulfilment came. Instead, the day of salvation dawned on these Christians in a way not even revealed to the angels, just as the revelation in Christ was greater than any divine communication given through angels (Hebrews 2:16). Although suffering these believers are privileged people.”

And we are privileged people! Jesus recognized this for his disciples:

“Then turning to the disciples he said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.’” (Luke 10:23-24)

CONCLUSION

One of the main purposes of this letter is to help its readers to realize their true standing in the world. Contrary to appearances, we are the victors in the spiritual battles that engulf our world. We look to be under attack and losing ground, but we are actually winning the war because, in the end, Jesus will return to fully exercise and realize his dominion over all things.

We are the victors, but the present battle is hard. We need to know and trust that we are the victors, or else the battle will seem too hard for us to endure.

Peter speaks so highly of God's dominion, grace, mercy and protection so that we will understand what a great treasure it is. And if we understand this great treasure we've been given, all our other treasures will seem less precious. In fact, if God and his gospel are precious enough to us, nothing else we possess will even deserve to be described as precious. Once this is the case, we will gladly give up all that we have in this world in order to obtain the treasures in heaven that we will enjoy at a future time.⁶

In the meantime, there will be trials and brokenness and sadness. But if our hope is firmly in the one who is victorious now and in the time to come, and if we can access in the present the encouragement of our future deliverance, then we will have everything we need to endure and thrive in this world, even while we suffer afflictions.

Peter has a realistic view of both the present and the future. Peter didn't go through fewer trials than we do; in fact, he appears to have gone through many more and they were more extreme than what most of

⁶ For this reason," Calvin says, he highly extols the wonderful grace of God in Christ, that is, that we may not deem it much to give up the world in order that we may enjoy the invaluable treasure of a future life; and also that we may not be broken down by present troubles, but patiently endure them, being satisfied with eternal happiness." (The Complete Biblical Commentary Collection of John Calvin by John Calvin <https://a.co/crIQyZi>)

us have endured. He sees the present suffering and acknowledges the reality of it, but he keeps his eyes fixed on what lies ahead. And this is consistent with the other authors of scripture. Paul puts it so well in Phil. 3:13-15:

“But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.”

And “In this,” in the reality of our salvation, our inheritance, Peter says, “we rejoice!”

We Rejoice!

Let me ask you: Do we? Do we often rejoice in all that has been said in these first five verses? Do we rejoice that God is merciful, that he caused us to be born again, that we have a living hope, that Jesus rose from the dead, that we have a secure inheritance, that we are being guarded and that we will be fully protected and rescued?

Or do we more often set our eyes and minds on all that we must endure? On every trial and affliction that is unresolved? On how the Lord is giving us the opposite of what we think we deserve? Where is our focus?

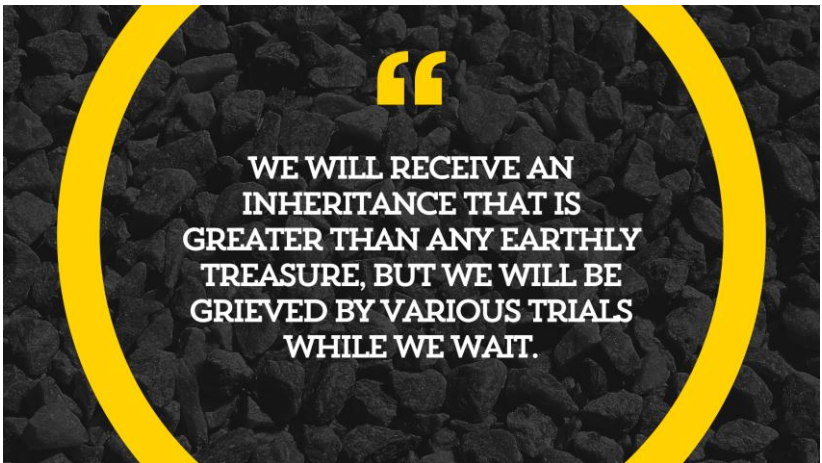
I know which one is more true for me - I'm the pastor so my eyes and mind and heart and head are always

focused on Jesus and his glory - right?! No. No, I am too often more focused on the dangers that approach me than on the Protector who surrounds me.

Peter recognizes all of this. He is not a man who was always kept from trials and neither are the people to whom he is writing - and neither are we.

We are under God's protection with no guarantee of physical safety in this world but a sure and steadfast guarantee of eternal safety in the next. And this is life as a Christian, holding in tension these two realities:

that we will receive in full an inheritance that is greater than any earthly treasure, but that we will be grieved by various trials while we wait.



But as we wait, we are being purified, sanctified, and prepared to better receive and better enjoy all that

God will provide. And our faith is proved to be genuine in all of this.

We face trials but still believe that God is good. We endure affliction but still believe that God is sovereign. And this, Peter tells us, will result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, suffering is temporary and salvation is forever. And our salvation is secure not because we are such wonderful people who are strong enough to hold on to Christ, but because even in our weakness, he holds on to us.

AMEN