

Guest Preacher Rev. Paul Amed

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Preacher: Rev. Paul Amed

[0 : 00] I'm going to look at some verses in the beginning of chapter 1, but I will begin in verse 3 where we read, Praise be to the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And God willing, over the two Sundays that I'm here, this Sunday and next Lord's Day, I want to bring to you something of the blessings of God, but also the buffetings of God. The blessings of grace, and dare I say, the buffetings of grace. Tonight we'll centre on some of the blessings and what we have been given in Christ Jesus.

And very often we speak. We speak about our blessings. We speak about peace. We speak about joy. We speak about God's providence and God's presence.

And yet, truly, it's not until we go through some buffeting and some trial and some difficulty until these things become so real in our experience.

[1 : 14] And for a Christian, it's not either or, lots of blessings and no buffetings, or many buffetings and no blessings. It's both. It's part of our journey. It's part of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

We glory in his presence. We enjoy his peace and joy. But we also share in his sufferings. So that's what I want to bring to you, or begin to bring to you this evening.

I'm visiting a man just now. And the man has cancer. And has it in one or two, maybe even three places in his body. And he not only has cancer, he has faith.

And every time I visit him, every time I go to see him, at the moment it's about once or twice a week, he's discovered more of this deadly illness of his cancer.

He's discovered, perhaps from the doctors, another issue in his body. And he knows full well that ultimately he'll not beat it. But he has faith. And every time I speak to him, and he's discovered something more concerning this dreaded illness, he's shining.

[2 : 23] He's so gracious. He speaks about the Lord. He accepts his lot. He knows that, perhaps, he's done things wrong in the past.

But he knows he's a forgiven man. And so there we have, you know, you don't know what faith you have until you go through the trials and testings and tribulation.

And then, then you experience, then you come to know what measure of faith you may have. We see it in the psalm. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadows, how gloomy and doomy and dark is that.

And yet, you are with me. You are with me. Focus upon the cross. Focus upon Jesus where it's said that the Father, the Father, Jehovah was pleased to bruise him and to make him suffer.

And yet, then we read again that he gave of his life voluntarily. No one took it from him. He gave his life himself. And so there are the blessings and the buffetings in our every experience.

[3 : 27] And though we may not like the buffetings, the blessings are there to encourage us and to assure us that though these buffetings will come, we're not alone. We have the one who said, I'll never leave you nor forsake you.

Much more who goes before us and makes the crooked places straight. So this evening, hopefully, God willing, I want to concentrate more on the blessings than the buffetings.

Again, verse 3. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection from the dead.

On most occasions, this occasion in particular, when Peter considers the salvation of God, his immediate response is to praise him, to honour him, to glorify him.

And that's because the motive, the motive for God's work is not found in you and I, but it's found in himself. It's nothing to do with us really, no merit in ourselves, but according to his great and abundant mercy.

[4 : 34] His salvation, our salvation, our redemption is according to his great and abundant mercy. The authorised version has it this way, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And when we are blessed, when we are blessed of God, we are enriched in many, many, many ways. I dare say we don't know the heart of it as yet. When we bless God, however, we speak well of him.

With words or actions as being worthy of all praise, all honour and all glory to him. We love to sing the psalm, don't we, as we've sang this evening.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that in me is. We want to bless the Lord. We don't understand at times what it is to bless him, but it is, as said, to speak highly of him.

To seek to live the life worthy of the name Christian. To focus our hearts and our minds and our eyes upon the one who is altogether lovely, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[5 : 40] In his great mercy. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope. And so the blessing of our salvation, it flows to us sinners by the way of God's great mercy.

His great mercy alone. Mercy from God. What a wonderful blessing that is. What a world this would be if God sat on a throne of justice alone.

And if no mercy were ever shown to men and women. If no mercy was shown, you and I wouldn't be sitting here tonight, praising God and seeking to listen to his voice.

A mother once approached Napoleon, seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offence twice, and justice demanded death.

But I don't ask for justice, the mother explained. I plead for mercy. But your son does not deserve mercy. Napoleon replied.

[6 : 44] Sir, the woman cried. It would not be mercy if he deserved it. And mercy is all I ask for. Well then, the emperor said, I will have mercy.

And he spared the woman's son. My dear friends, tonight, as there is no mercy too great for God to give, so there is no mercy too little for us to crave.

Salvation is all of mercy. And nowhere do you and I intimate, imitate God more than in showing mercy to others.

Do not the Lord promise his people, blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. And the godlier, the godlier the person is, the nearer to Christ a man or woman is, the more merciful that person will be.

Why? Because they have experienced, they know, not only verbally, but experientially, they know and have been touched by the mercy of God. But in his great mercy, he has given us new birth.

[7 : 59] Someone has said, conversion is more than repairing the old building. Instead, conversion takes it all down and erects a new structure. And that is precisely what has happened to you and I as newborn Christians.

In Ephesians 2 and verse 4 we read, But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, made us alive together with Christ, who is mercy.

He made us alive because we were, we were dead. We were far off. We were out with Christ. We were dead in our transgressions and our sins and we needed, we needed to be brought alive spiritually.

We didn't need reformation. We needed regeneration. And that's what the Holy Spirit does in our experience. You see, reformation is just whitewashing, whereas regeneration will wash you white, whiter than snow.

Reformation will put new clothes on a person, whereas regeneration will put a new person into those clothes.

[9 : 21] And so becoming a Christian is not making a new start in life. It's receiving a new life to start with. And already, surely we're getting a flavour of the miraculous and the many, many blessings that the Lord has brought to our experience.

Of his conversion experience, Billy Bray said, I remember this, that everything looked new to me. The fields, the cattle, the trees.

I was like a new man in a new world. And I'm sure some of your testimonies would emphasise that. It was all, it was all so clear, all so different, all so, so new.

That's what the new birth does for you. It opens your blind eyes to a new world. It opens your mind to new thoughts. It changes you from the inside out.

And it gives you a new heart. John writes, no one born of God makes a practice of sinning. For God's seed abides in him.

[10:35] And he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of, of God. We're not alone, never shall be alone. I said earlier, I think in prayer, we have one another and as iron sharpens iron, so the friendship and fellowship of one Christian, it sharpens.

and deepens and encourages our faith. But God abides within us. The Holy Spirit, we're temples of the Holy Spirit and he makes his abode in our lives.

We're not alone, never shall be alone. Peter tells us then that the fruit of the new birth here is a living hope.

Simply put, this refers to a living confidence that we have a bright future, a living hope that is sure, certain, and real, as opposed to the deceptive, empty, and false hope that the world offers.

Of course, many have their hope in the stock market, in their health and wealth. Some have hope in their families, but these hopes are really based on wishful thinking.

[11:49] When the New Testament uses the word hope, it doesn't refer to a fond wish or a longing that we may have or a desire.

It means a confident assurance based on the word of God and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that produces an excited response, that produces an excited response.

I wonder, are you still excited with your salvation and with your relationship with Jesus Christ? Yes, we have to grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord. We have to add faith and goodness and kindness to our experience, but surely there is that excitement, that amazement, especially when you look at our world today and you see all that's happening and we see a humanistic society, a secular society and so on.

We see so many hard souls, no shame, no sense of sin and yet you and I were safe, safe in the arms of Jesus.

We are clutch, we are held by Christ and he'll never let us go. We have a hope. We have a hope.

When we believers speak of our hope of heaven, we're not talking about pie in the sky, by and by.

[13:11] We're talking about something that's sure. We're talking about something that is more solid than even the ground that we walk on. Biblical hope then is also confident expectancy.

Someone has put it this way. Hope is faith in the future tense and John Blanchard adds hope is biblical shorthand for unconditional certainty and then the Puritan writer Thomas Brooks.

Hope can allow us to see heaven through the thickest clouds. In short then, biblical hope is not a hope so, it's a hope sure.

And let me just repeat, hope can allow us to see heaven through the thickest of clouds. And every one of you gathered here tonight, and I know, and I don't know you personally, but I know as a Christian, you've experienced the thickest of clouds.

Because we all go through, shall we say, for want of a better word, the mill. We're all called to share in the sufferings of Christ. We are on the Lord's side, and when you're on the Lord's side, you're going against the stream.

[14:27] And Satan knows that. And he seeks to divide, and he seeks to destroy, and he never gives up. Sometimes we get tired, don't we? We get tired of it all, and we wonder, why?

Why me? Why has this happened to me? But we can see, we can see heaven through the thickest of clouds. This world may be in turmoil.

I would go further. It is in turmoil. But those who are saved, those who know Christ, we are possessed by a hope that is out of this world. And this alone, surely, is enough to shout about. That's why Peter can write so assuredly in his great mercy. He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Biblical hope, then. It's not finger-crossing, but it's alive and certain. Why? Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Life without Christ is a hopeless end, whereas life in Christ gives an endless hope.

[15:39] And the world, of course, hopes for the best, but Jesus Christ, he offers the best hope. And that's why, surely, we have this burden and longing for those that are our own family circle, our community, for others to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

The living Christ is our hope of glory and the glory of our hope. The New Testament preaches a Christ who was dead but is alive.

Not a Christ who was alive and is now dead. Again, no wonder Peter writes so assuredly of the resurrection. Remember, poor Peter, all hope for Peter died when his master died.

The cold blade of remorse pierced his soul and he wept bitter tears as he recalled his sad denial of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, his hope then lay buried in a sealed grave.

And then came that personal message, that personal message from the women that the Lord had risen from the dead. And for Peter, it was a shaft of light in the darkness.

[16:50] Revival for his hope. Healing for his heart. And new meaning for his life. It is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ that hope can live.

As Paul clearly reminds us, if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are, of all men, most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead.

But now is Christ risen from the dead. And I'll say now, perhaps too early in this sermon, but for the Christian, the best. The best is yet to come. We have a bright future.

We're going to be with the Lord. Therein lies much of our hope. What lies beyond that is an inheritance of indescribable wonder.

Peter continues in verse 4. And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade, kept in heaven for you.

[17:56] How wonderful. How wonderful is that? Christ is in glory. Christ is in heaven. And when we leave this earthly scene, when we pass away, when we fall asleep in Jesus, we'll see him as he is and we'll be like him.

But there is also an inheritance. There's something which Paul, Peter doesn't describe exactly or precisely. He tells us what it is not.

But nevertheless, he calls it an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade, kept in heaven for you. Spurgeon writes, Joy, my brethren, in the glorious, is the glorious inheritance which is prepared for you.

unstained, uncorrupted, perfectly pure, and therefore to last forever. Because the elements which produce decay are not in it.

It is without sin and therefore it shall be without end. And what a mercy it is to be kept by the power of God.

[19:02] The inheritance is kept for us in heaven and we are kept by God for heaven. And this inheritance is totally unlike any earthly inheritance.

A Christian's inheritance cannot be ravaged by hostile forces. We know through experience maybe, sometimes wills are successfully contested by parties not mentioned in them.

sometimes people are deprived of an inheritance because of legal technicalities. So many inheritances they vanish before they are obtained or they quickly are squandered after they are obtained.

but this one, this one, our heavenly inheritance, it will never perish. What you and I have laid up in glory is incorruptible, imperishable and indestructible.

How rich, how rich we already are. Our inheritance can never diminish which means it's beyond the reach of change and decay.

[20:20] It cannot die nor change nor pass away. It's, it's death proof. Everything else in this world, it's, it's dying, it's, it's collapsing, it's changing, but this heavenly inheritance, it cannot die, it is death proof.

It will never spoil. What we have is immaculate, pure, spotless, pristine. It will never decay because it's pure.

untouched by any earthly sin. Sin will never touch or defile it, so therefore it is sin proof and it will never fade.

What we have is infinite, endless, limitless, vast. It's time proof. It will not fade. It will never disappear, never decompose.

It will last forever. And it has already lasted since God's elective plan was made in eternity for you and I.

[21:24] And it will go on forever. It is time proof. Kept in heaven for you. What we have is insured, protected, covered, and it's underwritten, and it's underwritten in the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Heaven is kept for us and we are kept for heaven. Heaven is prepared for us and we are being prepared for heaven.

There's a double, as they sometimes say, a double whammy, but a double action of God's mercy and grace, thus working in you and I, and it's working unto eternal bliss.

As said, Peter doesn't tell us exactly what the inheritance consists of, but surely, surely our inheritance includes complete salvation, it is seeing Jesus as he is, it's worshipping God in the purity of holiness, it's having glorified bodies like Christ's body, it is seeing the rewards of our labours in the Lord, it's being absent from the body and at home with the Lord, which is far better. But to be more assured of the blessings of our inheritance, consider Revelation 22 and verses 3 to 5. No longer will there be any curse.

[22 : 56] The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city and his servants will serve him. They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads.

There will be no more nights. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light and they will reign forever and forever.

Now that's some inheritance, regardless of how you feel, regardless perhaps if you're failing and falling at times, regardless of your doubts, that is some inheritance to look forward to because it's being kept in heaven for you.

Of course, it's very hard, isn't it, for us to imagine how it will be there as we live in such a sinful world. Our minds can't really take it all in.

The most precious of all these words are these. They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads.

[24 : 04] The psalmist said in Psalm 17, as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness and I will be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.

The Bible speaks of a satisfaction that we have now in Christ and yet there's a greater and a deeper satisfaction yet to come when we see him as he is.

John says in his first letter, beloved, now are we the sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, but we shall see him as he is.

How easy then, how correct and how truthful to say for the Christian the best is yet to be, the best is yet to come, but God's love for us then does not stop with the new birth, it continues throughout our lives and it takes us right up to the return of Jesus Christ.

When our Lord appears, all his people, all his people, whether here on earth or in glory, we will see him and we shall be like him. Paul writes in Philippians 3 and verse 20, but our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies, that they will be like his glorious bodies.

[25 : 41] That means when Christ returns or when you and I fall asleep and are taken home to glory, our bodies will be suited for heaven. That's where the buffetings and the trials and the testings come in.

We need to be fashioned and made and we'll look at that of course next Lord's Day. But it's very exciting, surely.

It's very exciting, especially can I say to those who get older and I'm speaking about myself. You see, the older we get, the nearer we get to heaven.

The aches and the pains, the decline of hearing and seeing can all vouch for that. But we can be assured, we can be assured, and I say this for the third time, that for the Christian the best is yet to come.

Paul says, however, as it is written, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.

[26 : 50] But God has revealed it to us by his spirit. He reveals something of heaven to us, of the depths of his grace. He reveals his secrets to the people of God.

Not only then is the inheritance kept safely in heaven for the heirs of Christ, but the heirs of Christ are kept for heaven and secure in themselves.

In verse 5 we read, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

So we're being shielded and we are being kept. Now that also lays a responsibility on you and I. We are to make our calling and election sure.

We are to be obedient. We are to seek the Lord day by day. We are to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. And yet in all of that we're not alone. We are being kept. We are being shielded. [27 : 55] And that shielded is a military word. We are guarded by the power of God who cares for us, who cares for us every day.

And the only reason, the only reason any Christian will ever reach heaven is the fact that God keeps us by his own divine power.

If it were left to ourselves, to the will of man, to the strength of our own resolutions, to our own power to meet temptations, and to any probability that we would of ourselves continue to walk in the ways of the Lord, there would be no certainty that any of us would get to heaven.

But it's all of his mercy and his grace, his power, his will. The Lord doesn't save you and I and leave us there to get on with it. He has a plan and a purpose.

He makes us more and more, he fashions us more and more into the likeness of his Son. The power that keeps us resides in us.

[29 : 03] That is, the Holy Spirit. And I quote, God, the child of God has much better protection than the President of the United States.

The President has the Secret Service. We have Sovereign Service. The President has Armed Guards. And we have Almighty God.

The President has Present Protection. Protection. And we have perfect protection. We have perfect protection. We are in his hands.

And no one and nothing can pluck us out of his hands. Even if we were to be our last tonight in Christ, we are in the hands, in the hands of God.

And so the Bible is clear when it teaches that anyone who has received Jesus as their personal Saviour need never worry. Never worry about reaching heaven.

[30 : 03] Need never worry about losing their salvation. You see, getting lost again after you have genuinely been saved is an absolute impossibility.

You are united to the Lord. You are bound to him. There is that superglue, the precious blood of the Lamb, which has seared us and united us to Christ.

Notice what the Bible then, says about this matter of our union. Jesus said, all that the Father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I will never drive away.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

And so the reason that you and I are secure and heaven bound is the fact that we are not responsible, dare I say, or we're not liable for keeping our own salvation.

[31 : 14] The Bible is clear when it says here that we are kept by the power of God until the coming of the salvation ready to be revealed. God and therefore with confidence, with holy confidence, we can rest in the knowledge that what he begins, he finishes.

The good work that has begun in your life and my life, Paul writes, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

He doesn't wind us up at salvation like a clockwork toy and send us on our way. He's with us, watching over us, even through the difficult times, even through our rebellious times, our hard times.

Listen, he loves us. He loves us too much to leave us the way he found us. He wants to change us, transform us, and to make us more and more conformable to the likeness of his son.

Paul was confident that this work would last. are you confident of that? Are you persuaded of that, that this work that God has begun in your life will continue?

[32 : 30] Listen, as I've already said, if we had to keep ourselves saved, we would fail. The Lord, the Lord would not fail us. Even though we may have strayed at times, fallen, fallen short, willingly sinned, even let the Lord down.

God in mercy will never allow his children to be comfortable in sin. And even though sin may rebel in a saint, it shall never reign.

It shall never reign in a saint. We are free in Christ. We are free to worship, to praise, to come to the house of God this evening to gossip the gospel.

C.H. Burden writes, there is a little hell within the heart of every child of God and only the great God of heaven can master that mischievous indwelling sin.

So praise God. Praise God that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

[33 : 42] And so we are in his hands. We are in those nail pierced hands. We are united to Christ until he returns. My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one, no one can snatch them out of my hand. So if you're a born again Christian, you're a born again Christian, you're a believer here tonight, you're calling and your election is sure and beyond doubt.

But make them sure. Make them sure. Don't just endure salvation, enjoy it. And don't be content with a starved or a shallow faith.

But instead make every effort to add to your faith goodness, to goodness knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love.

Imitate, express the heart of God. Let me close with this illustration. A new Christian was doubting his salvation and spoke to a friend.

[35 : 03] Yesterday I was filled with joy and thought I would never be in the dark again, but now it's all gone and I feel so low. What's the matter with me? Have you ever passed through a tunnel?

Asked his friend. Yes, said the new Christian. When you passed through the tunnel, did you think the sun had been blotted out of the sky? Oh no, I knew the sun was still in the sky, even though I couldn't see it.

Were you distressed when you were in the tunnel? Oh no, I knew I'd soon be out in the light again. And did you get out? Of course, replied the new Christian.

Then he paused as the truth dawned upon him. God's promises remain the same no matter how I feel. I must trust his word and not my feelings.

And they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us. God with us. Amen, then and may the Lord bless these thoughts to us this evening.

[36 : 12] Let us again, let's pray. Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you then for your word and we pray that that may have granted a deeper awareness or an assurance Lord that we are indeed yours.

Although at times we know we can backslide, we can be so earthly and so worldly, but you bring us back, sometimes through chastisement, through prayer, through affliction, through illness, but you bring us back because you love us.

And your desire for us is that one day we should be at home in glory with your son Jesus. And so we bless you, Lord, for your word. We pray as we leave this place, as we go out into the world of work and labour in the week that lies ahead, we may think upon these things.

And if we give it the opportunity, we would share something of your great love with those who we meet. So go before us now, we pray. For Jesus' sake do we ask it.

Amen. Let's close now by singing from Psalm 16, Psalm 16, and we sing verses 1 to 6.

[37 : 24] Psalm 16, verse 1, Lord, keep me, for I trust in thee. To God thus was my speech. Thou art my Lord, and to thee my goodness doth not reach.

To saints on earth, to the excellence where my delights all placed, their sorrows shall be multiplied to other gods that haste. And at verse 6, unto me happily the lines in pleasant places fell.

Yea, the inheritance I got in beauty doth excel. Verses 1 to 6 of Psalm 16. Amen. Amen. Lord, keep me for all I trust in thee.

To God has lost my speech. Thou art my court, and under thee my goodness doth not reach.

To sing on earth to the excellent where mighty lights all play.

[38 : 51] Their sorrow shall be heard be glad to wrap where those yag our arc are my Hat there could be of a oug that I will and no way may Yea, neither I am, every lips of pain my lips will take.

God is of my inheritance, and from the portion, the Lord hath fallen is to me, the God's kingdom alone.

Unto me, heavenly light, in blessed places hell.

Yea, neither I am, every lips of my God in beauty, I am, every lips of my heart.

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest and abide with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.