

A Living Salvation

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[0 : 0 0] a short while. If we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in 1 Peter and chapter 1. We're going to look at the verses that we read, verses 1 to 12, but we're going to read again in verse 3. So 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 3, where Peter writes, he says, 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 an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. And so on.

When your world is turned upside down very, very quickly, what do you do? When everything you once thought to be safe and secure is taken from you, where do you turn? When life throws unwelcome and unexpected things at you, how do you respond? You know, those questions, they were not only relevant to the Christians to whom Peter was writing in the first century, but these questions that are relevant to us tonight in the 21st century. Because like those to whom Peter was writing, many people in our country and in our communities tonight, they're living in a great time of uncertainty.

Because with all that's going on, no one knows what the future holds. And for some, their present circumstances are very, very difficult. Because they've lost their job, or their business has been hampered. Their home is now unstable. Their health maybe has been undermined. Their families have been separated and their relationships may have been compromised. Life, my friend, has changed. And no one knows if or when it will get better and return to a level of normality. And you know, the same was true for the Christians living in the first century. Their circumstances were very difficult. Because they too had job losses. They had business problems. They had health, home and family issues. But you know, the chaos and the confusion in their life, it wasn't because of the coronavirus. It was because of the Roman Emperor. Because the Roman Emperor at the time was Nero. And Nero had instituted emperor worship.

He demanded that everyone must bow down and confess that the Caesar is Lord. But of course, for a Christian, that was an impossibility. Because for a Christian, Jesus is Lord. And when you refuse to bow down and go with the flow and worship Caesar and follow all these Roman gods, well, the result is that you don't receive praise for your stand. You receive persecution. And for Christians living within the Roman Empire during the first century, persecution was rife. Persecution was even being enforced by the government. In fact, the persecution of Christians was extremely volatile and extremely violent. And you know, it's into that situation and that circumstance that Peter writes his first letter to the churches. And in these opening verses that we're looking at this evening, verses 1 to 12, Peter, he reminds the Christian church that their salvation is not a dead salvation. No, he says that they have a living salvation. They have a living salvation through Jesus Christ because he offers to sinners a living hope. And that hope, says Peter, it's not a probable hope. It's not a plausible hope. It's not even a possible hope.

But it's a living hope. It's a living hope that's sure and steadfast. Because this Christian hope, it is the anchor of our soul. And so as we begin our study of 1 Peter this evening, we have been reminded that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have a living salvation. We have a living salvation. And I'd like us to consider these these verses under three headings. Scattered saints, sure salvation, and spiritual searching.

[4 : 41] And spiritual searching. So look first of all at scattered saints. And we look there in verses 1 and 2. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood, may grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Now, I don't know about you, but whenever I receive a letter in the post, the first thing I do is look at the end of the letter to see who it's from. Because, well, it's by knowing who the letter is from that you'll have context. And that context, it helps you to appreciate the content of the letter.

But in the first century, the author would save you the trouble of turning to the end of the letter for context. Instead, the letter would often begin with the name of the author, just like we see there.

And we see it in many of the other New Testament letters, in which they begin with the name, the name Peter or Paul or James. And they immediately give context to the letter in order for us to appreciate the content of the letter. And that's what we see here.

Peter begins his letter by giving to the church's context. He writes, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. And notice he doesn't refer to himself as Simon, which is the name his mother gave to him. But he calls himself Peter, the name that Jesus gave to him.

[6 : 25] Because you remember that when Peter, when Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus then said to Peter, you are Peter. And on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And, you know, it's that Peter who writes to the Christian churches in the first century. It's that Peter who was called from his nets and confessed Jesus Christ as Lord.

And it's that same Peter whom we know in the New Testament, he even contradicted his confession by denying Jesus. It's that Peter who was restored and confirmed as an apostle of Jesus Christ, a sent one of Jesus. It's that Peter who stood up on the day of Pentecost and commanded sinners to repent and over 3,000 souls were saved. And it's that same Peter who was criticized and confirmed and even confined to prison for preaching the gospel. But you know, it's this, the Peter we come to this evening is the same Peter who continued to make Christ known for over 30 years.

And you know, who better to write this letter than Peter? Because as soon as the Christian church opened this letter and read who it was from, they would have known that this letter was written from personal experience. And they'd have known that Peter was writing to them out of sympathy and empathy for them. Because Peter, he was not only aware of their suffering, but he could also identify and understand their suffering because of all that he had been through himself. In fact, that's where the words sympathy and empathy come from. They come from the Greek word pathos, which means suffering.

And so Peter, as an apostle and as a writer of this letter, he had sympathy and he had empathy for the suffering Christian church. And you know, that's why context to the letter is important.

Because it would have enabled the church to appreciate the content of the letter. Because they knew that Peter, of all people, Peter would have understood all that they were going through as a church.

[8 : 51] But you know, Peter, he wrote to encourage the Christian church, not only because they were suffering saints, but also because they were scattered saints. Peter describes the Christian church here, he says in verse 1, he describes them as elect exiles of the dispersion. Elect exiles of the dispersion.

And that description, elect exiles, it's a description that was used to describe the Israelites in the Old Testament. Because as you know, the Israelites, they were the Lord's chosen people. They were the Lord's covenant people. They were the ones whom we saw this morning in Exodus chapter 12. They were the ones whom the Lord redeemed from slavery and bondage in Egypt. And they were made to be pilgrims and sojourners as they journeyed on towards the promised land. They were elect exiles. They were a people whom the Lord had chosen for himself. And they were chosen not because they were more important, not because they were more in number, not even because they were more dedicated than anyone else in the world, but they were chosen simply because the Lord set his love on them and sought to redeem them and make them his. They were elect exiles. And you know, it's with that Old Testament imagery that Peter writes to the Christian church, reminding them of the glory of the gospel. That he reminds them that as Christians, as followers, of Jesus Christ, they are elect exiles. They have been chosen by God. And they've been chosen by God, not because they were brought up in a Christian home, not because they were baptized as a child, not because they went to Sunday school or learned their catechism or memorized their Bible, not because they're good people or good living or faithful in their church attendance. No, Peter says, you are elect exiles. You've been chosen by God. You've been chosen according, as he says in verse 2, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to

Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood. Peter says, this Trinitarian act of salvation has taken place in your life. You have been selected, sanctified and sprinkled, not because of anything in you, but all because God set his love upon you and sought to redeem you. And you know, what an introduction, what an introduction to a letter where Peter says to the Christian church, a church that was suffering, he says to them that they're like Old Testament, like the Old Testament Israelites who are sojourning through the wilderness on towards the promised land. Peter says, you are elect exiles of the dispersion, making your way to the promised land of glory as suffering and scattered saints.

And you know, the thing is, they really were scattered saints. Because we're told that they were dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. And those areas, they were huge areas of land that are now part of modern day Turkey. And these areas, they cover nearly a thousand miles from east to west. They were scattered saints. But as Peter affirms, they were scattered because of the diaspora, they were scattered because of the dispersion. Because the dispersion took place when there was this great persecution against the church in Jerusalem. And we read about that in Acts chapter 8, that as Christians were persecuted, they fled for their lives and they were dispersed and displaced outside Jerusalem. They were dispersed and displaced into the regions of Judea and Samaria and even throughout many parts of the Roman Empire.

But you know, what's remarkable is that the scattering of saints, it was a fulfillment of Jesus's promise. Because you remember in Acts chapter 1, Jesus said to his church, he said, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be my witnesses. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth. My friend, as the saints were scattered, they were scattered because of suffering. And as they were scattered, so was the seed of the gospel. Because as the gospel spread, more and more people came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, that's why, that's who Peter's writing to.

[13 : 47] He's writing to scattered and suffering saints who need to be encouraged. And you know, tonight, we may not be suffering saints like those who were persecuted in the first century.

But I'm sure that you would agree that we are suffering from a lack of fellowship with one another, as friends and as family. We're suffering saints because we're scattered saints. We've experienced a diaspora. We've experienced a dispersion which has caused us to be scattered. We're scattered throughout our communities and we're confined this evening to our homes and we're unable to gather together in God's house. And you know, the longer this goes on, the harder it becomes. But like the early Christian church, we need a word of encouragement. And we really do need a word of encouragement.

And what better word of encouragement is there than to be reminded that we have a sure salvation? We have a sure salvation. We may be scattered saints, but Peter reminds us we have a sure salvation.

And that's what I want us to see secondly. Sure salvation. So scattered saints and sure salvation. Look at verse 3. Peter says, 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 an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

You know, despite being suffering and scattered saints, Peter reminds the Christian church that we have a reason to rejoice. And he says that our reason to rejoice is because of our sure salvation.

[15 : 52] Because our sure salvation, he says, it has come to us, not because of anything in us, but all because of the gracious hand of God. And Peter says, he says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, he says, You have a reason to rejoice. You have a reason to rejoice because you have been blessed with a sure salvation. And that word blessed at the beginning of verse 3, it's a word which we're familiar with because it's a royal term which literally means to kneel.

And it's often used in the Bible in the sense of kneeling before a king. It gives to us the image of kneeling in reverence and humility before a king.

And the image that the word blessed seeks to portray is the image of a king standing up from his throne. And those who are in the presence of the king, those who have come into the king's presence, they're kneeling and they have their head bowed and their hand outstretched and their heart is in submission.

And they're receiving something from the gracious hand of the king, something that they don't deserve. And the king is blessing them. And my friend, that's the promise of the gospel.

[17 : 10] The promise of the gospel is that when we come to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and when we come on bended knee with our head bowed and our hand outstretched and our heart in submission, the wonder of wonders is that the king of kings, he blesses us.

He blesses us. He gives to us what we don't deserve. He blesses us because blessing only comes from the gracious and merciful hand of God.

And Peter says to us, he says, if you have come to this king on bended knee with your head bowed and your hand outstretched and your heart in submission, he says, then you have a reason to rejoice.

You have a reason to rejoice because you've been blessed. You've been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. You've been blessed from the gracious hand of God.

And you've been blessed with a sure salvation. Because, you know, as Peter says, he says, you've been blessed according to his great mercy.

- [18 : 19] And he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. My friend, you've been blessed because you've been born again.
- You've been born again. You've received a spiritual birth. You have a new birth. You have a new beginning. You have a new heart. You are a new creation.
- You sing a new song. You serve a new master. You're part of a new covenant. You have new life and you have a living hope. And it's all because, he says, it's all because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- But more than that, says Peter, you've not only been blessed with grace by the way, but you've also been blessed with the promise of glory in the end. Because you have an inheritance, he says in verse 4, you have an inheritance that's incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, but has been reserved and kept in heaven for you.
- You've been blessed, says Peter, with treasures beyond the veil of this world. And my friend, this world may be for you a veil of tears. A veil of tears through trial and testing and tribulation.
- [19 : 36] And these things, they may be in your experience because of sin, suffering, sickness or sorrow. But you know, what I find beautiful is that Peter assures us that there's not only an inheritance being kept in heaven for us, but as those who have been blessed by the gracious and merciful hand of the king, we are being kept for heaven.
- We are being kept. We are being kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. And you know, this word kept, I love this word kept.
- It means to guard or to watch. And it's a military term. And it carries with it the idea of a soldier standing on guard. In which the soldier, he would keep the area safe.
- He would guard the area with his own life. And he would carefully watch over it. And what Peter is saying is that we are blessed because we have an inheritance that's been kept for us.
- And we're being kept for that inheritance. And we're being kept because the truth is, we can't keep ourselves. As one of our elders would often say, the first step after being saved is being kept.
- [21 : 03] The first step after being saved is being kept. And we're kept, says Peter, by the power of God. We're kept because the Lord is our keeper.
- You know, is that not what we're assured in Psalm 121? Because Psalm 121, we'll sing it at the end of our service. Psalm 121 is the keeper's psalm.
- In which the psalmist, he encourages us to lift our eyes beyond the valley and the hills of this world and look to the Lord. Because he's the one who promises to keep and to guard and to watch over his people.
- He's the one who promises to keep us people and to keep their going out and their coming in from this time forth and even forevermore. My friend, we're blessed, says Peter.
- We're blessed because we're being kept. We're blessed because we're being kept. And you know, I'm sure I've told you before that I once asked an older Christian, how are you?
- [22 : 09] And her response, it wasn't the usual, I'm fine or not bad or plodding on. All she said was, I'm being kept. I'm being kept.
- And my friend, that's the hope of the Christian tonight. That's your living hope. You are blessed and you're being kept. You're blessed and you're being kept.
- And you know, whatever circumstances or situation you may be facing this evening, you're blessed because you are being kept by the power of God. We may be suffering and scattered saints, but we have a sure salvation.

And for that, says Peter, we have a reason to rejoice. Even when we're faced with testing, trials and tribulations, even these things that bring about tears, Peter says, we still have a reason to rejoice.

We still have a reason to rejoice. He says in verse six, in this you rejoice. Though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 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 honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[23 : 35] As we said, the greatest trial for the Christian in the early church was persecution. Because if you were a Christian living in the Roman Empire, it was going to affect your job, your family, your relationships.

It was even going to affect your life. Because in many ways, coming out on the side of Christ and confessing Jesus as your Lord, by doing that, it often meant that you were signing your death warrant.

But as Peter affirms, he says the furnace of testing is not to make us run from Jesus. It's to make us run to Jesus. Because, as Peter reminds us, he says there's always a purpose in it.

Peter says the trial of your faith is much more precious than gold. Gold that perishes, God is tried with fire. Of course, the imagery that Peter's drawing from by describing gold that is tried with fire, he's using the imagery of a goldsmith.

And how a goldsmith would heat gold in a smelting furnace in order to remove all those cheap impurities. But it's said that in the Eastern culture, a goldsmith, he would hold the smelting pot, he would hold the smelting pot in the furnace.

[24 : 59] And he would hold it there for such a long time until he could see his own face being reflected in the molten gold. And you know, it's a beautiful illustration of what the Lord does with his people.

Where the furnace of testing is there to make us more like Jesus. So that our life of faith might be found unto praise, honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

And you know, if there was one Christian who lived in the furnace of testing, it was Job. Job was tested on every side.

He lost his home, he lost his business, he lost his health, he even lost his family. Job lost everything and yet, the genuineness of his faith, it shone through.

And it shone through because Job acknowledged that he was in that smelting furnace. And while he was in that smelting furnace, he could say that he knows the way that I take and that when he has tried me, I will come forth as gold.

[26 : 12] And my friend, what Job discovered in the furnace of testing is what every Christian discovers in the furnace of testing. That our light affliction, it is but for a moment because it's working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

While we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen, they are just temporal. But the things that are unseen, they are eternal.

And those things which are unseen and eternal, that's what we long to see face to face. for as Peter says in verse 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, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

My friend, although you have not seen Jesus in the flesh, I'm sure that tonight you can say that you love him. And you love him because he first loved you.

[27 : 27] You love him because he has demonstrated his love towards you in dying upon the cross. You love him because he gave himself for you. You love him because he was condemned in your place.

You love him because it's his blood that cleanses you from all sin. You love him because he speaks tenderly and compassionately to you in the gospel.

You love him because he promises never to leave you and never to forsake you. You love him because despite all your faults and failures, he still loves you.

And my friend, you love him and you rejoice tonight with that inexpressible joy because you're blessed. You're being kept.

And you're being kept even in the furnace of testing. That might be where you are tonight. But you're being kept. And you're being kept because you have this great salvation, this sure salvation that one day when this pilgrimage is over and you reach the end of your salvation, you will see Jesus face to face.

[28 : 35] You see through a glass darkly now, my friend, but one day you will see him face to face. And you know, my friend, we may be scattered saints, but we have a sure salvation.

We have a sure salvation and for that we have a reason to rejoice. We have a reason to rejoice. But you know, as Peter reminds us, he reminds us that we have a living salvation and he says that our living salvation has also caused some spiritual searching.

And this is what I'd like us to consider just lastly and briefly. Spiritual searching. So scattered saints, sure salvation and spiritual searching.

Spiritual searching. Look at verse 10. Peter says, Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what portion or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

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 preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven things into which angels long to look.

[29 : 56] Now when you go to the end of 1 Peter, when you go to the end of Peter's letter, we're told there that this letter was written by the hand of a man called Silvanus or Silas and it seems that the letter was written with Peter directing Silvanus as to what he was to write.

But you know what's really interesting about 1 Peter is that Mark is also mentioned too. Mark is mentioned too and it's the Mark who was the author of the Gospel of Mark and it's actually believed that Peter was a key influence in helping Mark write his Gospel account.

Maybe like his letters Peter dictated or directed much of Mark's Gospel and what was written. But it's also interesting that Mark's Gospel was written to Christians living in Rome and the letters of 1 and 2 Peter were written from Rome which means that it could be suggested that they were all written in the same location because they were all written within a 10 year period.

Mark's Gospel was written in 60 AD 1 Peter this letter was written around 64 AD and 2 Peter was written around 67 AD.

But you know what Peter highlights here in these verses in verses 10 to 12 is not what happened AD Anno Domini in the year of our Lord.

[31 : 33] Peter draws attention in verses 10 and 11 he draws attention to what happened BC before Christ because he says that the prophets the prophets searched carefully and inquired as to what kind of person was to come.

In other words they longed to know more about this sure salvation. They longed to know more about God's gracious act in blessing sinners with a living salvation.

And Peter says that it's because of the Spirit of Christ because these prophets had the Holy Spirit dwelling in their heart they longed to know how Christ was going to be revealed.

They longed to know how all these Old Testament prophecies about Christ's suffering and resurrection they wondered how they were all going to be revealed and fulfilled.

But you know what Peter says in verse 12 it's remarkable. He says 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 preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven things into which angels long to look.

[32 : 53] What Peter says to the Christian church is that even though the Old Testament prophets were serving to give you a sure salvation they were serving to give a sure salvation because he says you have received the full revelation of Jesus Christ.

You have the full revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ and you have the full revelation of God's word in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

and with that Peter is just re-emphasizing what he said before you're blessed you're blessed he says you may be scattered saints you may be scattered through all these different regions of Pontus Galatia Cappadocia Asia Bithynia but be encouraged he says be encouraged because you have a sure salvation you are blessed you have a sure salvation a salvation says Peter that even the angels of heaven long to look into and marvel at and you know my friend what better encouragement is there this evening than to be reminded that in the gospel we have a living salvation we have a living salvation we may be scattered saints scattered throughout our community and throughout our country but we have a sure salvation a sure salvation that promises us that we are blessed we have been kept we have an inheritance awaiting us beyond the veil and even though we might have to endure the furnace for a while one day faith will give way to sight and we will see him even like he is my friend we have a sure salvation and for that we have a reason to rejoice we have a reason to rejoice well may the lord bless these few thoughts to us let us pray oh lord our gracious god we give thanks to thee for the sure salvation that is found in thy word and we thank thee lord for it for that assurance that thy word gives to us and reminds us that that Jesus has provided for us that living hope a living hope that reminds us that we are blessed that we are being kept that we have an inheritance awaiting us and that even though we might have to go through the furnace of testing and even though we have not yet seen Jesus face to face that will all take place one day that faith will give way to sight and that when we see him we will be like him and see him even as he is lord help us then we pray not to look to our circumstances or look to our situations but lord to look to our saviour to keep our eyes upon him and to know that he is with us he is by our side and he promises never to leave us and never to forsake us encourage us then lord we ask keep us we pray for we know lord that we cannot keep ourselves do us good take away our iniquity receive us graciously for Jesus sake amen