

Behind A Frowning Providence, Part 2

1 Peter 1:3-9

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, June 4, 2017

Chris mentioned being busy this morning, and I was coming into church and someone told me, they said, "Hey it's a wonderful day - beautiful day outside." And I didn't catch what they said and I thought, "Oh no. Did I miss another Canadian holiday?" You guys have a lot of holidays around here. We have them in the States too, just different days. I think I also read this week that parenthood is about learning how to say, "What?" from the other room. And so - I don't know. Anyway, connecting that to our series, this morning we're on the front end of a series called the suffering church. (I'm just kidding that's not connected - no connection at all). But we're on the front end of a series called the suffering church where we're looking at how the church should handle suffering and hardship and difficult times. If you've been with us for a while, you'll know we just finished a four month series called "Foundations of the Church" where we talked about some foundational issues. And now we want to build on that by talking about suffering.

Everyone suffers, don't they? I don't have to tell you that. Everyone goes through trials and tribulations, and the way we grow as a church is directly related to how we handle that. We handle suffering well, and we will grow. We handle it poorly, and we won't grow. Augustine, the fourth century theologian, said, "God had a Son without sin, but He never had one son without suffering." Everyone suffers. Everyone goes through pain, and the question is, when it comes to you, what are you going to do with it? When hardships come your way, how are you going to respond. When you find yourself in the hospital, when you find yourself in the funeral home, when you get a phone call in the middle of the night and it changes your world, how are you going to react to that? Here's what we're studying together in this series.

Charles Spurgeon said, "You won't go to heaven on a feather bed. You'll get there on a bed of pain." Martin Luther, in his usual blunt fashion, said, "They gave your Savior a crown of thorns. Do you really think they're going to give you a crown of roses?" He went on to say, "God can only be found in suffering. If you don't know God in suffering...", and this is typical blunt Martin Luther, he said, "If you don't know God in suffering, I can scarcely see how you even know God at all."

Suffering is just a part of life. You live in a fallen world, which means it's not as it should be. If you ever watch the news or are witness to people, like some of our folks did yesterday, and you wonder, "Why is this so backwards? Why is this so...?" You live in a world that has fallen from grace. It's fallen from the way God intended it to be. And the question we're wrestling with in this series is when you experience that, when you get caught up in the fallenness of this world, are you going to fall to pieces? Or are you going to give up and abandon the faith? Are you going to curse God and die as Job's wife did? Or are you going to respond to it in a God-honouring way?

It is said that those who know their way to God can find it in the dark. And that's what this series is about: finding God in the dark. And to do this, we're studying the book of First Peter. So, if you want to turn there with me in your Bibles, the book of First Peter.

And while you're turning there, one doctrine that comes to mind when you think of suffering is the doctrine of God's providence. You don't hear much about it today, but God's providence means that God directs all things. He moves all things towards His purpose. Some of you have heard of the town of Providence, Rhode Island. The Pilgrims named it that because they believe God led them there. That's the meaning of the word "Providence". God leads us where He wants us to go. J. Vernon McGee called Providence "the hand of God in the glove of human events." He said,

When God is not at the steering wheel, He's the backseat driver. He's the coach who calls shots from the bench. He's the unseen rudder on the Ship of State. God is the pilot at the wheel during the night. As someone has said, 'God makes great doors swing on little hinges.' God brought together a little baby's cry and a woman's heart down by the River Nile. The Lord pinched Moses, and he let out a yell. The cry reached the heart of the Princess, and God used it to change the destiny of the world. That was Providence. That was the hand of God.

And I mention this because Providence has a darker side to it. Providence doesn't always lead us to smooth places. It doesn't always lead us to a crown of roses. Sometimes it leads us to a crown of thorns.

Just a couple of Biblical examples, of this of the darker side of Providence, we might even call it the "frown of Providence". If you consider the life of Moses, the little boy who was pinched would one day grow up and murder someone, I would say that's pretty dark. Right? I can't think of anything worse than murder. Then he would go to the desert for forty years. He would get out, and he would lead Israel back into the same desert where for forty years an entire generation would die off. If you do the math, that comes to something like fifty deaths per day for forty years. If you are going to kill two million people, which is the population of Vancouver, that's the amount of Jews that went into the wilderness with Moses. If you would kill all those people, or at least a generation of them in forty years, it would come to about fifty deaths a day. Because of this some scholars think that everywhere they went, Israel left behind a graveyard. Everywhere they stopped, it was just bodies everywhere. And Moses led them through that. Why? Because the hand of Providence led him there. The hand of God took him through that dark place. God doesn't always lead us through smooth waters. Sometimes He takes us through storms.

Another example of this is consider the life of Joseph. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. That was pretty dark. They sold him actually to his cousins, the Ishmaelites, who in turn sold him to Potiphar, who in turn threw him in prison for refusing to sleep with his wife. And Joseph would stay in prison for thirteen years. Why? Because the hand of Providence led him there. Providence has a darker side to it. It's not always full of fun and games. It's not always full of light. But the good news I have for you this morning is, God doesn't leave us that way. The good news is if you are in Christ, the Providence does bring us into the light.

Consider the life of Moses, for a moment. He murdered someone. He hid out in the desert. He watched entire generation die. But the young ones lived. The ones under military age survived, became a great nation, and took over the Promised Land because of Moses. Consider the life of Joseph. He was sold into slavery, sent to prison. But when he got out, Pharaoh made him the second highest ruler in the kingdom, and the Lord used him to save millions. Providence has a brighter side to it, And that's what we're looking at here in the book of first Peter.

First Peter tells us, chapter one tells us, that our trials brings us to Christ. That's the point of them. If you're a believer, that's the lighter side of God's providence. If you would read in First Peter 1 verses 1 through 9 it says,

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade

away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Just to show you what Peter is saying here. If you notice this passage starts out, "Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ to those who reside as aliens and are scattered." That word scattered is *diaspora* in Greek, or, "dispersion". It referred to the time when the Babylonians and Persians took over the ancient world and dispersed the people. They scattered them everywhere. They took the Egyptians and scattered them to Rome. They took the Africans and scattered them into Europe. They scattered everybody everywhere, and Peter's audience, it says, were scattered to these places (in verse one): Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. In other words they experienced the dark providence of God. They were suffering. This is not where they intended to be. Many of you are here in Canada because either you or your parents or your grandparents intended to come here. They did not intend to land in these places. This was forced on them. But Peter says there is a light behind all of that.

For one thing, if you notice, it led to their salvation. Verse 1 says, "they were chosen". That's a salvific term, "chosen to salvation" is the idea. "If you stayed at home," Peter says, "you might never have heard the gospel." He says, "If you weren't dispersed to these places, you might have stayed lost and gone to hell. It was God's gracious providence that led you here to be saved." Verse 2 also says it was done to sanctify you.

They say that persecution purifies. Trials wash us off, so to speak. They burn off the dross. Peter says this had that effect on you. Verse 3 says you as a result you have grace and peace. As a result you have assurance. Peter says, "If you can love God through all of this mess, you can love Him anywhere. If you can follow Christ through the fire like this, you can follow Him anywhere, and you have done that, so you should have peace." But the point is that all of this led them to Christ. All the pain and heartache of being displaced brought them to salvation.

And, by the way, some of you guys can relate to this. Some of you have told me, "If God didn't bring me through that trial, I never would have become a Christian." Does anybody say "amen" to that? "If God didn't make me suffer in the hospital, suffer at work, suffer at school, suffer in that relationship, I never would have believed." I've talked to some people in our church family who say, "If I was never on drugs, I don't think I ever would've gotten saved. I thank God for putting me through that hell. I don't miss the drugs. I don't want the drugs. They ruin my health. They ruin my work. They ruined my family, but they lead me to Christ. They took me to rock bottom. Those drugs brought me to the end of myself, so I praise God for them."

My friends this is the kind of God we serve. This is what Peter is saying. He takes bad things, like drugs, and He uses them for our good. He takes terrible things, like a trip to the hospital, or the loss of a job, or the death of a family member, and He uses it to save us.

The Puritans used to say, "There's honey at the end of the rod." There's sweetness at the end of the beating. And maybe some of you need to hear that today. Maybe you're in a trial. Maybe you're in a bad place - you're suffering at life, suffering at work, suffering at school. Can I tell you that God may be using that to lead you to Christ? I don't know the mind of God. I don't know His will, but He could be using that to save you. He doesn't waste your suffering. He doesn't waste your pain.

And He might be using all of that to lead you to Himself for the first time. He might be wanting to give you honey at the end of the rod. And let's see how Peter explains that in this passage. He goes on to develop this.

And so, if you're taking notes, in First Peter one, we're going to look in verses three through nine. Peter tells us that God's providence leads us to three things when it concerns salvation. So if you're taking notes, God's providence leads us to three things, a couple of things where it concerns salvation. And the first one is this: It leads us to a new birth.

If you're a believer in here this morning, you have had a new birth. You understand that? You guys ever heard of a born again Christian? Can I tell you there's no such thing as a non-born again Christian? If you're a Christian, you've been born again. If you're not, it's because you haven't been. But if you're a believer or not this morning, your trials can lead you to a new birth. That's one reason God gives them to us. That's one reason He takes us through the darkness. If you read in verse 3, Peter says it this way, he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

The phrase "born again" is only used two times in the Bible. It's used once here, and it's used again down in verse 23. But it means "to start again" or "to get a second chance in life." When you're born, you get a chance at life. When you're born again, you get a second chance at life. A new chance. God does this at salvation through a miracle of the Holy Spirit. He gives us a chance to start all over again. He recreates life for us. And the Bible says it's a bunch of different ways. So let me just explain some of these to you, because I think it really draws out what Peter is saying here.

John Chapter 5 calls it a resurrection of the soul. Peter mentions Jesus resurrection here in verse 3. But John 5 says that if you believe in the resurrection, if you believe in Jesus physical resurrection, God will resurrect your soul. He will bring your soul back from the dead.

Some of you witnessed our baptism from a couple of weeks ago. Lord willing we'll have another one here in a couple of weeks. But when someone is baptized, they go down into the water, and then they come back up again. That's a physical symbol of a resurrection. The Scriptures tell us that when you're saved, your soul goes down into death, the death of the cross, and it comes back up again to new life. Ezekiel says it's like getting a new heart, or a new soul. Ezekiel 36 verse 26 says, "Moreover I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh." "Flesh for stone" Ezekiel says. Some of you this morning you feel like your heart is dead and cold inside you. Ezekiel says you can have something better.

Second Corinthians 5 verse 17 says, you become a new creation. Everything is made new. The theological term for that is "regeneration", comes from the word "Genesis." Genesis is the beginning, or a creation. You're created all over again. John 9 verse 39 says you get new eyes. You once were blind but now you see. Romans 12 verse 2 says you get a new mind so that you can think again. Those of you that have been saved, you know the first thing that changes is your mind, isn't it? It's almost like the whole thing's going to be washed off and reprogrammed. You get that at salvation. Luke 22 verse 20 says you get a new covenant so you can approach God a new way. Ephesians 2 verse 15 says you become a new man. You get the idea. New, new, new. The new birth makes all things new. It create recreates all of life, so that everything is now different. Everything is fresh. And if you have this, Peter says in verse 3, you have a new hope.

Verse 3 says you are born again to a living hope. That word "living" means it's alive. It is vital It has energy to it. As one man said it: "If you're a Christian, you don't have to be saved everywhere

but on your face." You guys ever met someone who was saved everywhere but on their face? You know, they talk like a Christian, they look like a Christian, but they never smile. You guys know what I'm talking about? Oh, come on, don't look at me like that. You guys know what I'm talking about. You've met people like that. Peter says you don't have to be that way. You can smile. You're born again. You're forgiven.

The U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "I would have become a pastor if the pastors I knew didn't act like undertakers. They were miserable." I told you Spurgeon talked about the pastor with the "Beware of the Dog" sign on his face, you know? There's no reason to be like that. Even in your trials, even in you're suffering, even in your heartache, you can have hope - a living hope. I mean, if you have a soul that is alive, you have a hope that is alive. If you have a heart that is breathing and beating for God, you have a joy that's like that. Lost people don't have this. They don't have life, so they don't have hope. They don't have spiritual life, anyway.

Voltaire, the famous atheist, he said, "I wish I had never been born. I have absolutely no joy." Why did Voltaire say that? Because he had no spiritual life. He had no second chance. He said, "If I mess it up in this life, I've got nothing else to look forward to." The poet Lord Byron said, "the worm, the canker and the grief are all mine." Jay Gould, the American millionaire, said, "I'm the most miserable man on earth." One quote I thought that was very interesting, was very insightful, was the atheist (and I studied this guy in philosophy - I remember this guy): Jean-Paul Sartre. He said, "I want to die with hope but, hope needs a foundation, and I don't have one."

Friends, can I tell you this morning you have a foundation to your hope? You have something to look forward to. You have a new birth. Therefore, you don't have to talk like these men. If you mess up a thousand times, it's only one step back to God. If you sinned over and over and over again, all you have to do is repent once because you've been born again.

In the words of one author, "You don't need a change of life, you need an exchange of life." You need to trade your life for God's life. You need to trade your sins for His righteousness. And this is what God has allowed you to do. And to get through suffering, you have to remember this. This is how you get through trials, by trusting in the new birth. Listen friends, at the end of the day, Christians suffer just like non-Christians do. The difference is that we have hope, the difference is that we can smile through it. Which leads me to ask, can you smile this morning? Do you have joy in the midst of your suffering? Do you taste honey at the end of the rod? Do you feel a good hand guiding you through your trials?

A friend of mine once said he feels like he's being pushed through life, but he knows that the hand that is pushing him is a good hand. Can you say that this morning? Are you saved everywhere but on your face? Do you talk like a Christian, look like a Christian, but you have no joy?

When's the last time you got excited about church? Listen we're a new church. It doesn't get any more exciting than a new church. The best thing about having a new church is, we can mess up real bad, and it's okay, because we're new, you know? PowerPoint doesn't work? That's all right. We're new, you know? Preach a bad sermon? That's okay. I'm a new Pastor, you guys can still like me at the end of the day - it's all right. When's the last time you got excited about coming to a new church? When's the last time you went to the hospital and people said, "There's something different about that one."

The point of suffering is to make us different. It's to make a stand out. It's to remind us that if you have new life in Christ, you can act in a new way. Even though the road is dark, you can smile. Even though the pain is bad, you can smile. And that leads to another thing God's providence brings us to when it relates to salvation. It leads us to a new birth. It also leads us, and this is even more

exciting I think, to an inheritance. If you get a new birth, you're going to have a new inheritance. Does that make sense?

In the ancient world, your inheritance was directly tied to your birth. Very similar to the way it is today. Peter says if you're born again by the power of God, then you will inherit the blessings of God. Does that make sense? You have a new Dad, you have a new family. You're going to get a new inheritance. And that should get you through your suffering. You're going to a better place. No matter how bad this world is, the next one is better.

And if you read on in verses 3-4 it says, "3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,"

These people, Peter's audience, would have really picked up on this word "inheritance", because when they were dispersed they lost their first inheritance. When they were kicked out of their homes and scattered to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. They lost everything they owned. Their bank accounts were seized. Their crops were stolen from them. Their earthly savings were wiped out. "But that's okay", Peter says, "because you have a new birth, and you get a new inheritance. You have new property now, spiritually speaking."

And if you notice, this inheritance is so great that it can only be described in negative terms. So if you look at the terms Peter uses here, it's almost like it's so great to him, he can't even express it in positive terms. They're all negative.

For instance, he says, "it's imperishable." It cannot perish. It won't rot or decay. In the words of Matthew 6 you remember this, "moth and rust cannot destroy it and thieves will not break in and steal." These people had their possessions stolen from them. Peter says, thieves will not steal this.

Another way to look at that, when this inheritance is a thousand years old, it will still have a thousand more to go. I don't know about you guys, but I've just got into this whole business of getting a retirement account. Boy, you gotta mess with that stuff over and over again, don't you? Move it around here and change it. You don't have to do all that with this - it stays put. It's also undefiled.

That's another way to describe this. Sin cannot defile it. Sin defiles everything it touches. It ruins everything. That's a reason we suffer so much in this life, because this life is full of sin. Peter says, sin can't touch this. The devil and his demons can't do anything about it. As a result, it won't fade away, he says.

That word referred to a flower that would not wither or grow old. This inheritance would never lose its beauty. It will never lose its value. But the point is, this is what you have to look forward to. This is what you set your hope on: you set it on the future - not the present but the future.

I was talking with someone the other day and he said, "You know, this life is so short. I want to live for eternity." That's what Peter says here. You're not caught up in the trials and the difficulties and problems of this life, you're thinking about the next one.

You could look at it another way: Heaven is the safest place in the universe. Do you get that? There is nothing safer than heaven. And that's where your future lies. Heaven is God's home. It's where He resides. And since nothing can touch Him there, nothing can touch you there. And your trials can't hurt your mansions. Your suffering can't ruin the streets of gold, they can't even touch it. I mean,

this life can hurt you and hit you and beat up on you, but it can't beat up on this, because it doesn't depend on you.

You know when you were born, I wasn't there personally, but I'm guessing no one shook your little baby hand and say, "Way to go. Congratulations! You just birthed yourself." Anybody had that experience? Alright, in a similar way, when you get to heaven, no one is going to come up and shake your hand and say, "Way to go! You earned this." Doesn't depend on you. It depends on God, which means, you can't mess this up. Amen? Anybody else afraid of messing up Heaven? Is anybody else afraid of one day sinning so badly, God's going to say, "That's it. I'm through with you." It won't happen. You can't mess this up. You didn't earn it. You can't lose it.

I Think it was Randy Alcorn would told the story of a little boy who was walking with his six-foot-four daddy through a parking lot after a football game, and the crowd was hostile. They were violent, because the home team lost and they were drinking and going nuts, and all this stuff. But Randy Alcorn said, the boy was fine, because he held his daddy's hand. And since no one could touch him, no one could touch him without going through his dad. Friends, nobody can touch you eternally without going through your Dad. Peter says in verse 4, this is reserved in heaven for you. The whole idea of that, we'll get into this in a minute, is that all the hosts of heaven are protecting this in a safety deposit box that nothing can even touch.

If you're in Christ. Nobody can hurt you without God's permission. Every trial you face, every sickness you encounter, every disappointment that comes your way is all ordained by a sovereign, Almighty God who loves you and cares for you.

To tell another story, a little girl died, and her father went with her body to the grave side to bury her. And he was weeping as he did so. He was pretty broken up about it. And finally the man locked the casket. (It was one of those old fashioned caskets with the lock on it). So he locked it, and he gave the key to the minister and he said, "Here you are. The key is yours now." And the minister said, "No it's not. It's God's. And one day He will come back, and open it."

Friends, this is where your hope lies if you are in Christ: one day, God will come back to unlock the casket. One day, He's going to return and give you an inheritance.

They say that a bee can only sting you once - death can only sting you once. Sickness can only sting you once. Disease can only sting you once. That bad job, that bad salary, that bad neighbor, that bad family member, that bad "whatever" can only sting you once. All you have to suffer is sixty, seventy, eighty years and that's it, then you go to heaven. All you have to wait is a couple of decades, and then it's over and you get your reward. How is that? How painful is that?

And I want to tell you this morning, if you're without Christ God will open your casket too, but it won't be to reward you. It will be to punish you.

As I was reading this, I was getting so excited I was thinking, "Man, this is awesome. This is really good stuff." Peter is writing to people who are suffering going through a hard time. And he starts by just diving into all this rich theology. And then I got to thinking, "But this doesn't do any good to someone who doesn't believe that." I mean if you don't trust Christ for a new birth, if you think your first birth was good enough, if you don't trust Him for your inheritance, and you're saying, "Boy I'm going to go to heaven, and they're going to shake my hand because I'm going earn this." None of this applies to you. And God will open your casket one day, and you will face Him, and you will wish you had never been born. In the words of J.C. Ryle, "A day will come when those who have not been born again will wish they had never been born at all." And if that applies to you, let me tell you it doesn't have to be this way.

I mean there is hope for you. You can have a new life and you can have a new birth and a new creation. And this leads to one more thing God's providence brings us to concerning salvation, and that is: protection. I think we could round it off with this in verse 5: God's providence brings us protection.

If you're in Christ, you have the protection of God. I can't think of anything more discomfoting than being in a place you didn't choose. These people were probably under masters they didn't choose. They were probably doing jobs they didn't choose. They probably felt extremely vulnerable. And Peter says you have the protection of God. The strongest arms in the universe are holding you. If you're reading in verse 5, he says it this way. He says (let me start in verse 4) you've been born again "to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

That word "protected" is an interesting one in Greek because it's in a continuous tense, which means this is an ongoing protection. You are protected over and over and over again is the idea here. It doesn't just happen one time, and that's it. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three-hundred and sixty-five days a year, God is watching over you. He doesn't take holidays, Canadian or American. When you go to the hospital God is watching over you. When you lose your job God is watching over you. When you get dispersed and scattered and thrown all over the place God is watching over you.

And Peter says this will be revealed in the last time. That phrase "last time" refers to judgment day. So this is ultimately what this is referring to. "When Judgment Day comes," Peter says, "you will be safe, because you're under the protection of God." You'll be safe in the hospital and you'll be safe on judgment day you'll be safe in this life and you'll be safe in the next one. That's what God's providence gives you. When God comes to destroy the world, He won't destroy you, if you trust in Him. But there's a corollary to that. And that is, if you don't trust in Christ, you have no protection.

If you go through this life and say, "I'm okay. I don't need help with that. I don't need a new birth. I'm fine." Then Judgment Day will come, and God will unlock the casket, and you will have no one to stand up for you. R.C. Sproul says it in an interesting way. He says, "We will all be saved by the law." He says, "Either we will be saved because Jesus Christ kept the law in our place, or we will be lost because we try to keep it ourselves." I mean the point is, without Jesus you have no protection. Without Jesus when you stand before God, there is no mediator. And the holy, perfect wrath of an Almighty God will be poured out on you with nothing to buffer it.

This week I was looking at Facebook which is a wonderful source of theology and sound thinking. Man alive. The stuff you see on Facebook...I won't mention any names and...no, I'm kidding. Everybody here posted good stuff this week. But I saw it from somewhere else, and it said, "Never forget that time is short, and you have to make it count. So be sure to use the good china. Go on the long trip. Eat the big piece of cake. Watch the late night movie. Read your favorite book, and take a chance on life." Now as a pastor, I'm studying this passage this week and I got to thinking. So if I'm in the hospital with a busted leg, you're telling me I need to eat some cake. Have you ever had cake at the hospital? You know. When my loved one dies, and I'm sitting at the funeral home, and my whole world is collapsing all around me, I need to use the good china. I don't think that's what they meant, but I was thinking about this. Let me take it up one more notch, when I stand before God on judgment day, and the books are open, and God looks at my life - all my sin and all my evil deeds, every careless word - you're telling me to go on a long trip? Friends you need more than a long trip on judgment day. You need protection. You need Jesus Christ.

I'm afraid some of you might be trying to get through your trials this way today, with cake and movies and china. You get through your problems with diversions. You just don't want to think about the real issues in life. And I'm here to tell you that won't work. Not in the last time. Not on Judgment Day. You're going to need more than diversions. You need a new birth. You need an inheritance that is guarded and doesn't depend on you, and you need protection, forgiveness. And you can have it.

That's a good news I have for you this morning. You can have hope in the midst of your suffering. You know, if you walk through this passage, Peter goes on and it's just hope after hope after hope. Good news after good news after good news for these people who are suffering. Verse 6 says you can have joy. "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,". That word "joy" or "rejoice" occurs three times in this passage. Over and over and over again Peter says, "have joy...have joy...have joy," because your hope is in something greater.

In verse 7 he says you can offer praise to God. It says, "so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;". It doesn't take much faith to praise God when everything is going wonderful. You win an Oscar or you score a touchdown in a football game, it takes a lot of faith to praise God and when you don't. That's what he's saying.

Verse 8 says you can learn to love God for this: "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,". I think it was Sarah Edwards, Jonathan Edwards' wife. When Edwards died he was in his fifties, and it came out of nowhere. The family wasn't expecting it. And his wife wrote a letter to their daughter saying that her husband had died. And in it she said, "We are going to kiss the hand that bears the rod." That's what Peter says here. He says even in your trials, you can learn to love God. Kiss His hand. And as a result of all this you can have salvation.

That's what verse 9 says, "obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls." You can be saved through all this. You can taste honey at the end of the rod. You can see a smiling face behind the frown. All this joy and hope and happiness can be yours. All the new birth and inheritance and protection of God can belong to you, if you would trust in Jesus. Come to Jesus. hope in Jesus. If you notice in the passage that this all free.

He doesn't get the verse 10 and say, "Oh by the way, it's going to cost seven-hundred and fifty-thousand dollars." This is free. You don't earn it. God does it all. You just have to come with open arms. You just have to trust in the Son. will you do that today? Will you come to Him with open arms? Who knows, I don't know the will of God, but who knows that God may have put some of you in here at this hour to learn all of this.

There are no mistakes in God's universe. Everything happens for a purpose. Maybe the purpose was for you to believe. Maybe God is bringing you through trials and letting you suffer and letting life just fall out from under you so you can taste honey at the end of the rod. Let me pray for you now that if you haven't believed, you would trust in Christ.