

Part 2: The Hope of Home

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I want to open up today by reading **Psalm 46:1-11**.

Here we have in this Psalm a picture of the whole world teetering, nations raging, and seas roaring with foam, but in the middle is the hope of a river. A river which makes the people of God, living in the city of God, glad.

This river and this scene sound awfully similar to the hope John gives us in Revelation where he says, "The angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. 22:1). And it's perhaps this distant vision of the future which leads the Psalmist to say: "Be still and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

Since we gathered last week, we have felt the mountains begin to slouch. We feel the anxiety of raging nations and roaring seas. COVID-19 in our city, fear in our homes, emptied store shelves, and all sorts of pressure on the internet.

Which means in light of the physical fears we might have we are also burdened in our information age with how we are to feel towards these concerns. Some people scold us for not being serious enough, so we start to take it seriously. Then some people tell us to lighten up, so we lighten up. Until we see the next article or next post.

But here as we gather, in what will probably be our last meeting for a while, we are reminded of the peace that God's word brings. God, the wonderful, reigning, exalted, ruling, saving, river producing God, tells us how to feel in light of how he has acted in the gospel.

As this week goes on we will get you all sorts of information. We want to let you know what this church will look like should we be prohibited from meeting. We want you to know how church members who are healthy can help those members who are at risk. There are so many practical things, and human comforts which we will communicate.

But today we need to have our hearts spoken to with wisdom far more needed. The only message which says to a melting world, "Be still, though everything melts. You might not know how to feel, but you can know that I am God and no virus or building fund will alter your good in my glory."

Last week we started a series in 1 Peter, and we are going to continue in that today and how wonderfully timely this text is. Peter reminded us last week that those who are saved by Jesus are called "elect exiles."

Meaning this, either in confrontation with those who are spiritually opposed to the gospel, or in experience with a physical world broken itself by the wages of sin, you will be reminded of how inhospitable this land is. This is not the world we were made to live in. We were made for something better. But sin disrupted that.

But as we are reminded of our status as exiles, we are also reminded that we are elect exiles. Loved by Jesus Christ. Peter wrote this book to a collection of churches scattered around modern day Turkey. And those churches were fearful and confused at the increasing persecution which was mounting against them on account of the gospel.

And here is the wonder of God's word. While the reason for our fears might at this moment be unique, the emotions which Peter seeks to speak to are the same emotions we might be wrestling with today. What is happening? How am I to feel? What does it look like to be a Christian when it seems everything is changing?

But to be loved by Jesus is to realize that in the trials and storms of life, God has not abandoned you. God is always with us. And to show that both Peter and the Psalmist appeal to the plan of God to bring his people out of their wilderness.

It is the plan of God, his plan for his glory, which gives us hope even when we don't know how to feel. It fixes our eyes on something and compels us to things that emotion applied from the outside could never do.

One day we believers will sit on the banks of the river of the Lamb, and it's that idea that shapes how we respond on the deck of a storm tossed ship.

I grew up watching re-runs of the TV show MASH. The show followed a military hospital in Korea during the Korean War. One of the characters was named, Maxwell Q. Klinger. And Klinger was from Toledo, Ohio. He loved Toledo. All he would do was go on and on about his love for Toledo. And for the majority of the show Klinger tried to do all sorts of crazy antics in order to be discharged from the war so that he could go back to his beloved home.

But at the end of the show, Klinger fell in love with a young Korean woman, who didn't want to leave Korea. And when everyone was boarding the helicopters ready to be taken back to their home, Klinger asked Colonel Potter what he should do to which Potter replied: "When you're in love, you're always in trouble; all you can do is either stop loving them, or love them a whole lot more."

And to everyone's surprise, Klinger stayed in Korea and married Soon Lee. Why? Did Toledo change? Did the conditions of Korea become magically better? No, but in these things his heart was captivated by a love which compelled him.

When we are faced with trials, suffering, confusion and discomfort as Christians there are always and only two options, to stop loving Jesus and to try to find hope in the Toledo's of our heart, or to start loving him a whole lot more.

This is the message Peter wants us to see today, he wants us to see how wonderful and compelling the person of Jesus is so that when you are confronted with the less than ideal pictures of this broken world, you are smitten with affection towards the savior who was broken for you. And as a result, you will know exactly how to respond.

For Klinger, a life spent with Soon Lee made the mess of Korea worth it. And for Peter, it is the glorious end of an eternity with Jesus which makes life on this broken world worth it.

The big picture today is that Jesus gives us hope in life's hard times. And Peter is going to show us this today by stressing three aspects of the gospel: **the nature of the gospel, the effect of the gospel, and the reward of the gospel**. All of which leads to his point of application: **joyful endurance**.

Let me read our whole text for us today and then we will dive into it: **1 Peter 1:3-12**.

To a church who like us was anxious and wanting clear direct help, Peter starts by praising God.

When we are fearful, when we face difficulties in fighting sin or living out the Christian faith we are so prone to five step programs which promise immediate relief. But Peter starts out this letter by praising God: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

And this might seem so small and so simple but we can't afford to rush past this: there is nothing more practical than the worship of God. Worship changes us, and we were made to worship God.

To think that Peter could bring grace and peace to us without helping us worship is to think that someone might help a chef who is in a slump by simply giving him a bunch of microwave meals. Sure it might seem like an immediate help, but long term the chef must learn to cook. So too, when things are tough, Christians must learn to worship.

And Peter knows that our desires for the practical and tangible often cause us to rush past the gospel but here Peter begins to slow walk us through it: **1 Peter 1:3-5**.

Has anyone in here watched "Antique Roadshow"? For those who don't know this was the American Idol before American Idol. People would take old junk from their attic and stand in line for a long period of time so that someone could assess their antique and assign a value to it.

The largest find came in 2008 when a statue was presented which went on to be sold at auction for over 2.5 million dollars.

While we gawk at hidden value like that, Peter has just come into your attic and shown you the immense value you have in the gospel. We quickly are captivated by what we value and here he sets up salvation as the object of greatest value.

He calls us to consider first its nature: **The Nature of the gospel is mercy**. The gospel starts with "according to God's great mercy."

God is to be praised because he acts with great mercy. If God only responded to our own efforts then he is hardly to be praised. If the gospel highlights our work, then it will always fail to captivate us.

But God's glory in salvation doesn't start with man's might it starts with God's mercy. God moves towards his people because he is a merciful God. As part of the Coronavirus shut downs, the NBA has been shut down. That means that for most of the concession and stadium workers they just lost their income. But a collection of players and owners around the league are donating money to pay those employees for the games they are missing.

Do you think that maybe when those workers get their next pay check it will have a different effect on them? In the past, no one marveled at their paycheck because it was their due. Maybe some of them even bemoaned it because they thought they deserved more. But when they get this next check they will realize that they did nothing for it. Their time card showed what they deserved: nothing. But in mercy they didn't get what they deserved and instead got what they didn't. That's mercy.

In our sin we don't just deserve nothing, we deserve death, eternal judgment, separation from God. But God is going to act towards sinners in the gospel according to his great mercy.

If we think that we had anything to do with our salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ then Jesus will never be of comfort to us. We will always feel like we need to do something in order to bring God into our mess, but Jesus has already entered our mess in mercy.

What does that mercy look like? Consider the effect of the gospel. **The effect of the gospel is conversion. 1 Peter 1:3.**

Paul tells us in Romans that the wages of sin is death. But here, those who have received mercy are dripping with new life. Did you notice the words Peter chose to use: born again, to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we too have newness of life. We are converted. We are new people in Jesus, given new birth through his work, left to live for a living hope.

Now the word "born again" comes with cultural baggage in America. We often use born again as a bench-mark for salvation, and certainly it is. But we often communicate the idea of being "a born again believer" as not only the beginning, but the end of our Christian walk.

To be born again is to check off the only box we ever needed to check, and now we can move on living as we always have lived. But this is a total misunderstanding of the metaphor here. People are born to live.

We all know times in our life where sins or trials were enslaving and defining. For me when I became anxious pornography was always my drug. Maybe for you fears or pressures are medicated by another vice. But the doctrine of conversion gives us hope that when we feel certain fears, we can actually respond differently because we have been made new in Jesus Christ. There's hope!

I'm sure you've seen the movie Groundhog Day where Bill Murray is forced to relive the same day over and over again. He is literally "reborn" at the beginning of each day and the consequences of what he did yesterday are removed. This at first leads him to joy as he gets to spend time living life free from consequences but eventually he realizes how mundane and trapped he is in this life.

Most of us are amazed at our conversion because we tie the Christian life only to the removal of punishment and not to the ability to actually move on to the next day. But this is the living hope and resurrected life that Jesus gives us. Conversion pulls us forward to what's next with wonderful joy that we can live light in light of our salvation.

That's the desired effect Jesus' work has on us, it makes us new.

And lastly Peter calls us to consider **the reward of the gospel: a future inheritance.**

In his mercy he calls us to, **1 Peter 1:4-5.**

This idea of a future inheritance is actually what Peter is going to spend the rest of his time today defining for us. In the gospel we have an inheritance which is unrivaled by worldly standards and incorruptible by worldly standards. How incorruptible? It is held in the treasury of heaven itself.

In other words what Peter and Paul are saying is that there is a wonderful gift for us in our salvation but to reach it we must endure in our faith. Faith guards us for the end. You need faith! But it's not just your faith right, it is faith guarded by the power of God. What a privilege! To be saved, to receive your inheritance is to endure faithfully to the end by God's power.

This combination of God's sovereignty and our responsibility is so necessary because we must endure, this world is not our prize. If there's anything our world has shown us this week is that there must be something better than this. And there is!

To lose the future aspect of salvation is to think that God has placed his reward somewhere other than Jesus, and that is to think idolatrously.

And it's in light of this future tension that Peter says this next: **1 Peter 1:6-12.**

When we understand the nature of our salvation, the effect of our salvation and the wonderful reward of our salvation there is only one thing left to do: stop loving him, or love him a whole lot more. And this is where Peter defines the rest of our life as **Joyful Endurance.**

In this text Peter describes suffering, testing, grief and trials and yet he calls us twice to joy even joy inexpressible! How can he do this? Is Peter trying to minimize the pain and confusion suffering brings?

No. Christians shouldn't minimize the suffering we experience in this world. To act like suffering isn't real is to minimize the wonderful work of Jesus to redeem us from all of it.

But to clarify, Peter isn't calling us to have joy in our trials, but actually joy in the result of our trials: Read this again: **1 Peter 1:6-9.**

What is the result of our trials? Praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Christ, the outcome of our faith which is the salvation of our souls and the receipt of that glorious inheritance.

For Peter the end shapes our present. If the present helps us reach the end of glory, it's worth it. To illustrate this point Peter uses the illustration of refining gold.

Gold is a mineral that in its raw form isn't very valuable because it's always mixed with other minerals and metals. So to make the gold golden, they would refine it by putting it in an oven for up to five days so that the less valuable aspects would melt off. I just looked this week at the modern refinement process and this is what they do.

They take raw gold bars and they wash it up to four times in different chemical baths, then they melt it in a crucible at 1,400 degrees, then they wash it in chlorine, then they refine it once more and it turns

into a type of gold flake. Then they chemically wash it again so that it actually breaks down into a type of sand. After which it is refined again for a fourth time which produces a type of gold grain. And that gold grains is finally 99.9% gold and can be melted or pressed into whatever final form you want.

All that work to get almost, pure gold. You want to know the process God uses to purify your faith: life.

Your life is a kiln which is meant, by God's grace to test your faith. Peter includes a wonderfully odd hypothetical in here. He says, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials."

I'm not sure what your relationship is to suffering, or how much you have suffered in your life. But if I'm reading this letter, and if the qualification for suffering is simply, "if necessary," I would probably volunteer that in my life I don't think it do be necessary.

I feel pretty strongly that I can love God and endure in faith without the trials. But the reality is that if you are a Christian it is necessary. Why? Because here on this earth our faith can become so intermixed with other things that we forget what true faith looks like.

But just like the process of refinement suffering separates what is rubbish from what is of value so that we might rejoice in what endures. In other words this life is built to help you find what is safe.

You know why daredevils and inventors use test runs? Because they want to know what will break on a small scale so that it doesn't break and kill them on a large scale. The trials of life are God's grace of breaking things now so that we will learn not to rely on them later.

It is a grace that God would sometimes melt away things we once thought were valuable so that he might one day show us that was no gold at all. So when we encounter tragic and heartbreaking seasons of life, God in his mercy is pointing to the only object of faith which will endure: faith in Jesus.

The refinement of life shows us what we shouldn't value and what we should.

My oldest two children share a room and most nights end with them arguing over who gets to sleep with which stuffed animal that night. Their hearts long and lust for this animal as if it were the only thing that mattered in life.

But the irony is, when there is a bad dream, the toy is nothing to them. When they are scared at night, they might cling to the toy for a minute, but if they are truly worried they come into our room. Why? Because in that moment they know that nothing else can care for them like mom and dad.

Charles Spurgeon says it this way, **"If you place a Christian in trouble you will find that he does not want gold then--then he wants his God. When he sails along smoothly he loves to have fair weather, and wants this and that to amuse himself with on deck. But when the winds blow, all that he wants is the haven. He does not desire anything else. The bread may be moldy, but he does not care. The water may be brackish, but he does not care. He does not think of it in the storm. He only thinks about the haven."**

Jesus is the haven. Now you might think to yourself, "That's kind of vain that God would do such things so that I might simply want him." But it is not for vanity that God afflicts in this way, it is according to his

great mercy. For Jesus himself is not a novelty to be cherished in a storm, or even a parent to be clung to when scared, he is himself salvation.

In fact it is exactly the weight of the trials of life which allow us by grace to love the Jesus we cannot see and in so doing experience the comfort that this world cannot provide.

This is Peter's point when he talks about the prophets of the Old Testament. They longed to see the gospel which is proclaimed to you, this wonderful work of Jesus which saves sinners and restores them to God, this thing which angels long to look.

So I have a question for you today: Do you long for what this text longs for?

Whether you lived thousands of years ago as an Israelite, or in the more recent future as a Gentile believer, or now today, this is what was made to captivate us!

Look with me at **1 Peter 1:8-9** again.

Do you realize that one day, those who endure in faith will see Jesus. Look at what Paul says in **Colossians 3:1-4**.

Sometimes it is God's invaluable grace in our lives to cause us to wrestle with the weight of longing in this world so that we might learn to long for that moment of revelation at the end of all things.

Can you imagine that moment with me. That moment when the Jesus who took away your sins on the cross, finally takes away everything else that burdens us.

Look around this world. Do you see the brokenness? Do you feel it your heart? Does your back remind you of it in the morning? Can you imagine a world without the disgusting burden of sin? A world with no coronavirus or cancer?

In this day we could fill books with pages of the things we'd love to see removed from us. But here is the stunning thing about the value of the inheritance held up for us in Jesus. In Revelation we read about sin being destroyed and Satan being damned. And then the apostle John brings us into the New Heaven and the New Earth and you know how much time he spends describing what has been removed?

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning, nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21:4).

That's it. And what does he spend the rest of the time describing? The wonderful radiant joy of being with Jesus. That is what compels us. It is the joy of being with Jesus which makes the presence of trials bearable.

My grandparents were both members at this church for decades. My grandfather was the worship leader for a long time, and he passed away eight years ago now. Just this past year his wife, my grandmother passed away too. And I was reflecting at what that scene would be like I was struck by the weight of this text. That in that moment her faith in Jesus would have reached its desired outcome. And even if the first person she saw in heaven were my grandpa, there would be no sentimental reunion. For

in that moment the joy of my grandfather would be to show his wife to the feet of her savior and say, "Isn't he worth it?"

Would you be so compelled by the gospel to actually believe what Peter is saying here: that whatever the trial, however the duration, let it be so if it means I increase my love for Jesus. Let it be so if this is the path I take to that moment of glory.