

1 Peter 1:5-7 "Genuine Faith Will Be Refined By The Master Refiner, To His Glory"

1 Peter 1:5-7 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 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;

The place we pick up this morning is really a continuation of where we were last week. Peter was praising God for His mercy as He causes us to be born-again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And then Peter explains this hope, this inheritance, as being secure in Christ and the fact that it's imperishable, undefiled, it cannot fade away and it's reserved in heaven for us.

That word "reserved" in the Greek is *tereo* and it means to guard. It is God Himself guarding your inheritance so as to deliver you entirely before Himself.

And as we pick up in our text this same thought is continued as we read in 1Pe 1:5 "who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."

The NAS puts it this way: "who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Again, we must rejoice in the way God is actively involved in our lives. The word protected or shielded, as the NIV puts it, is a military term. And it has two senses. On the one hand it can mean guarding so as not to allow to escape.

This is the way it's used when Paul was conveying his escape from arrest in 2Co 11:32 "In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me."

But it is also used in the sense that any attack from the enemy is thwarted as we are guarded or protected from attack. And so here in our text it could be taken both ways. God guards our inheritance in the sense that He does not allow us to wander from His

presence. But He also guards us in the sense that the enemy cannot take us from His watchful care.

And by the way the Greek word used here is *in*, what is referred to, as the present participle which just means that the sense of protection from God is that we are continually being protected by our Lord. It's God's present active participation in our lives.

Again, He doesn't save us and then go on vacation saying, 'I'll see you when you arrive in heaven'. No, He is actively involved in our lives today. And our text assures us that this protection is by His power.

Praise God for that! In my strength I'd last a second or two. But my protection is found in Him as is my deliverance and it is ever present. Jesus speaks of this most sure inheritance that we possess when He says in Joh 6:39 "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."

Again in Joh 10:28-30 Jesus say's .."I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

There is no greater power than God Himself and when He says I will not lose one of you who has truly embraced Me as Lord and Savior, then He means it.

But then, Peter adds in verse 5 "...who are protected by the power of God through faith..."

The faith that our Lord gives us enables us to trust God and to follow Him. But we must be careful not to place our faith above the power of God which holds us. It's true that faith is the means by which we believe but we are not saved by faith but through faith, a faith whose object is Christ the Lord.

Paul clearly states this in Eph 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast."

We are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ as He died for the penalty of our sins. Our acceptance of that salvation is through faith. And so faith must be seen not as the source of our salvation, only Jesus is the source.

Faith is a gift enabling us to come to Christ. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--..."

Not only is our redemption a gift, but even our faith is a gift from God of which we cannot boast. And this is why some in the church have erred when they place an over-emphasis on their faith.

And so it goes; 'if you only had enough faith you would not be sick.' 'If you only had enough faith the circumstances in your life would always be joyous.' 'If you only had enough faith your pocketbooks would be overflowing.'

In these cases it's your faith which takes center stage instead of the God who gives such faith. Me, myself, and I are lifted up as we point to ourselves, as we exercise such faith which is nothing short of boasting.

I don't mean to suggest that faith is not important. It's vital. But when it's misplaced it gives rise to pride. And it's often seen as a magic tool for getting anything you want instead of trusting God in any and all circumstances.

The word-faith movement or the "name it claim it crowd" are the proponents of such teaching. And as such it is in violation of the clear teaching of God's word which places Christ as the One we boast in no matter what we encounter in life.

The word faith-movement is one of the most cruel movements to infiltrate the church because it places the individual Christian in a position of always striving to conjure up enough faith to meet the demands of always having the best in life, whether it's money, possessions or health.

I've met more frustrated Christians over the years who have been hurt by such teachings, because they didn't "have the faith", as they were taught, to be delivered from the problems of this world.

We are told to live by faith, not by sight. Faith does not promise a bed of roses, it enables us walk through this life with Christ in any and every circumstance. But what's encouraging is to know that when our faith is weak it doesn't change Christ's love for us.

Paul touches on this in 2Ti 2:13 "if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself." And in 1Co 1:9 "God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."

He's faithful to His promises, He's faithful to guard our inheritance and He's faithful to enable us to endure to the end.

One of my favorite portions of scripture is when Elijah exercised his faith as he came against King Ahab and the prophets of Baal. The Lord brought down fire and consumed the sacrifices on the altars and the Lord showed Himself as the true God. Israel humbled themselves and Elijah commanded that the prophets of Baal be killed by the edge of the sword.

What victory, what faith. And then only a couple verses later (1Kings 19:1) the faith which Elijah had seemed to vanish.

1Ki 19:1-4 "Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."

You ever feel like that? God I've had enough I can't go on. 'Oh, no you've made a negative confession. God will be displeased and will not bless you. The hordes of hell will hear you and your life will take a downward spiral with no chance of recovery unless you confess positively with all faith that you really didn't mean what you said.'

Let me share the rest of the story, as Paul Harvey would say. What happened to Elijah in his weakness? Did God smite him? Did He beat Elijah with His heavenly stick?

1Ki 19:5-7 "Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat."He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you."

In Elijah's weakness God extended grace and strength. Instead of rebuking him God gave Elijah mercy. Does this mean God doesn't care about our lack of faith? Not at all. But He knows what we

are and He knows how frail our faith can be at times. And so He comes to us when all we want to do is die, and He comforts us and gives us His refreshment and a renewed sense of Himself.

And He gently say's, "Get up and follow Me." And with that renewed sense of strength our faith is strengthened and we get up and follow.

It doesn't mean we may not stumble again, it simply means as a loving Father who is continually guarding His children, He will teach us through the situation and He will come along side us to lift us up because He will never let go of us anymore than He let go of Elijah.

But what I find interesting about this process is that the next time a trial comes along my faith has been strengthened through the last experience to where I can stand just that much more firmly in the faithfulness of my God and Savior who promises to be with me always.

But why are we protected by God like this? Peter answers it at the end of verse 5... 1Pe 1:5 "who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."

There is where our eyes need to be continually. The eye of faith, if you will, looks to our salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Our salvation includes not only a present possession of a promise, but the actual possession in time. We have salvation today by faith in Christ, but we do not actually possess it in full. By that I mean that we are not living in glorified bodies on the new earth in the very presence of Jesus Christ this moment. That is in the future. That is the fullness of our salvation.

It's like that little child being promised that new bike for Christmas but not actually possessing it until that morning as he sees it under the tree and can actually climb on it.

As far as the child was concerned the promise was just as secure as the actual bike because his mom and dad had made that promise and he can trust that what they say they will deliver on.

Now, for you and me that doesn't mean that our salvation has been partially delivered to us. We have the very Spirit of God as our down-payment who indwells us. We have the continual grace of

God working in our lives and we have present fellowship with Christ because we have been reconciled to the Father.

All of that is real and in the present. But the best is yet to come. Paul understood that and so he could say in Rom 8:18 "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

You see, he too was looking to his salvation ready to be revealed in the last time and he rejoiced, even in his sufferings.

And here is where Peter has been taking us in this letter. I told you in the beginning that the theme of this letter involves suffering in this world. But the promise has been that in our suffering God will bring us through to the very end where we will see Him face to face.

1Pe 1:6 "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials."

"In this you greatly rejoice". Rejoice in what? In your salvation, in your eternal inheritance, in your knowledge that God is the One holding you and will not let go.

But Peter reminds these Christians that the real world can be hard, but it doesn't mean that we can't still rejoice. The problem is that our rejoicing is in direct proportion to our ability to look at God and His salvation for us, instead of the circumstances we face.

And it's something we continually battle with. I don't care how spiritual you are, the weakness of your flesh wants to always take the easy way out. For Elijah, who had just seen God's mighty hand, and then went into a tail-spin, the easy way out was to be taken home to be with the Lord.

'I don't want to live any more Lord.' God responded by saying, 'I know how hard this is for you Elijah, but I've called you to Myself to be My servant, and your work for Me is not over. Let Me refresh you and get you back on your feet.'

I personally know that sometimes we wonder if God knows that we can't take any more. Believe me He knows, but He is working in and through us to strengthen us for His service to His glory. And sometimes those hard times are necessary. Peter brings this out in this verse. ..."even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials."

You mean to tell me that God deems it necessary to experience trials at times? Yes. You don't need to look much further than Job. The testing of our faith is something God uses to help us mature in our faith.

And though it seems hard at the time, when we come through the other side we will be stronger in Him and we can rejoice in that. Our rejoicing is in the results and knowing that God's hand is personally involved, not to destroy us, but to make us stronger.

James brings this out in his epistle.

Jam 1:2-4 "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

This is the reason for trials. And for that reason we can rejoice. Now I'll be the first to admit that life would be so much simpler and happier if we didn't have to go through such trials.

But you need to keep two things in mind. In a fallen world, whether you're a Christian or not you would still have trials. How much more comforting as a Christian to know that God's grace and strength will be with us in such trials.

But there's a second thing we must understand about trials. How do you know if your faith is maturing unless there is something to test it? How do you know if the fruit of the Spirit is there unless there is something to test it and show it to be real?

In life we call this process putting to practice those things we've learned. What's the point of going through years of school unless our knowledge and skills can be put to the test and in the process show that we've passed the test?

If you have a doctor you want to be very sure that his instructors pushed him to the limit of possibly failing, so that when he finally got it he had proven that he learned it, and in passing the test it will be to your benefit as well as his.

How can the fruit of the Spirit be shown unless love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control can be shown to be real in your life?

Do you think those things shine in your life more in the good times or in the bad? How do you know you've got patience unless it's tested? How do you know you've got peace unless it can be

proven in turmoil? How do you know you have self-control unless it's shown real in situations beyond your control?

It's true that at times we will fail the test. But remember it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (Phi 2:13)

In other words He's the One who wants to see you succeed. And He's the One who will enable you to do that so that He may be glorified in your life. As parents we would love to see our children succeed in life. But we know that life will not be easy for them.

But in most cases their success is beyond our control. Not with God. And as our Father He wants nothing more than our best, and most times our best comes as a result of the refining process called sanctification which proves and builds our faith.

This where Peter is going. 1Pe 1:7 "These [trials] have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Gold has always been viewed by man as a precious metal. And yet what the world deems precious God scoffs at and puts into perspective what is eternally precious in His eyes. And so it should come as no surprise that if our faith is so precious to Him, then He would refine it as gold is refined, and sometimes the heat must be put to that faith.

To get gold to melt it takes almost 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit of heat. When the gold is melted the top layer of impurities are skimmed off. You cannot refine gold without intense heat.

Likewise our faith is proven genuine through the fire. And the reason for that is not to puff ourselves up, but that it may result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

But like Shadrach, Meshac and Abednego who were thrown into the furnace for their faith in God, they were not burned by the experience, they were saved through it, because remember, there was a fourth person seen in the flames with them.

And through that experience they were able to more effectively serve their God and the One who got the glory was their Savior who was with them through the entire ordeal.

The genuineness of our faith is what God wants to demonstrate to the world. Not to showcase our faith, but to showcase our God

who gives the faith to follow Him wherever He may lead, which at times may be through the fire. But He does it to bring us out more refined and stronger so that our lives may better glorify Him.

In your trials try to keep this eternal perspective in mind. God is there with us and He graciously gives us each other, His Body, to be an encouragement to each other. This was Paul's perspective as well when he wrote to the Corinthians in his second letter.

2Co 4:16-18 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Don't lose heart. God is with us, Immanuel. He loves us with an everlasting love and has every intention of bringing us through the fire. Trust Him and love Him as you humbly seek Him and rely on His grace and strength.

Rom 8:26-28 "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God who have been called according to his purpose."