



Chippie the Parakeet never saw it coming, according to writer Max Lucado. One second he was peacefully perched in his cage, the next he was sucked in, washed up, and blown over. The problems began when Chippie's owner decided to clean Chippie's cage with a vacuum cleaner. She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage. The phone rang and she turned to pick it up. She'd barely said "hello" when *sssoopp*, Chippie got sucked in!

The bird owner gasped, put down the phone, turned off the vacuum and opened the bag. There was Chippie— still alive, but stunned. Since the bird was covered with dust and soot, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom, turned on the faucet, and held Chippie under the running water. Then, realizing that Chippie was soaked and shivering, she did what any compassionate bird owner would do... she reached for the hair dryer and blasted the pet with hot air.

Poor Chippie never knew what hit him.

A few days after the trauma, the reporter who'd initially written about the event contacted Chippie's owner to see how the bird was recovering. "Well," she replied, "Chippie doesn't sing much anymore, he just sits and stares."

It's hard not to see why. Sucked in, washed up, and blown over... that's enough to steal the song from the stoutest heart. I'm sure some of us today feel like Chippie the Parakeet. We feel that our lives have been sucked in, washed up, and blown over and maybe you don't sing much anymore. You mostly just sit and stare. I hope these verses today will put a song back in your heart.

Last week Dominic fed us well as he introduced us to this letter called 1st Peter. He showed us that Peter's primary audience were Christians in Asia Minor who were undergoing hardships of all kinds because of their faith. To expand on that, Peter wrote this letter to Christians who knew deep down that because they had placed their faith in Jesus Christ, they had become like aliens in a foreign land. Peter wrote to Christians who were suffering the consequences of living in a fallen world. Peter wrote to Christians who were asking the question, "What in the world is going on?"

Peter wrote to Christians who have been sucked in, washed up and blown over. And Peter, the pastor, wrote this letter to put the song back in their hearts. He writes to those of us who suffer physical sickness, who are unable to pay our bills, who lost a

loved one, who feel marginalized or mocked for their Christian faith. He writes to those of us who mostly now just sit and stare.

As we learned last week, Peter's first priority was to remind us of who we are and where we came from. He reminds us that when things get tough, we must remember that God chose us to be his children from the beginning. He reminds us that if we don't remember who we are, we won't know where we are going. He reminds us that if we don't remember who we are, we won't be able to make sense of what in the world is going on. As someone said, "Hell begins when hope ends." And these next verses are a message to us that hope never ends. We have been given hope in the "here and now" and hope for our future.

We can have hope in the "here and now" and in the "future" because we have been given a New Birth. Because of this new birth, Peter gives us five reasons why we can have hope in the here and now and in the future.

We Have Hope...

Because we have been born into a Living Hope

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3).

We have hope because the world changed when Christ came. Jesus died and was brought back to life. He went from being dead to being alive. Our new birth is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. When Christ rose he secured our resurrection. Because Christ rose from the dead, we know we will rise.

Why does Peter right up front call for us to praise God? Because this living hope was not accomplished by our work; it was accomplished by God's work. We couldn't accomplish it and we in no sense deserved it. We were dead. But because of his great mercy, the Holy Spirit drew us to himself and allowed us to place our faith in Christ as our Savior and we became born again. When we were born again, the living hope came to us because the Holy Spirit took up residence in us and gave us life. Our hope isn't just because he lives; our hope is because of his great mercy we shall live.

For Peter, his hope was shattered when he saw his Lord arrested. His hope was on life support when he denied him three times. And Peter's hope died when he saw his Lord die on the cross. For

Peter, at that moment, there was no future. His glory days were in the past as he remembered his three years of following his Lord. But now his Lord was in a tomb. There was nothing to look forward to.

But hope was restored. It was brought back to life. Hope was re-born in Peter when he saw his living and resurrected Lord appear to him and the other disciples through a locked door in the upper room. He then began to understand that all of God's promises had come true in Christ. From all the way back to the fall in the garden, up to the death of Christ, then to the resurrection of Christ, he now knew what God's purpose was. God was working on giving us new life—giving us a living hope for the here and now and for the future.

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead now lives in us and has allowed us to be born into a living hope. Every move we make to follow God—to honor him or to trust him—is a result of the Holy Spirit now living in us. Apart from Christ we were spiritually dead, but because of God's great mercy we have been given new life and a new purpose. As a pastor, I want you to remember that no matter how hard life is right now your past is not the best that will ever be. Your past is not as Bruce Springsteen sung, your glory days. Being born again into a living hope means God has infused purpose into your life today. Our present struggles become opportunities to see God work through us and in us for God to get the glory. Your past isn't the glory days. Your present and future are the glory days.

Because we have been born into a Protected Inheritance ...and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 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 (verses 4-5).

In other words, free from decay, nothing can cheapen it, and it will not lose value over time. It's important to remember that one of the costs of following Christ in Peter's day was the loss of earthly inheritance. A follower of Christ was likely to be shamed by their pagan family and have his inheritance taken away. No wonder Peter encouraged them about the spiritual trust waiting in heaven that no one could touch. This is a perfect passive, which means that God has already stored it up in heaven and continues to reserve it for us in the present. It is kept safe for us and down here we are kept safe for it. In Peter's mind it's likely when he thinks of inheritance he thinks about his Israelite ancestors who received the land as an inheritance and then lost it. Israel was ravaged and destroyed by invading armies. It wasn't kept for them. It perished. The glory of it faded away. The land was taken from them first in the exile and then later by Roman armies. The idea is that "this faith" is a gift from God that actually does the locking-in of this amazing inheritance. This gift of faith-giving by God makes this Trust Fund ironclad. It can't be changed. If that is

not enough, we are hopeful because this inheritance is continually being kept under guard by God's power, not our own power. As we said earlier our faith can put us in harm's way as we live out our faith as exiles, but as we see here, our faith is also a gift from God that is evidence that we are legitimate heirs.

As we sit here today, some of us may struggle with hope, you may struggle to sing because you don't feel rich in friendships, in wealth, in family, or in spiritual talents or gifts. But Peter is wanting you to know that you are moving toward incalculable riches in Christ. No matter where you are today, you are marching toward this spiritual inheritance. There will be a day in your future where this reality will overwhelm every dark day you have faced on earth. So be full of hope, God is keeping your spiritual trust fund and he is set on keeping you spiritually fit and well until you are ready to receive it.

Because we have a Proven Faith

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—(verses 6-7a).

The word "this" refers back to verses 3-5. He is saying we reflect on the hope we have because of what God has done in verses 3-5. So what is Peter saying to us? What are the trials he is referring to here? They are genuine problems Christians have living life as exiles in a world of unbelievers around them. I confess, what I am about to say is an obvious thing for me to say, but I must say it anyway. "I have a hard time rejoicing in trials. And I need to understand how I can. Shouldn't there be some greater purpose that would lead me to more of a response of joy? What am I missing?" Hopefully for you who feel sucked in, washed up and blown over these next few minutes will give you reason to rejoice.

Peter is telling us that the real purpose of any trial is to refine us and produce a genuineness of faith that results in glory to God. So we need to look at our trials as experiences controlled by God. They are not easy. They don't make us feel good going through them. But from God's perspective trials are experiences for the purpose of producing a good for his glory.

Our inheritance is kept through faith, and our faith is proven genuine through sufferings we endure. So it should give us hope that there is a greater purpose to suffering. There is a purpose to trials. They lead to a proven faith. Consider the tests Christ endured. Did his trials have a purpose? Did they ever dash his hopes? Did they ever lead him to despair? Remember what the writer of Hebrews said in chapter 12 verse 2, *"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

We have hope in the “here and now” because the trials we face today refine our faith and prepare us for a future. Trials in the here and now get us fit and ready to go and live forever with Christ. Trials prepare us for the joy set before us.

For our faith to be proven genuine, Peter uses the metaphor of metallurgy. It is really worth looking into further. Here is a picture of gold ore. There is valuable gold inside this piece of ore, but the rock is not beautiful. Ore is imperfection. This rock looks big and heavy but it isn't strong and it isn't beautiful. Although this contains gold it isn't a piece of jewelry. I look around and I see jewelry, but I don't see anyone wearing a piece of ore. This Christmas I doubt any of us bought our loved ones jewelry made of ore that contained gold. I don't see any ore pendants around anyone's neck. We want the refined, the pure, the beautiful gold, separated from the ore.

When we come to faith and Christ we are like pieces of ore. When the tests started coming, when the fire came your way, what did you do? For me, when I was under fire early in my faith, I doubted God. I panicked. I took my life back into my own hands. I questioned the wisdom of God. My faith wasn't strong and it wasn't beautiful.

There is spiritual ore that needs to be burned away. God couldn't be the faithful redeemer, the divine metallurgist and leave us in that state. So there will be times when he will boil you. He will take you where you haven't wanted to go in order to produce in you what you couldn't achieve on your own. This is redemptive love. In these trials when we feel like Chippie the Parakeet, we must resist questioning God's attentiveness, his faithfulness, his love and his power. As Christian writer and speaker Paul Tripp put it, “We need to comfort one another with the theology of uncomfortable grace.” We all want the grace of God releasing us, or giving us relief, and instead he sees fit in seasons of our lives to offer us the grace of refinement. As Jesus experienced in his life, relief and release was to come later in the future. He endured on earth so much with no relief or release.

According to God we are in the right place when we are in the middle of a necessary refinement phase, even though in the middle of it we may cry out, “God, where is the grace?” And the truth is, we are getting God's good grace. It is uncomfortable but it is still grace. Peter wants us to know that everything he is doing in our lives is being done for the glory of God. There is no better place to be, no place of greater dignity, no place of greater blessing than in some way to see our lives give glory to God.

Why do we struggle with trials? We struggle because we think life is all about our glory—the glory of our good decisions, our successes, our pleasure, our friendships, the list goes on and on. But when God challenges those things that we desire to bring glory to us, and then things do not work out well, we are tempted

to question his love, faithfulness and truth. When was the last time you envied another? That is always motivated by self-glory.

Trials burn away our pride, our self confidence and drive us to our Savior. The fire that Peter is talking about doesn't destroy, it burns away impurities and makes it stronger and more beautiful. In the same way trials don't destroy faith. Trials refine faith and make our faith stronger and more beautiful. God is so totally engaged in our spiritual growth in the here and now on earth. And that should give us hope. Did you notice that he said, we will endure these trials “for a little while”? One day trials will end. God's future glory should empower us today.

Because we have a Promised Reward

These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—[may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed] (v. 7).

When Jesus comes he will bring far more than an end to suffering, he will bring his reward of blessing. Romans 8:18 says, “*Our light and momentary troubles are achieving an eternal glory.*” It really hit me as I was thinking through this yesterday. If I love myself more than I love Christ then I am not thinking about my faith shining as praise to **him**. I am thinking about my faith shining as praise to **me**. If I love myself more than I love Christ, the refining fire will burn me, not purify me. The whole meaning of suffering transforms us when we realize that any anguish we go through can bring honor to Christ.

One of the most powerful acts of grace God gives us as exiles in a foreign land is a real time relationship with Jesus Christ. Look at what Peter says in verses 8-9.

Because we have a real time relationship with Jesus Christ

Though you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Peter is telling all exiles that even though we haven't seen Jesus, we can still have a loving relationship with him. The tense is present, meaning we can continually love him, every day spend time with him. How? Paul in Romans 5:5 says, “*that the Holy Spirit has poured out God's love into our hearts.*” In 1st John John said, “*We love because he first loved us.*” It's interesting that Peter phrases it this way because Peter had seen Jesus, he had touched Jesus. He had followed Jesus for three years of public ministry. The Christians in Asia Minor had never seen Jesus. We have never seen Jesus, yet we can still have that relationship with him in real time every day.

Peter says again that one day we will be set free from anything that oppresses us. But for life in the here and now, have hope

because the love of God has been placed in you. And the challenge is this: What is the gospel I preach to myself? Is it that anything is on the table for refining? Is it that in this trial I face, in this suffering that causes grief, that this too is God showing me love through uncomfortable grace? May God give me the grace to believe the true gospel and preach it to myself as well as others.

So concerning this salvation, this deliverance from this difficult world, Peter concludes this section of scripture:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow (verses 10-11).

The goal of the Old Testament was the same as the New Testament, to bring glory to God. Peter said that these prophets were trying to figure out how all that they said and studied pointed to a messiah. They must have studied the third chapter of the Bible that spoke of Satan eventually being defeated through the son of the woman. Or what it meant in Isaiah 53 when the anointed one was described as *“despised, rejected by men, a man of suffering, familiar with pain, who took up our pain, and bore our sufferings, and was seen as punished by God. And he was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, and the punishment that brought us peace was on him. And he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent”* (verses 3-7).

The point is that Christ was leading these prophets. This was all part of his plan. For hundreds of years God was always

in control and then at a particular point in time Jesus would come because God had placed his love on you and me. Jesus was willing to subject himself in order to die to turn the wrath of God that we deserved away from us and onto himself. He faced all the hardships our fallen world could offer and every hardship we could ever imagine experiencing. He faced hunger, temptation, injustice, betrayal, torture, loneliness, all to give us such a privileged position.

Because we have a Privileged Position

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things (v. 12).

There were glories that followed Jesus' suffering. Jesus' resurrection, Jesus' ascension, but also the gospel of Jesus Christ which exploded on the scene. And this gospel gives grace, even uncomfortable grace, all for God's glory. Peter wanted to give us a taste of this today to give us hope in the here and now.

For any here today that feel sucked in, washed up, and blown over by a fallen world, for anyone who looks at their fallen world and cries out, “What is going on?” may Peter's words put a new song of praise in your heart. May the living hope you have been given in the here and now encourage you to hang in there for God's glory. These are the glory days.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.