

## Perspectives

1 Peter 1:10-12

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, June 18, 2017

In honour of Father's Day, I spent most of the service holding a toy car in my hand my son had put there. I don't know if any of the other fathers in here experienced that this morning. It's always a blessing. Let's remember Father's Day. And also, in honour of this sermon series, I decided to put to practice what I've been preaching by getting sick last week. We've been talking about suffering a little bit, and I woke up Friday morning, and I didn't have a voice. I thank you, Larry Nelson, for filling in for me last week. I really, really appreciated it and enjoying hearing his message online on valuing the church. It was excellent.

If you're joining us for the first time this morning, we're on the front end of a series called "The Suffering Church," where we're talking about how the church should handle pain and suffering. I also want to tell you, I put this in the practice list this last week by watching the Nashville Predators lose in the Stanley Cup Finals. Anybody else see that? I'm originally from Tennessee and I was looking forward to telling you how Tennessee has the best hockey in the world. And they lost, so I suffered through that. Actually, I was talking to my roommate from college. He lives in Nashville where the Predators are, and he said, "What do people in Canada think about the Predators?" And I said, "Well, where are all the players from, Dan?" He said, "They're all from Canada." I said, "That's what they think about it." "They think it's their team anyway." Then I found out you can't watch the NBA Playoffs online in Canada, or at least, I don't know how to do it. Anyway, so there was a lot of weeping and wailing at my house this week.

I got to put this into practice. And I say that as a joke, but everybody suffers for real, don't they? Everybody experiences pain, real pain, not the silly stuff I was talking about. As I was preparing for this sermon, I came across a cartoon of two chickens sitting on a fence, and one chicken looked at the other, and said, "Do you think everybody suffers?" And the other chicken replied, "No, that's just you. The rest of us are having a great time." That's not true. Everybody's not having a great time, especially when you try to grow, especially when you try to do something for the Lord. That's hard.

I don't know if you've seen children grow lately, but growing is painful. There's a lot of falling down and getting back up again in childhood. My children spend the majority of their time on the floor. That's childhood. That's growth. And it's the same way when you try to grow as a church, there's a lot of falling down in that. Mark Dever was once interviewed and asked by a younger man in the ministry, "How did you get your church to grow to the size it is today?" And he was telling the man some tips, and some things that he learned, and then he said, "Now, wait a minute. I'm not telling you to do all that." He said, "I'm not telling you to do all the things we did." He said, "We just tried this, and when it failed, we tried something else. And we tried this over here, and when that failed, we tried something else. But I'm not telling you to fail in the areas that we did." That's how the church grows, through failure, through trial and error. We fall down, and when this thing here doesn't work, we try something else.

And that's what we're talking about in our series in the book of 1 Peter. If you turn there with me in your Bibles (to the book of 1 Peter), 1 Peter was written to a church that was suffering. It was written to a church that was falling down and trying to get back up again. If you notice in the very first verse of the book, 1 Peter 1:1, it says that this letter was written "To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia." That word "scatter" in Greek is the word *diaspora* 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 over Egypt and they scattered the Egyptians to Rome, or they took over Rome and they scattered the Romans to Egypt; they moved these people everywhere.

And verse 1 says these particular folks were moved to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. If you looked at a map of the ancient world, that's the territory of Asia Minor; it's the current Balkan Peninsula, but it covered a space of about 300,000 square miles. That's about the size of British Columbia, which means that these people, these Christians, really had no way of contacting each other. They were totally alone. So whoever took this letter from Peter, just went from church, to church, to church. And in between, he travelled thousands and thousands of miles. These people were isolated.

They also lost everything they had when they were dispersed, their homes, their money, their savings, all this was gone. It was taken from them. They lost their identity, their race, their history. These people were suffering. They were experiencing trials upon trials. They were falling down lower than most of us have ever gone. "But that's okay," Peter says, "Because you're saved." That's the point of this letter: It's okay if you're suffering, it's okay if you're falling, because God has something better for you. And if you look at 1 Peter see what that is, just read on in the first verses of this book. We've covered all this, so this is a little bit of a summary, but if you look in verse 1,

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.

And writing to these people who have been scattered, Peter says that, "You have been born again," in verse 3. "You have an inheritance," in verse 4. "You're protected by the power of

God," in verse 5. And in verse 6, "You have been distressed by various trials to prove your faith." In verse 7, "That's why the trials are given to you, to prove your faith and show you what it's made of." We didn't talk about this last time, but a lot of people say, "A man's faith is proven by his blessings, by how many good things he has." Peter says the opposite. He says, "Your faith is found in trials." A lot of people say, "If a man drives a nice car, and lives in a nice house, and enjoys perfect health, he must have faith. If he wins the Stanley Cup, he has faith. God is blessing his faith." Peter says, "Your faith is proven in trials." Your faith is proven when you lose the Stanley Cup. Your faith is proven when you don't drive a nice car, and don't live in a nice house, and don't enjoy perfect health. Anyone can have faith when they're driving a nice car, it takes a real Christian to have faith when you don't.

Another way to look at this, is they say, "You can tell what's in a bottle by shaking it." In a similar way, you can tell what's in a Christian by shaking them. If faith comes out of them, then faith was in there to begin with. I've talked with people, and maybe you have too, who say they believe, because they made a profession of faith 20 years ago, but they don't live like it now; they get into a trial and they fall apart. The Bible doesn't know anything about that kind of faith. The Bible doesn't know anything about that kind of Christian. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "To imagine that Christ died on the cross, simply to allow us to continue living a sinful and worldly lifestyle in safety, is very near a form of blasphemy." There is nothing more dangerous than for a person to think, "Well, because I've believed in Christ and I believe He died for me, it doesn't matter what I do, it doesn't matter how I respond to a trial." That is completely and utterly false. The whole of the Gospel message denies it. Friends, you prove your faith in a trial. That's what Peter is saying here.

I didn't get a chance to talk about that too much last time, but you prove faith in suffering. "And if you do that," he says, in verse 8, "you have joy." He says, "You should greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible," which is another way of saying, "You should have a lot of joy. If you come through a trial, and at the other end of it, you still have faith, you should be overjoyed with that." It was Walter Chantry who said, "The only lasting joy a man can have is found on the other side of the cross." That's what Peter says too, "If you can have joy when you're suffering, then you've got real joy." Amen? If you can smile in the funeral home or on a hospital bed, you have real joy. Another way to say this, is that, "Assurance is not found in a dramatic, emotional experience you had 20 years ago, it's found in the day by day things of life. It's found in the nitty-gritty."

I don't know if you've ever seen one of those Christian movies where the main character has one dramatic experience after another. I'm not encouraged by those movies, 'cause I don't have a life like that. I don't know about you guys, but in the scope of two hours, I don't survive a gunshot wound, have my car blown up, and then save the world from nuclear disaster, and then I have joy and am real excited about it. Well, who wouldn't be excited with a life like that? See, that's not real, that's just pretend. And that's not where you find assurance either. Real assurance, real faith, real joy is found in the ordinary stuff. It's found in the day by day stuff, changing a tire on the side of the road when you're late for a meeting. If you can have joy doing that, that's what Peter's talking about here. Getting laid off from your job and going home and having to tell your family, if you can have joy doing that, that's what the Scripture's talking about. Real assurance of salvation is found in things like that.

And that brings us to our passage for this morning. In 1 Peter 1:10-12, going on with this idea of joy and suffering, Peter says, "You can have joy, if you have some perspective in your suffering." If you're taking notes in these verses, in verses 10-12, Peter goes on to give us some perspectives in our suffering. It takes perspective to have joy in the small things of life. Amen? It takes perspective to have hope when you go to work and do the same boring job, over, and over, and over again. I think nothing is harder to have in suffering than perspective. You get so caught up in the nitty-gritty, you get so caught up in the day by day, that it consumes you, swallows you whole.

And to help with that, Peter gives us some perspective here. And the first perspective is this: He gives us the perspective of the Old Testament. The Old Testament has a lot to say about suffering. It has a lot to say about falling down and getting back up again. And specifically, it says how privileged we are as Christians. If you read on in verses 10-11, Peter gives us the perspective of the Old Testament this way. He says, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating, as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow." That's a little hard to understand, so hang in there. Let me explain this to you. Peter essentially says that, "The prophets, the Old Testament prophets, made searches and inquiries into this salvation that you have," this salvation that he's been describing in chapter 1. They wanted to know about it. They wanted to know about the new birth, and the inheritance, and the protection that you have. They wanted to know about the joy that you have in Christ. They wanted to know the Messiah. They didn't get to know that. Peter says, "They searched into it." The word "searched" here refers to someone searching a house or a tent. The prophets searched into salvation the way you would search someone's tent. They looked under the tables, they looked under the rugs, they knocked over beds in looking for this, trying to understand and trying to grasp how someone could be saved like this. One commentator said, "They were like waiters setting the table, but not getting to eat at it," or, "They were like astronomers looking at the stars, but not getting to touch one." They made prophecies about salvation, about this type of salvation, this full salvation in Christ, but they didn't get to see them fulfilled. Peter says it this way in verse 11, "The Spirit of Christ indicated to them the sufferings and the glory of the Messiah," but they never got to see them take place. Augustine says that, "The prophets were like blind men carrying lanterns. The light was right there in front of them, but they couldn't see the full picture of it yet."

Just to show you what Peter is saying here, according to the Jews, there were 60 different prophecies in the Old Testament for the Messiah. If you added all the references to the Messiah up, it comes to something like 300, so let's start with number one. (I'm kidding. We're not gonna go through all 300 you guys. I'm making sure you're awake.) Let's cover just a couple of them. I'll just name a few of these prophecies. In Genesis 3, verse 15, you don't have to turn to these, let me just read them to you: "God told the serpent that He would put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise you on the head." That phrase "bruise you on the head" referred to a killing blow or a death blow. Moses says in Genesis 3:15, that, "Someone would come along who would kill the serpent. Someone would come along who would put the devil to death." And as you can imagine, the prophets looked forward to that. They searched into it; they wanted to know, "Who was this Man? When would He come? What would He look like?" They were asking that in the days of Genesis, in the beginning of time.

Psalms chapter 2 tells us more about this Messiah when it says, "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'" David says, "One day, God Himself, God Almighty of heaven and earth, will beget a Son who will rule the world with an iron fist; He will shatter the nations like earthenware." And the prophets who looked into that, "Who was that guy?" They said, "Who is gonna rule the universe? When would He come?"

Isaiah 53 gives this from another angle, it says this Messiah would suffer. He would be punished for His people. Isaiah 53 says, "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities, the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed." Isaiah wrote that around 700 something BC. It was 700 years before the time of Christ and the prophets were wondering, "Who is this Man?" "They made inquiries into it," Peter says, "They searched after it. They wanted to know about this salvation."

"And here's the thing," Peter says. "Here's the point of this chapter: you get to know about it! You know the Messiah. You know salvation. They knew salvation as well. But you know it in a fuller way, a more comprehensive way, you nobody Gentiles, you refugees from Pontus, Galatia, and Cappadocia, you scattered peoples of Asia and Bithynia, who don't have a dime to your name, don't even know what race you come from, some of you guys. You have no tie to the people of God. You know the Messiah." That's what Peter's saying here. If that doesn't give you perspective in your suffering, I don't know what will. If that doesn't help you see the bigger picture in your trials... If you can put yourself in Peter's mindset, to a Jew, nobody knew more about God than the prophets. Nobody knew more about God than Moses, or Elijah, or Daniel, or Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or Ezekiel. They were the PhDs of their time. They were the scholars, the wise men. They were the ones you would buy their books at the Christian bookstore. They were the guys you would go sign up to sit in their class in seminary. "And now," Peter says, "You know more about the Messiah than they do, you foreigners, you nobodies."

He's not saying this in a negative way, but the Jews did look on the Gentiles in a negative way at this time in history. One translation for the word "Gentile" in Hebrew meant "dog." He said, "You dogs know more than the prophets." Peter's not saying that here, but that's how some of them would look at this. And that has to give you some perspective in suffering. I think one reason we don't see this or value this like we should, is because we don't suffer enough. Amen? A friend of mine was talking to a Russian Christian years ago, who said, "Wow, you have a Bible. How many times have you read it?" This was during the days of the Soviet Union and she said, "We can't have a Bible in my country. We'll go to prison for that." How many times have you read your Bible? You see, I think one reason we don't read it enough, is because we don't go to prison for it anymore, and we don't suffer.

We fall apart when our air conditioner quits working or we can't watch the NBA Playoffs on the computer. That's a trial to us. We come unglued when Save-On-Foods runs out of ice cream or Tim Horton's runs out of chocolate doughnuts. That's a catastrophe for us. The latte machine

quits working at Starbucks and we picket outside. You can compare that to Christians in the past. Tertullian, a third century author and church leader, said that, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the church." He said, "The church grew by people bleeding." That was God's church growth strategy. If you look at the first three centuries of the church, the church grew by martyrdom. God crushed the people, and out of that crushing, the church grew. Tertullian went on to say, "Go on," to the Roman authorities. He said, "Go on, wrack us, torture us, grind us into powder. Our numbers will only increase, the more you mow us down." Hebrews 11 says the same things: "They were put to death by stoning, they were sawed in two, they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskin, goatskins, destitute, persecuted, mistreated. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered around in deserts and mountains, living in caves and holes in the ground." Paul gives his own list in 2 Corinthians. He says, "Five times I received from the Jews the 39 lashes. Three times, I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A day and night I spent in the open sea." And we fall apart when Tim Hortons runs out of chocolate doughnuts. This is one reason we don't appreciate our salvation. I'm not saying this to beat you up. I'm in the same boat. But oftentimes, we don't get what Peter's saying here, because we don't suffer enough.

Adoniram Judson was a missionary to Burma in the 1800s, who suffered horrendously. He was the first American missionary from the States who actually was successful in his work, international missionary anyway. And he went out at a time when missionaries were unheard of, to the point that, when he went out, his family thought he was just as good as dead. And the missionary agency thought the same thing, so what they did was, they would not put him and his fellow missionaries on the same ships, because they were afraid if one of the ships went down, they would lose all their investment in the mission. They split them up into different ships, so if one ship went down, the rest of them could make it. While he was in Burma, his first two wives died from sickness. Several of his children died. All his co-workers died. After 38 years, he was the only missionary left in the original group that set out from Pennsylvania. But he would say this about his work, he said, "If I had not felt certain that my trials were ordered by infinite love and mercy, I would not have survived them." And he said, "All this suffering has convinced me of one thing, that the only hope I have is found in Jesus Christ." Friends, can you say, "amen," to that this morning? Can you say that, "The only hope you have is found in Jesus Christ? The only real joy you have is found in Him?" Your joy is not found in your ice cream. Your joy is not found in air conditioning. Your joy is not found in the Playoffs, or the Stanley Cup, or in chocolate doughnuts. Your joy is found in Him. And sometimes, God, in His grace and mercy, takes the doughnuts away, so you'll be reminded of that. And sometimes, God, in His grace and mercy, makes the air conditioner quit working, so you'll remember that your joy is not in this life. Your hope is not in this life; it's in Him. He's the one the prophets pointed to. He's the one they wrote about. He's the one we hope in.

And that leads to a second perspective we get in this passage. The first one is the perspective of the Old Testament. The Jews were blown away that anyone would get to experience all these wonderful things about the Messiah, and they were looking into it, and searching into it. And now, you get to see it. At least, to another perspective Peter gives us in our suffering, that's a perspective of the New Testament. And the New Testament helps us in our suffering as well. It helps us in our trials, because it reminds us there's something greater going on here. There is all of human history wrapped up in this. When we suffer, sometimes we can't see past the nose on

our face. Peter says, "There's something so much greater going on, than the nose on your face." If you read on in verses 10-12 he says, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, made careful searches and inquiries seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven." Like I said earlier, this is not an easy passage to work through. There is a lot in here. But Peter says, essentially, in verse 12 that "It was revealed to them, the Old Testament prophets, that they were not serving themselves, but you." In other words, "The prophets knew their prophecies were for someone else, someone in the future." "And now, it has been announced to you," Peter says, "That you are that someone else."

The word "announced" in verse 12 means "to bring something back". It's the idea of a messenger going to the king and bringing back his message. Peter, and the apostles, and the New Testament writers have done that. They have brought you the Holy Spirit's message back from God. Another way to look at that, they brought the Old Testament message to you. Peter says, "We're not saying anything new. We didn't just come up with this. This has been going on since the beginning of time, since the dawn of creation. Salvation has been planned out for you." That should give you some perspective. You're part of something much greater than this dispersion to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

I had a professor in seminary say that, "When you read your Bibles, it's like walking into a conversation that's already going on. It started before you got here, and now, you get to be a part of it." Salvation is like that. It started long before you were born. The way some people think, the world started turning the day they were born. Friends, the world did not start turning the day you were born. Salvation did not start the day you were born. It's been going on for centuries. You're jumping into a stream that's already flowing. You're hopping onto a train that's already moving. So you should be able to show some patience when Tim Horton's runs out of doughnuts. You should be okay when you get a flat tire, or even lose your job. Our trials are so small compared to this. That's Peter's point here. They're so minuscule. A man was flying in an airplane over the Sears Tower in Chicago, one of the tallest buildings in the world, and he said to the stewardess, "What's that building down there?" And she said, "That's the Sears Tower. That's one of the biggest buildings in the world." And he said, "It looks like a speck from up here." Friends, your trials look like a speck from up here. They look like nothing compared to what Peter is talking about.

To say this another way, two farmers were walking in a field one day, when one farmer said, "Look at these beautiful cows." And the other one said, "Yeah, but look at these cow patties." Do you guys know what cow patties are? Manure. Some people are like that, they can't walk through a field without seeing cow patties. "As a Christian," Peter says, "You don't have to think like that. You've got a better perspective than that. You can see the cows. You can see the beauty of your salvation. You can see the hope, and the grace, and the joy, and mercy at the cross. You can see God's sovereignty, and all the miracles, and the mighty works through Israel, and how He's grafted in you Gentiles, how He brought you in the kingdom as a wild olive branch," Romans 11 says it. And when you see that, your trials look like nothing. They look so small. It's easy to forget this when you're suffering. It's easy to forget there's something greater going on here. I'm

thinking of Father's Day. I don't know if you've seen a child fall off his bike lately, but children do this when they fall off their bike, they lose all sense of perspective. The world just comes crashing down. You look at them, and they're weeping over their knee, and you look at their knee, and there's nothing there. There's not even any blood. I'm like, "Go fall down and do it right, son. That's not... Don't weep over that, save it for the real stuff." Adults do that too, it's not just kids.

Several of us were watching a video on Friday night by Jim Newheiser on the subject of anger, and he was talking about how people behave when they don't get their way, and they scream, and holler, and they punch walls, and they punch people, and they plot revenge. They lose all sense of perspective. They lose all sense of a bigger picture. Friends, you don't have to do that. You can see the bigger picture here. You don't have to lose control, you don't have to get angry, you can see God's salvation in the midst of your trials. You can see His grace and mercy in the midst of your suffering. You can see His love and kindness. Randy Alcorn said, "Heaven does not eliminate pain, but it sure keeps it in perspective." Friends, salvation doesn't eliminate pain, but it keeps it in perspective. Compared to heaven, this is so small.

A soldier once had his arm amputated in a war. And afterwards, the doctor said, "You lost your arm in a great cause," to which the soldier said, "No, I didn't, I gave it away." Friends, you're not losing anything for Christ, you're giving it away. When you suffer, you're not losing your health, you're giving it away. When you lose money or comfort, you're giving that away for a higher cause. Some of you may need to take a step back this morning, and go up in the airplane, and think about life for a moment. I don't know what you're going through, but I think a lot of folks in our church family are suffering. You're going through some trials, some hard times. Maybe you need to just take a breath for a moment and think about what you get to be a part of as a Gentile. I don't think we have any Jews in the room. The Jews are the people of God in the Old Testament; we're grafted in.

Here's what you get to be part of as someone who's grafted in: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," and you get to be a part of that. You get to be a part of His creation. The Lord of heaven and earth has made you part of all this. And then He created man, and you get to be part of that. He made you in His image, He crowned you with glory and splendour. Then man sinned, but a second Man came, a perfect Man came to die and give you a new birth, and you get to be part of that. You get to be born again. And with that comes an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away, and you get to be part of that. And with that comes protection, the protection of God - you get to be part of that. With that comes faith that is more precious than gold. With that comes joy inexpressible and full of glory. You get all these things. You get to know more than the Old Testament prophets did about God. You get to be part of the greatest event in human history, the salvation of sinners. So don't you think you can endure through a trial? Don't you think you'll be okay when you get a flat tire or the Predators lose in the Stanley Cup? You need to see the beauty of your salvation. You need to learn to see the cows and not just the cow patties.

And that leads us to one more perspective Peter gives us this morning, and that is this. You see the perspective of the Old Testament, you see the perspective of the New Testament (I like this one the best. I think this is very interesting), he gives us the perspective of the angels. I say that

word “angels” and some of you perk up. Angels are interesting, aren't they? Anybody else like studying angels, the unseen messengers of God? Angels aren't mentioned all that often in Scripture; there's only 100 references to them in the New Testament, but this is one of them. If you read in verse 12, Peter says, "It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven - things into which angels long to look." That word “look” means “to stoop or bend over.” The idea's that the angels long to stoop or bend over the banister of heaven to see our salvation. The word is in the continuous tense, which means it's an ongoing thing, so angels are continuously looking over the banister of salvation and watching us come to Christ. They can't help themselves, it's fascinating to them.

I mentioned this a moment ago, angels are God's messengers, they are sent from the throne room of heaven to do His errands. And the Bible says, "They learn salvation by watching you." Shouldn't that give you some perspective? If you wonder why that is, it's because angels can't get saved. They sin once, and that's it, they're thrown out of heaven, they're thrown out of God's presence. They're perfect creatures, but they lose that perfection for an instant and they're done, then they become fallen angels and they're in hell. You get to sin and be forgiven, so they're fascinated by watching you. Now, one scholar referred to the church as, "The University of Angels," or, "The School of Angels," 'cause we're constantly schooling them, and we're constantly teaching them what it looks like to be saved. Another commentator said it this way, he said,

Experientially, you know more about salvation than the angels do. Doctrinally, they know more than you. Theologically, they know more than you about salvation. But by experience, you know more than them.

Another way to look at this, is that even though the rest of the world doesn't care about you, the angels care. Even though the rest of the world doesn't care what our church is doing, and what our mission is, and what we're all about here at Grace Fellowship, the angels care. They're very interested in what we're doing. They're amazed that someone can sin and be forgiven with God. They're blown away that you can disobey and still be pardoned through the blood of Christ; that overwhelms them. Of all the things to be watching in heaven, you would think this would be pretty petty. You'd think there'd be something more interesting, though they're fascinated by this. Luke 15 says, "They have a party over it." Revelation 5 says, "They sing about it in heaven." There's a huge fascination with angels today. People love to talk about them and write about them. You can see go see whole websites devoted to angels and books written about them. I'm not gonna tell you any of the songs, or the songs written about angels, all kinds of stuff, paintings of chubby, little angels shooting arrows at people, and making them fall in love. Peter says, "Angels aren't interested in that. They're interested in salvation." They're not interested in romance. They're interested in seeing people come to Christ. And this is how you get through suffering, by being interested in the same thing.

I hope you've seen that in this passage. You get through suffering and trials when you remember that you will eventually be saved from it. A better life is coming. A better world is coming. A time is coming when you won't suffer anymore, and you draw strength from that.

On July 4th, 1952, Florence Chadwick attempted to swim the 26 miles from California to Catalina Island, when she had to quit due to fog. She actually made it for 25 and a half miles, and then she quit, because she couldn't see the coastline. She didn't know how close she was to the end. She later told reporters that, "If I could have seen it, I could've made it." And I mention that, because maybe some of you are thinking that way today, "If I could see the coastline, I could make it. If I could see the end of my trial, if I could see the end of my pain, if I could see the end of my suffering, I can make it. I could finish the race." Friends, Peter says right here, that you can see the end of it. He shows you the coastline right here. You have personally experienced the greatest event in human history. And even if you're not saved this morning, you're surrounded in a room by people who are, and you can talk to them, and ask them about this great experience. You know more than people for thousands of years of Bible history ever knew: Moses, Elijah, David, Solomon, all those heroes of old, the judges, the kings of Israel, you know more than all of them. You're created by God, given a new birth, you have an inheritance, and you're being studied by the angels. If that doesn't give you perspective, I don't know what will. If that doesn't help you see the finish line, I don't know what will. Friends, there is a coastline to your suffering. There is a day when it will all end. You don't have to quit the race, you don't have to give up the fight. Keep fighting, keep going, and "may the God of all grace, who's called you to His eternal glory, confirm and establish you." May He grow you through the trials and may He pick you up when you fall down. Amen?

Let's pray. Father, we do pray for help. I've prayed many times for help this week in a difficult passage, just that You would, in Your grace and mercy, help us to apply what Your servant, Peter, was writing to us here. I know so many of my friends in this room are skilled in the art of suffering. They've suffered tremendously, and so I pray that nothing I said this morning would in any way trivialize what they're going through. I know we have folks in the church who are experiencing great trials. I pray this would be an encouragement to them, to think about all the mercies and kindness You've offered them in Christ, how we've been given blessings that people have wanted to have for thousands of years. God, to even think of the way You planned salvation, it leaves us speechless. And we thank you that we don't have to be speechless, that You have a Word that says it all here in Scripture.

Lord, if there's anyone here who's not saved, I pray you would convict them of their sin this morning, and remind them that they don't experience this, but they can, and they can come to Christ, and be forgiven of sins.

Lord, thank you for Your Word. Thank you for the hope we have in Christ. May we go out this morning as hopeful people. May we go out this morning as people who suffer well for Your glory through eternity. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.