

## The Hope that We Have

1 Peter 3:13-17

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 22, 2017

Good morning. Have you been blessed by the worship so far today? I feel like we could just have a word of prayer and go home, but I do have a sermon prepared, so we'll go ahead and dive on into that. If you would, turn in your Bibles to the book of 1 Peter. And as you're doing that, I want to do something a little different from what we normally do. We've done this a few times before, but I have a visual illustration for you. It's not a water bottle, I promise you. (I was banned from bringing water bottles up here for visual illustrations couple months ago.) It's an extension cord, just an ordinary run of the mill extension cord. I think I got it at Walmart or Ace Hardware. My brother-in-law works at Ace Hardware. He didn't give me a deal on this though, I need to talk to him about that, but, it represents your life, just a typical life. The plug-in part I have here represents your life here on earth. The Lord plugs you into existence. You like that? Get that? That's pretty good. Okay, everybody's tracking with me so far. He plugs you into the world, you begin to live for 60, 70, 80 years. Your soul flourishes in your body. It thrives, it does its thing and then it dies. And your soul leaves your body like a hand leaves a glove and it goes to live elsewhere. At which point, we come to the cord, the rest of this thing here. The cord represents your life after that, represents your life in eternity. Once your soul leaves its body, it goes to a place of eternity, a place of never-ending existence. It starts here on the stage, by the pulpit, goes down the stage, out the door and it never stops. It goes on, and on, and on. It goes from Chilliwack to Agassiz, from there to the North Pole, because we all know that Agassiz is just below the North Pole. I'm getting my Canadian geography right, right? Anyway, and from there, it goes on forever. It's the ordinary life. Everyone lives a life like this, whether you're passed away when you're two years old, 10 years old, or 90 years old. This will be the kind of life that you'll live. It's a never-ending thing.

And with this in mind, with this illustration in mind, just to kind of of get it started off this morning, I want to ask the question, which one of these are you living for? The plug-in or the cord? Which one are you filling your life with, this world or the next? You only get a few short years to live. You only get a few years to take this, and prepare for this, so which one are you living for?

Maybe we could ask it another way as we're considering the passage we have before us this morning. Which one are you putting your hope in? In this crazy messed-up world, we prayed about that this morning (you heard us talk about that some already) ... which one are you turning to for comfort?

And I ask you that because we're in a series called "The Suffering Church" where we're talking about how the church should handle pain and suffering, how it should handle a messed-up world. And if you've been with us for last couple of months, we've talked about how to handle a messed-up job and a messed-up marriage, or a messed-up government. But how are you supposed to handle that? Where do you go for hope? Let me cut to the chase real quick and answer the question for you: the Bible says you need to look to the cord, not the plug-in, for hope. You need to look to eternity and not this life for your comfort.

Jesus said, "In this world, you'll have tribulation." That's a promise. That's a guarantee. This world will not be easy for you as a believer. It will not go light on you. You will have tribulation. Paul says, "Realize this, that in the last days, difficult times will come. Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, but evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse."

In that passage, you can see a comparison. The godly will be persecuted, the evil men will get ahead in this life, in this world. That's another guarantee. Which means that your hope needs to be in another world, not this one. And this world is on a downward spiral. It's headed for hell, it's fallen, which means, it's going off the edge. So you have to find comfort elsewhere. To say this another way, God will deal with evil and sin over there, not in the plug-in. God will take care of wickedness and wicked things in the next life and you take your hope in that.

You know, like many of you, I'm not very old, but I've seen this world go from bad to worse in my short lifetime. I know little bit about what Jesus and Paul are talking about here. I remember the first time a major school shooting happened in the United States (or at least the first major one I can remember), because it happened just up the road from me. On December 1, 1997, a 14-year-old student walked into a Bible study at Heath High School in Paducah, Kentucky, and opened fire on his fellow students killing three and injuring five more. And I remember that 'cause it happened an hour away from my home. I lived an hour away from Paducah. In fact, I played tennis with people from there. I might have known people from that high school. And I remember thinking as a senior in high school when that happened, if that happened to them, it could happen to me. If that happened at a Bible study at a public school in Kentucky, it can happen in Tennessee. And it has happened dozens of times. You guys have seen the news. They say the last shooting in Las Vegas was one of the worst - 58 people were killed.

And it raises the question, where is God when that happens? Why doesn't He put a stop to it? Well, let me answer that. He will put a stop to it over there in the next life. People want to know, "Why didn't He bring justice?" God will bring justice in eternity. We don't like to talk about the doctrine of hell because it's offensive and unpopular, but the reality is, if there is no hell, there is no justice for some sins. If there's no hell, there's no guarantee that God will ever put a stop to things like that. But if there is a hell, He will. He will hold men accountable. People often say they want immediate justice. Well, that's what goes on in hell, it's immediate justice, forever. Right now, immediate justice is taking place in hell. Or people say they want the guilty to pay, well, that's what goes on there too. The guilty pay for everything they do in hell. They don't get away with anything.

It's been said that God doesn't take opinion polls. He doesn't have popularity contests which means that when things go from bad to worse here on earth, it doesn't affect God. When things go on a downward spiral in our society, He stays the same, which means you can trust Him this morning. Which means that whatever you're going through, you can trust God will put a stop to it and He will deal with it and He will punish it on the cord in eternity. He may not do it on the plug-in in this short life, but He will do it eventually. C. S. Lewis said,

In the long run, the answer to all who object to the doctrine of hell is a simple question: What do you suggest instead? To wipe out people's past sins and give them a fresh start?

Well, God has already done that at the cross. To forgive them? Well, he's already offered to do that there, too. To leave them alone? That is what God does in hell. He leaves people alone, forever. You cannot escape the fact that hell must exist and that if you abandon it, then you have nothing to replace it with.

During the bombing of London in World War II, a minister was talking to a frightened man who said, "This bombing is awful, it's just like hell." And the minister said, "No, it's not, because I'm a Christian and there are no Christians in hell. And furthermore, there's a bar over there and there are no bars in hell. And furthermore, the men who are bombing us are getting away with it and nobody gets away with anything in hell." No one avoids justice there.

Let me just say for a moment, we don't want people to go to hell, we don't relish the idea. That's why our people went to the bus stop yesterday. That's why you guys share the Gospel with anybody you come across. But we do want sin to be dealt with. We want it to be dealt with at the cross, that's our prayer for every man, woman, and child. That their sin will be given to Christ who will bear it at the cross. But for those who reject that, sin will still be dealt with. There will be accountability. God will make it right in the end and that brings us to the book of 1 Peter. 1 Peter is all about the fact that God will make it right in the end. He will give us hope. There will be accountability. He'll put a stop to evil.

If you look in chapter one verse three, Peter starts off the letter this way. He says, "Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." You would think that if you were starting off a letter on suffering, you would not start off in the third verse with the phrase, "Blessed be God", right? You would say something like, "I'm so sorry" if you're writing an email to somebody, "I can't believe this has happened to you." You might say, "Why did God allow this?" You might say all those kinds of things to someone who's in pain. Peter starts off and says, "Blessed be God, because He knows God's going to deal with this in the end." He knows God will put a stop to it. He goes on to say this another way in verses 24 to 25 of chapter one. He says in verse 24, "For all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever." And thinking about this whole discussion of suffering and justice, you could say the justice of the Lord endures forever. His righteousness endures, while everything else withers and falls away. While evil men go from bad to worse, while this messed up world gets messier and messier and messier, God does not do any of that.

And as a result, Peter says in chapter 2 verse 13 that you can submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution. Since God's justice endures, since His Word stays the same, you can submit to Him. And through submitting to Him, submit to every human institution, which is what we've been talking about the last couple of weeks. And he goes on to list what those institutions are. Chris has already read this, so I won't read it for the sake of time, but if you notice in verse 13, he mentions the institution of government: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human government." He goes on to say, "slaves and masters" in verse 18 which we could translate as employers and employees. He mentions "marriage" in chapter 3, "husbands and wives." He mentions "the church" later in chapter 5. But he lists these one right after the other to say that you can submit for the Lord's sake to each of these institutions. You can trust

Him when life is hard with the government and the workplace and marriage. You can still have hope in each of these areas. You don't have to check your religion at the door when you go home. You don't have to check it at the door when you go to work every day. And you don't have to check it at the door when you go vote for a political leader. You can have hope that God is in charge of all that.

I just told you how bad the US is getting with all the shootings and the violence. I looked it up and did some research on it. Things in Canada are bad in some ways, too. Canada is still a very peaceful place to live, but there are some dangerous areas. The Vancouver Sun said that there were 67 murders last year from Whistler to Chilliwack which has gone up from 60 in the previous year. And while Chilliwack didn't make the list because of its size, the world atlas said that Vancouver is the seventh most violent city in the country, right behind Calgary and Saskatchewan. There are more murders in Vancouver than there are in Toronto or Quebec per capita person. And some people have told me there's areas of Chilliwack you don't want to be out in at night. So bad things happen here, too. Things are going from bad to worse everywhere.

We're experiencing tribulation in some ways and Peter says that when this happens, you can still have hope. When times are difficult, you don't have to throw your hands up in the air and say, "I quit." You can still trust in God. He still cares about you, and He'll take care of all this over there, in eternity. One author says it this way, he says "Hope is practiced when things are hopeless, otherwise, there would be no point in it." He says, "As long as things are hopeful and the world is at peace, there's no reason for hope. Hope is reserved for the darkest of times." And that brings us to our passage for this morning. In 1 Peter 3:13-17, Peter says you can have hope in the darkest of times. You can have hope when things go from bad to worse.

And here are some reasons why. So if you're taking notes, let me just give you some reasons why you can have hope this morning. Reasons why you don't have to fear. Reasons why you don't have to be afraid. And the first one is this. The first reason you have hope is that man is limited. Or we can say it this way, you could say, "The power of man is limited." The Bible says, "Man can go this far and no farther with his evil. He can hurt you this much and no more." God has put a limit on the evil that men do. You could say, "Please put a chain around our wrist" and whenever He wants to, He can pull the chain back and say, "Enough." If you look in verse 13, this is what Peter means when he says that, he says, "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" You don't see this in some English translations, but in the Greek, verse 13 actually starts off with the word "and" connecting at verse 12. So, reading from verse 12, if the context is this, "'For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil,' and who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" The idea is that since God takes care of the righteous, He'll take care of you. Since He'll put an end to their suffering, who is there to harm you? That's a rhetorical question and expects the answer, "No." Nobody is there to harm you. No one is there to do evil to you beyond what God has allowed. John Knox, the reformer, said, "God plus one equals the majority." That's called divine mathematics. God wins, period. And if you're on His side, you'll win too.

We can say it this way, your enemies can't touch what goes on in eternity. Your enemies can't reach across this into that. They can't do it. So if your hope is over there, your hope is safe,

secure. We all have our money in banks. That's an eternal bank. That's a bank that can't be touched, ever.

Some of you are too young to remember this, but back in the day, photography studios ... You guys know what I'm talking about, photography studios? Okay, we have. Okay good. Alright. Photography studios had what's called a stop bath. Anybody remembered that, a stop bath? And the idea there was, a stop bath was where you would take a picture, take film and stop it completely. Fix it forever in time. You had a developing solution where you would take a picture and develop it, change the colour, change the size, change everything about the film, and when it was ready, you would take it out of that and put it into a stop bath, where it would stay that way, indefinitely. Scripture says that God does that at death with the believer. He does that with death with everybody, puts you in a stop bath. Which means that if you die in Christ, you stay in Christ, forever. And no one can hurt you there. No one can bring you harm. The greatest armies in the world can't affect what happens to you in eternity. The meanest people in the world can't get to you there.

You can say it this way, there are no bad governments in heaven. There are no bad marriages there. There are no bad people. There're no school shootings in heaven, there's no violence. There're no victims there. There's no victimization anyway, which answers Peter's question, "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" The answer is, "Nobody." Eternally speaking, no one can harm you. And no one can move across the plug-in to the cord. No one can storm the gates of heaven, it can't be done. Luther ... We just sang Martin Luther's song "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God", right? Nothing can scale the walls. That's why Paul says in Romans 8. He says, "What then shall we say to these things?" This is printed out on the front of our bulletin. "What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up, will He not give us all things?" and "I'm convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels ... nor anything can separate us from the love of Christ." That's why David said in Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" It's another rhetorical question. Answer is, "Nobody." And we shouldn't be afraid of anybody.

Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna, and one of the leaders of the church in Asia Minor where Peter wrote this letter to too. In fact, Polycarp lived about a century after this book was written, around that time. He was the disciple of John the Apostle. And according to church history, he died in the Coliseum in Rome with great pain and suffering and a big audience. Not only did Polycarp die as a martyr, but he died as an old man and he died in front of a cheering crowd. And when the Roman soldiers came to finally kill him or to start killing and torture him, they said, "Polycarp, if you would recant your faith, we'll make it easier for you, we'll make it quick." To which the old man said, he said, "86 years I've served Him and Christ has never done me wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?" And then he said, "You threaten me with fire that burns only for a while and is soon put out, but you forget about the fire that burns for eternity. Do whatever you want. I'm safe." Friends, this is the hope that we have. We're escaping the fire that burns for eternity. However bad it gets, we know it's gonna end soon because man has his limits. God has a chain around His wrist and He says, "This much, and no more."

And that leads to the next reason you have just logically flowing from that. Not only does man have his limits (and he has his limits), and here's the next reason: because Christ is Lord. Christ is Lord. He's the one in charge. He's the one calling the shots. God, or Christ, plus one equals the majority. Man has a chain around his wrist because Christ put it there. He holds the other end of the chain. He's the one saying, "This far and no more."

Some of you have read the "Invictus" poem by Ernest Hemingway, which says, "I'm the master of my own fate and the captain of my soul." That's a bunch of silliness. You're not a master of anything, Jesus is. You're not the captain of your soul, Christ is captain of everything. If you read on verse 14, Peter tells you to acknowledge this. He says, "Who is there to harm you if you're zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. 'And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled,' but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts."

The word "sanctify" there means "to set something apart, to give it a place of honour." Peter says to do that in your heart, in the place of commitment. Some of you have seen the picture where the heart is like a throne, and the question is, "What do you put on the throne of your heart to worship?" Peter says, "You put Christ there." You put Him above everything in the place of greatest honour, because He deserves it.

And if you do that, if you look in the passage, Peter tells you what will happen to you. He says, "You'll be blessed. But even if you suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed." In verse 14, "If you do that, you'll live without fear." We've talked before about how suffering can produce fear in your lives. He says, "And do not fear their intimidation." You can live without trouble. Do not be troubled. This world will have trouble, this world will have tribulation, you don't have to have it internally if Christ is Lord in your heart.

I told you last week that your arms are too short to box with God. The same thing goes for your enemies, their arms are too short to box with God, too. And their fists are too small to reach Him so you don't have to be afraid. In his book "Death in the City", Francis Schaeffer said there are ... "Every man sits in one of two chairs." I'm going easy on the sermon illustrations 'cause I thought about putting two chairs over here, but we can put those back here. But two chairs, the chair of the believer and the chair of the unbeliever. And he says that the perspective from those two chairs is completely different, entirely different. It couldn't be any more different. One sees all of life this way, one sees all of life this way. One sees it as a cord, eternity, the believer does, and the unbeliever sees it as a plug-in and that's it; 60, 70, 80 years and it's over. So they have nothing to look forward to, which is terrifying to think about.

As an example of this, Bart Ehrman is a professor at the University of North Carolina. He used to be a Christian, but he abandoned the faith because of the problem of evil, and he said he couldn't understand why God would let people suffer, the very issue we're wrestling with here. He said, "I left the Christian faith. I left the belief in God, or at least a belief in an Almighty God, because I couldn't believe He would let bad things happen to good people." But in one of his books, he made this interesting comment. He said this, "When I fell away from my faith, not just in the Bible, but in Christ, and eventually from the view that He's the only way of salvation, there's an all-powerful God," He said, "I still wonder deep down inside, what if I was wrong? Would I burn

in hell forever? Would I go to the lake of fire?" He said, "The fear of death gripped me for years. And there are still moments when I wake up at night in a cold sweat." Why did he say that? Because if you switch chairs, if you abandon a belief in God, there's nothing left. If you reject the Christian faith, you have nothing to look forward to. This messed up world is all you've got. That's why the Russian philosopher, Fyodor Dostoyevsky said, "If God doesn't exist, everything is permitted." If you abandon God, you can go into a Bible study and shoot people, at least there's nobody to hold you accountable, eternally, if you abandon God. Other philosophers have said, "If you abandon God, we have no basis for truth or we can't find one." Friedrich Nietzsche spent his life wrestling with that, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, those guys. As a Christian, you don't have to think that way. As a Christian, you have a standard for all those things and you have hope. You know that Jesus is the answer for all of that. One author said it this way ... By the way, I studied Philosophy in college, in university, and it's kind of like trying to eat your lunch out of a trash can. I mean, if you look in there for answers, you might get a little taste of something here and there, but that's all it is. It's just a taste and the rest of it is gonna make you sick. One author said, "There's not a square inch in the whole world over which Christ does not say, Mine." Or another author said, "As princes hold a fake globe in their hands, so Jesus holds a real one in His." And if you abandon that, there is no hope.

And that leads the next reason for your hope. Man has limits, Christ is Lord and is on the throne, and another reason is this: you have a defence. "A mighty fortress is our God." You have a defence, you have a hope that is real and defensible. You have a hope than can be explained, it's not just a burning in the bosom, it's not just some pie in the sky kind of idea. It's a logical, real thing. If you read in verse 15, Peter goes on to say this. He says, starting in verse 14, we'll just go back down again, "But if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed, 'And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled,' but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

The phrase "always" there shows the intensity of these people suffering. It was always going on. It was always at the forefront of their mind, whether it was with the government or the job or the family. They were constantly suffering, constantly in the fire. So Peter tells them to always be ready to make a defence for it. Be ready to make a defence. When you're at work on a lunch break, and someone comes in and says, "Why don't you cuss?" Right? Some of you guys at work, you had people ask you those questions. Why don't you tell those bad stories and jokes and stuff? Always be ready for a defence. When you're in a family gathering, always be ready to explain why you do this or why you don't do this.

The word "defence" there is the Greek word *apologia* from which we get the word "apologetics". It means "a well-reasoned answer." "Defence" sounds negative, it's not really meant to be negative here because Peter goes on, he says, "Do it with gentleness and reverence." It was meant to be a gentle argument, a respectful discussion. Argument is probably even too strong of a word. The point is, when they ask you why you suffer, you need to tell them about the cord, right? Tell them about eternity. When they ask you why you still have hope in a messed up, terrible world, you show them Christ. You tell them about the Lord.

Here's the thing, as we just talked about, if you don't tell them, how else are they going to hear it? I mean, Kevin just talked about that. You go share Christ with people, and nowadays, you ask them, "Have you ever heard that?" A lot of them say, "No." But if you don't tell them, how are they gonna make Him known?

Going back to this discussion of philosophy, in 1998, Hugh Moorhead, a teacher at Northeastern University in Illinois, interviewed 250 famous scholars, and he asked them the meaning of life - very interesting. And several of these people, you might even recognize their names, E. E. Cummings, the author T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley, brilliant people, people who changed the world. And he asked them what the meaning of life was, and here was their answer. I appreciate their humility, but here's what they said, "I don't really know the meaning of life" or "I have never found it" or "There may well be no meaning to life. It still eludes me." One of them said, "Sad to say, I don't really know what the meaning of life is, do you? If so, please advise. It would come in most handy to have an answer to the most important question." Yeah, no kidding, right?

But as you hear that, you have to wonder, if they don't know the meaning of life, well, who does? You do. You're a Christian. If they can't find it with all their scholarship and all their brilliant minds, who can find it? You can. You know exactly where to find it. You find it in Jesus Christ. There is no other way. There's no other truth. There's no other life. Many years ago, a Christian businessman visited a lawyer to conduct some business, and after talking for a while, he asked the lawyer if he was a Christian. And the lawyer said, "No, I'm not. I'm a drunk. And it's my understanding that you can't be a drunk and a Christian." And the businessman said, "Well, I think you're avoiding my question. Why don't you believe in Jesus Christ?" And the lawyer said, "To be honest, I don't know how. No one's ever told me." And so the businessman did, and the lawyer believed. And he went on to write several books, and a study Bible. His name is C. I. Scofield. But friends, people don't get saved if you don't tell them how. They can't believe the Gospel if you don't tell them where to find it. So Peter says, "Do that." He says, "Give an account of the hope that you have. Make a defence to everyone who asks."

The word "everyone" there means "everyone, at any time". It's been said that you may be the only Bible that some people ever read. You may be the only Jesus that they ever see. So live that way. Let them see Jesus through you. And that leads to the final reason why you have hope.

And that is this: because you have a good conscience. It's kind of a neat way to round this off, I think, as we were looking through this passage. But after talking about the limitations of man, the Lordship of Christ, the need for a defence, Peter ties it all off nice and neat by talking about a good conscience. You can't have a good defence without a good conscience, right? You can't have a good argument for the faith without a good life to back it up. That's why in this world, always give a defence is so hard. Because there's times when some of us don't have good lives. Sometimes our conscience is tied up in sin and evil things, and Peter says, "You need to have a good conscience, so you can have a good witness to others." And he says this in verses 16 through 17. He says, "And keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you should suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong."

The phrase, "the thing in which you are slandered" shows how they are suffering here. They're being slandered. It's a verbal put-down. And the word "slander" here even gives a little more to this. The word "slander" is an onomatopoeic word, which means it sounds like the meaning. It's the word *katalaléō, katalaléō*, which if you say it over and over again, it sounds like someone is whispering behind your back ... *Katalaléō, katalaléō, katalaléō*. That's the idea of the word. And Peter says that when people are slandering behind your back, when they're whispering behind closed doors, keep a good testimony. Make sure you are suffering for what is right. They can disregard your argument, but they can't disregard your life, right?

It was said that when David Hume, the famous atheist, went to hear George Whitfield preach, he was so caught up in it that a friend of his said, "Well, surely, Mr Hume, you don't believe what he's saying, do you?" To which David Hume said, "No, I don't believe it, but he does." You want to live that way, where people may say, "I don't believe that" or "I don't understand that, but he does. He's sincere. She's sincere." You want a good conscience. If you do that, Peter says, "Those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame." They won't have anything to say. Their mouth will be stopped, either in this world or the world to come. And that takes us back to where we started all this.

Well, what are you looking to for hope? Where are you going to find comfort in this crazy messed up world; in this life, or the life to come? In the tiny little plug-in, or in the never-ending extension cord?

You know, a grave was found dating back to the first century, which really showed the hopelessness of people at this time. And it said, the grave said, "I was naught, I became ... I am naught, and I care naught." I don't care anymore. Maybe some of you feel that way this morning. You don't care where you're going. You don't care where you came from and how it's gonna end up. If that's the case, let me just graciously plead with you. A day is going to come when you will care. A day is coming when all this will matter to you, and it will be too late to do anything about it. The stop bath will occur. So do something now before it's too late.

Some of you do care, and you don't know what to do about it. You care very much, but you're like the lawyer that we just mentioned. No one's ever told you how to believe in Christ. Or what to do about it. So let me tell you what to do. You need to trust in Christ. You need to embrace His Lordship over your life. Embrace His cross, His empty tomb. You need to accept the fact that He bore all your sins on your behalf, so that you don't have to bear them in hell. That's why He died so you could be righteous with God, made right with Him. You need to accept that and embrace that. You need to trust Him to get you through a messed-up world.

You know, a fire broke out in the house in the countryside and as it burned, a little boy climbed up on the roof and his father told him to jump. But the boy said, "Well, Dad, I can't see you." To which the father said, "No, son, but I can see you. You'll be safe. Just jump." And friends, I want to tell you the Father can see you in your trials. He can see you in your suffering. And if you jump, He'll catch you. He knows what you're going through. He knows how bad it is. He knows what you need. You need Christ. So jump into His arms and He'll take care of you, I promise. Run to Him and He will give you hope. Let's pray.

Father, I feel like we've covered so many things this morning. We've talked about this life and eternity. And we've talked about when things don't go well in this life and how to process all of that, which is not a very easy thing to do. Lord, but we thank you that you live with us in a messed-up world. And Your Word was written to a world that in many ways was more messed up than the one we're in, it seems like. And yet You gave the people back then hope and You give us hope today. We rejoice in that, Father. We thank you that You are a God who is bigger than all our problems. And You're a God who is stronger than all of our enemies. And You have offered to make a bridge, a way for us to come to You through the blood of Your Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I do pray for any who are here this morning, who are wrestling with thinking, "I don't care anymore" that you would let them know, Father, just impress on their hearts, that You care for them. And not only that, that a day is coming when they will care very much. So draw them to Christ, I pray, Lord.

For those believers here who are suffering, I pray that this will give them an eternal perspective, just kind of take them back, Lord, to the day when they first believed. Remind them of the hope they have when they first came to Christ. And may that hope grow stronger and not weaker in the days to come. Father, help us to live in light of eternity. Help us to live for something much greater than this small, 60, 70, 80, 90 years. Thank You that we can have hope in that. In Christ's name we pray, amen.