

## The One We Hope In

1 Peter 3:18

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 29, 2017

You can go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the book of 1 Peter. And as you're doing that, this morning we are on the back half of a series where we got a couple of more months left, but we're kind of on the tail end of a series called "The Suffering Church," where we're talking about how the church has handled pain and suffering. And we started it back in April, and it seemed like a good place to start out when I first came here, because for whatever reason, a lot of you are in a season of suffering right now. As a matter of fact, I remember before coming to Canada, I talked to several of you over the phone and I heard your stories and listened to what you were going through, and I thought, "Wow, that's a lot. These people have been through quite a bit in the last couple of years." Since coming here, I've heard several of your stories personally. I've gotten to talk to several of you that I hadn't talked to on the phone and heard the same thing. And so, life has given you lemons (instead of lemonade as they often say). It's given you thorn bushes instead of roses.

The good news is that God uses thorn bushes and lemons, amen? And God uses those hard times in our life to grow us and mature us in the faith. As a matter of fact, I would say that you grow more as a Christian with lemons, than with lemonade. I think the sour times, they don't go down well, but they do you much, much more good in the long run than the times of sweetness. And so, a lot of you are experiencing that, that's what we're studying in this series. And it brings us to the book of 1 Peter.

1 Peter is about how God grows us among thorn bushes, and it's about how He blesses us among lemons. To see this for yourselves, I just want to read our passage for today and say a few words about it. So if you would read 1 Peter 3:13 through 22, I want to warn you, it may sound like some of the strangest stuff you've ever heard at the end, but I'll talk about that here in just a minute. But starting at verse 13, Peter writes,

13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 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," 15 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; 16 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. 17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22

who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

As you can tell, reading that, there is a lot in here. Matter of fact, I was reading that thinking, "Boy, my small group meets next week, and we're gonna have to discuss this." But you can't read a passage like that and not wonder what he's talking about. All this stuff about spirits now in prison, the stuff about days of Noah, it's some pretty wild stuff.

But just to give you some background for this. I've told you before that 1 Peter was written to a group of exiles. The very first verse of the book starts out, "Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ," (this is chapter 1:1) "To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." The word for "scattered" there in verse 1 is *diaspora* in Greek or "dispersion". It refers to the time when the Babylonians and Persians took over the Ancient World and dispersed the people, they scattered them everywhere. They took over Rome and they scattered the Romans to Egypt and they took over Egypt and scattered the Egyptians to Rome to keep them from forming a coup, to keep them from bonding together and resisting the government. They just split them up everywhere. They were forcefully taken from their land.

You can look at it like this, you came to Canada because you wanted to. Many of you immigrated because it was something you desired to do. These people didn't desire to do this. They were forcibly taken from them. They were moved at gun point. And you can add to this that they were scattered over an area the size of British Columbia. If you put these provinces together, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, and you look at them on a map of the Roman world, they cover about 300,000 square miles, it's about the size of our province, British Columbia. That's a huge tract of land, especially without modern travel or modern technology. This means they were isolated, they were alone.

And you can add to this, they were new to the faith. History tells us Peter died around AD 60, about 30 years after Jesus did. So, these are new believers, new Christians. This letter couldn't have been more than 20 years old, probably. And so, Peter writes to encourage and he writes to build them up in the faith.

And he does this several different ways. This is all review, building up to chapter 3. For instance, in chapter 1 he talks about salvation. So the theme of chapter 1. He says they have been born again to a living hope and given an inheritance. In verse 2, he says they are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God and protected by His power. In verse 5, in short, they have all they need to get through this hard time. Chapter 2 says this another way, in chapter 2:9 when it says they are a chosen race and a royal priesthood. It says they're a holy nation and a people for God's own possession. So that in verse 13 of chapter 2, they can respond well to the government. They can respond well in verse 18 in their workplace with masters and servants. They can respond well in marriage in chapter 3 and in the home.

And this leads to the key statement in verse 13, which we just read, that some say is the high point of the letter. Some say this is what the book is all about in chapter 3:13, "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" In other words, if you're saved, if God has chosen you, if He's protected you by His power and then called you according to His Spirit, then

who's gonna harm you in your marriage? I mean, if God has done all these things for you, who is gonna harm you in the workplace and in the government? Who's gonna hurt you in your job?

And he goes on to give some applications of this in verse 14 when he says, "Do not fear their intimidation, don't be troubled." Verse 15 he says, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts and be ready to make a defense." He says in verse 16, "Keep a good conscience." And then he goes on to give some examples of what he's talking about, which is what we're gonna look at this morning.

Starting in chapter 3:18, Peter gives us some specific examples of people who are not harmed but were zealous for doing what is good. That's the progression of the book here. I kind of gave you all that background just to get you into our passage. Starting in this verse he mentioned several people who suffered for the Lord and came out of it okay. The first one is Jesus and the second one is Noah. They did the right thing with the government and the workplace and the home. And they did the right thing, or Noah did the right thing with his marriage and other aspects of life and he still suffered for it and God still took care of him. That's the point of the passage. You may have had a hard life, but you probably haven't had as hard of a life as Noah, amen? Anybody seen the whole world drowned in a flood after building a boat for a couple of centuries and everybody made fun of you the whole time? None of us have ever been through something like that. Noah went through it, God took care of him and God will take care of you, that's what Peter is saying in here.

And as I was studying this passage, I wanted to get to it all in one sermon, but I really couldn't do that. So, sorry to disappoint you, but if you're really interested in this, the back half here, this stuff about the flood and spirits and prison, you got to come back next week. So sorry, you guys are eager to get into that, I'm sure. I just got stuck in this one verse, verse 18, 'cause there's so much in here. But verse 18 says Jesus was zealous for what was good and God took care of Him.

I don't have to tell you that, you know Jesus was zealous for good. In fact, it's interesting, even people from other religions say Jesus was a good person. In the Quran, Mohammed says that Christ was a messenger of Allah, and that He gave clear miracles to the people. In fact, Jesus is mentioned over 180 times in the Quran. I think He's mentioned more than anyone else, because He was zealous for what was good. Even the Muslims acknowledge that. He suffered for doing the right thing. The deist, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was anything but a Christian, said, "If Socrates died like a philosopher, Jesus died like a God." He said, "You can't deny that either." You remember the Roman soldier at the cross, what did he say? "Surely this Man was the Son of God." Albert Einstein, the Jewish physicist, said, "No myth is filled with such a life." The atheist H. G. Wells said that "Jesus is the very center of history". He said "History would not be complete without Christ." You can't even talk about it without that. And even unbelievers know that Jesus was a good man.

You know, it's interesting, if you study the Gospel, you would think somebody who had the knowledge Jesus had would've planted a seminary on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, right? Or he would've started a mega-synagogue - thousands of Jews - and be on TV and get a Rolex watch and all that stuff. He didn't do that, Jesus healed the sick. Jesus raised the dead. Jesus cured people of their diseases, some have said, He's like a walking hospital. He might've even

cured all disease and sickness in Israel, because if you do the numbers, the amount of people that came to Him and the amount of people that lived there at the time, He might've healed just about everybody. And yet, our Lord suffered horrendously, that's Peter's point in this passage.

We often don't look at it this way, but nobody suffered more than Jesus did. Nobody went through more pain, more anguish. No one had a harder life, and He triumphed over it all. In his book, "If God is Good," Randy Alcorn says, "God might say to us, 'I have an intimate understanding of what it is to be in your place, but you have no clue what it is to be in Mine. If you had experienced Gethsemane and Golgotha and the horrors of the cross, you would not for a moment question My love for you.' And He might say, God might say, 'After You have created a world and seen Your creatures betray You and You have chosen to die for them, then come back and we'll talk about this issue of pain and suffering.'"

I don't know about you guys, but when I'm having a hard time, I often think God doesn't understand. You guys know what I'm talking about? Anybody else? Friends, the reality is, He does understand us. It's us who don't understand Him. We often want to say, "You don't know what this is like, God." God does know what it's like, amen? We just don't know what it's like to be in His place. None of us have died for the sins of the world. None of us have experienced Golgotha. You might say, "I carry my cross," but you never carried a cross like that. And Jesus did, and He came out of it okay. Which is the point of this passage. Jesus went through all that. God took care of Him and God will take care of you.

A missionary was once talking to some scoffers about an orphanage he was working at and they said, "Where is God when the orphan dies? Where is God when little children starve?" To which the missionary said, "God is in the same place He's always been. He's with the orphan. The question is, where are you?" You see, friends, God is with us in our pain. God is with us in our hard times and the cross shows us that.

You could look at it this way, the cross was the most evil event in human history, because at the cross an innocent Man was killed. At the cross the only sinless Man who ever lived was put to death, punished. And if God can bring good out of the most evil thing that ever happened, He can bring good out of whatever you're going through this morning. If God can bring good out of the cross, then He can bring good out of your marriage and your home. He can bring good out of your job, He can bring good out of the government. He can take care of us. And that's what we're gonna talk about this morning. If you're taking notes, in 1 Peter 3:18, Peter gives us some good things that have come out of the cross.

I've kind of mentioned just a few just now, but let's dive into this a little more. Here are some good things that have come out of the cross, come out of this evil event, come out of this painful event, come out of the most diabolical act in human history. Here's the good that's come out of it. By the way, I could just tell you, God brought the best thing that's ever happened in the human race out of the worst thing that ever happened. That's the kind of God we serve. And here's some of the good that He brought out of it. The first is this: our complete salvation. The cross accomplished our complete salvation. I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but Christianity is the only religion in the world that offers complete salvation to people. No other religion offers that. For all the rest of the religions, it's a 50-50 deal. You do your part, God does

His. You do this much, and God pays you back for it. It's a bargain or an exchange of goods. Which is why, in every other religion in the world, there really is no assurance of salvation, because you die wondering, "Did I do enough?" Christianity isn't like that. In the Christian religion, God does it all. He takes care of everything at the cross. Hebrews 10:12 says, "Having offered one sacrifice for sins, Jesus sat down at the right hand of God." And Peter gives us the same words or the same idea, starting in verse 17 when he says, "For it is better if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. For Christ also died for sins once."

The word "once" there may be the most powerful word, maybe in the Bible, that might be strong to say that, but a whole system of theology could be built around the word "once." Because in the Old Testament, no one ever died once for sins. You get that? Does that make sense? In the Old Testament, no one ever said, "once for all." You had to be saved by multiple deaths, multiple sacrifices, and an endless amount of blood had to be spilt. It's been said that a Jew never could say, "It is finished," because there was always something more to do. As soon as you're leaving the temple, after offering your sacrifice, what do you do? You sin in your mind or something. So you got to turn back around and go back and offer another animal. It's also been said that the priests were professional butchers, because they were always killing something, sheep and bulls and goats, doves and rams. They were always taking a life. By some estimates, they would offer something like a quarter million lambs every Passover. And the temple would literally just be overrun with blood. And the valley of Gehenna, where they would burn the bodies, would be overrun with corpses and the stench of rotting flesh. It was just a blood bath. The Old Testament, in some ways ... it was much more than this ... but in some ways, it was a blood bath. And in contrast to this, Peter says in verse 18, maybe one of the most revolutionary statements in Scripture, "Jesus died once." In contrast to all those bodies, all that sacrifice, all that blood, all that carnage, all that going back and forth to the temple. Jerusalem was on a hill, by the way. So not only was the temple on a hill, but it was always going up and downhill, up and downhill to offer sacrifices. Jesus offered His body once. One death for sin, one offering.

And Peter's point is, if God could bring good out of that, He can bring good out of anything. If He could bring good out of all that pain. You think of all that death, all that carnage, it was all placed on Christ on the cross one time. The pain would have been beyond human reckoning. And if God can bring good out of that, He can bring good out of anything. Some of you heard the story of Jim Elliot and the five missionaries who were killed witnessing to the Indians in Ecuador in the 1950s. Jim's wife Elisabeth actually wrote a book about it called "Through Gates of Splendor." But what you may remember, or may not remember, is that after they were killed, the men's wives went back to the jungle and shared the Gospel with the murderers and forgave them and planted a church there. It's a good church, still there. And when they did that, one of the murderers believed and became close friends with Steve Saint, the son of one of the missionaries who were killed. Steve's family actually took to calling him, "Grandfather Mincaye". Can you imagine calling your father's murderer a "grandfather"? Mincaye even baptized Steve's daughter, Star. And when Star was dying in a hospital, Mincaye was there. And he was going around the emergency room, asking everyone, "Do you know Jesus?" Saying, "God is taking Star to be with Jesus. Do you know Jesus? Are you ready to go? Can I tell you how to get ready?" You never know the good God is gonna bring out of your suffering. You never know how He's gonna bless your father's murderer or your daughter's death in the hospital. You never know what He's gonna

do with your cancer or your broken home. You never know what He's gonna do with your messed-up job, or your messed-up marriage, or your messed-up life. And the cross is a reminder of that.

Nobody standing at the cross in the first century would've said, "That's gonna change the world." Nobody standing on the hill of Calvary would have said, "This is gonna make any difference." They would have said, "What a tragedy. What a waste." But it wasn't a waste to God. It wasn't a tragedy to Him. And your life is not a tragedy either. Your suffering is not a waste. You know, one preacher said, "You know, it might be Friday, but Sunday's coming. You might be dead in the grave, dead in your sins, dead in your pain, but there's a resurrection coming. We have a God who raises the dead. We have a God who uses our suffering."

To draw this out a little more, maybe some of the theology behind this short phrase here in verse 18. Peter says, "There's only one work that saves you, and you didn't do it. Jesus did, at the cross." There's only one thing that gets you into heaven, and it's not you, it's Him. What I mean is that some of you might be thinking that Christianity is all about doing good works and being a good person. You pray, and you witness, and you read your Bible, or you tithe, and you sing, and you go to church, and that's how you're going to heaven. It's like you have a checklist in your mind and when you get by the pearly gates, you're gonna hand the checklist to God and, "Here's all the things I did on my list. Let me in." That's thinking like the lost Jews did. Offering upon offering. Sacrifice upon sacrifice. There were Jews that did that in faith, but a lot of them did that legalistically. And maybe some of you are doing that, this morning. Peter says, "You're not saved by works." He says, "You're saved through one work, one cross."

I remember somewhere reading that there are something like 4,000 different religions in the world today. If you add up all the cults and all the different groups like Islam and Buddhism it comes to about 4,000, and they encompass 84% of the world's population. So we can talk all we want to about atheism and agnosticism, but like eight out of every ten people on the planet have some affiliation with a religion. Which is really intimidating if you try to figure it all out. It can blow your mind if you go on the internet and type in "religion" in a Google search engine. So let me make it real simple for you this morning. Let me just draw out what he's saying here. The Bible says there are two religions in the world and only two. There's the right one and there's the wrong one. It says there's two ways to get to God, only two: the way of works, plural, or the way of work, singular. One work, one Saviour. Either you do it all, or God does it all. Either you take credit for it, or He does. God will not share His glory with another. God will not do the work and let you take the credit.

And Peter says, "This is what Jesus' suffering accomplished. He gave us the religion of work (singular): the religion of grace, where God does it all and gives it to us in His mercy when we believe." We work, but we work as a result of all of this. We don't work to create it. You know, an apple tree works to make apples, but it doesn't work to become an apple tree. Its nature is already settled. Christians work to produce fruit, but we don't work to change our nature. God does it in our hearts through faith. And if you're wondering what your suffering can accomplish, you go back to the basics and remember this. If you're wondering how God can use your pain, you go back to the cross and remember how God used the pain of His Son.

Which leads to the next good thing that comes out of the cross, and that is universal salvation. Jesus died for sins once in verse 18, that is, complete salvation. And He died for sins once for all, that is, universal salvation. And by that, I don't mean that everyone is saved, because everyone is not saved. Everyone doesn't believe. Some reject what I'm telling you and therefore they are not saved. The cross doesn't apply to them. But everyone could be saved if they wanted to. That's what this means. The opportunity is available for everyone. To say it this way, "Jesus didn't die for the good people only, He died for the bad people, too." He didn't just die for the churchgoers or those from nice, conservative backgrounds. He saved people like the thief on the cross. He didn't tell the thief on the cross, "Boy, if you could just get down off of this cross and go to the Synagogue, you'd be alright." He said, "Believe in me and today you'll be in paradise." And you see this in verse 18, this idea when it goes on and says, "For Christ also died once for all the world."

The word "all" there is another revolutionary term. It's the term that really kind of turn the tables between the Old and the New Testaments. Because a Jew (or most Jews) would never say "once" in regard to salvation, they would never say "all." Salvation was not offered to all in the minds of most Jews. It was offered to all in the Old Testament. The Old Testament taught that anyone could be saved. But a lot of the people back then didn't get it. In fact, in the temple we just referred to, the Last Temple, there were several courts and one of those was the Court of the Gentiles, where non-Jews would worship. And the interesting thing about this court, is that it was the farthest away from the Holy of Holies. It was the farthest away from God, so to speak, the place where the priest would go and offer sacrifices. The Court of Gentiles was the farthest away. It was actually the spot where Jesus cleansed the temple, if you remember that event. After throwing the money changes out and all the people that were misusing it, Jesus said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for the nations." He said "the nations" there because that court was supposed to be for the nations, for the Gentiles to pray to God. And the Jews were using it to get rich. Because that was the mentality for many of them. They thought there were two types of people, they were the haves and have nots. There were the Jews and the dogs, as they often called the Gentiles, because they were so dirty. And Peter says here Jesus came to change that, too. He died once for all, all the nations, all the people, all the Gentiles and Jews who would believe.

And I won't say too much about this, other than to just give a quick application. Jesus died for all types of sin, which means that whatever sin you're suffering with this morning, Jesus died for that. He died to help you. If your suffering is, Quentin had already mentioned, from lust or pride or greed, Jesus died for that. If you're suffering from anxiety or fear or despair, He died for that, too. There is no sin too dirty for Him. There is no deed too dark. You can't fall so far that His grace can't pick you up. And there's only one work that saves you and that one work is available for all, which is another difference between the true religion and the false religion.

The false religion says that God's resources are only available to some, to the good people. The true religion says that God's resources are available to everybody. And you don't have to clean yourself up first. I remember praying with a man several years ago, who didn't come from a religious background. I don't think he'd ever even been to church. The first little country church where I pastored, we would go around door to door in the town and just ask people if we could pray for them. And this man very graciously let me in to his home, and I don't think he had any

kind of a Christian understanding of anything. As a matter of fact, every other word out of his mouth was a curse word. You know someone's background when they don't stop cussing when you tell them you're a pastor. Usually they think like God just showed up in the room as if God hadn't been there the whole time, and they stop cussing or whatever, put the alcohol away. And this guy didn't do any of that. But I asked if I could pray for him and he said "yes" and what he did next really, really touched me. He straightened out his hair and smoothed out his shirt. He tried to look presentable to God. And I remember thinking, "You know, that means a lot. He's really taking this seriously." I really appreciated that. But I also thought, you don't have to do that to get to God. God doesn't care about your hair or your shirt. He just cares about your heart. He just cares whether you believe in Him. That's what you have to do to be saved and that's what the cross has accomplished.

The cross made a way for all people to come to God, those from church backgrounds and those from not. He made a way for everyone to be saved who would trust in Him. And that leads to another good thing that comes out of Jesus' suffering and that is ... We could call it legal salvation. You could call it "judicial salvation" or "legal salvation". The cross brought us complete salvation. It brought us universal salvation and it brought us legal salvation; salvation according to the law. I think we all understand that God has a law, a very specific law. You can read about it in the Old Testament. It's spelled out right there very clearly. And I think we all understand that we've broken it. I'm always encouraged that there's only Ten Commandments, because by the time I get to the end of the list, I'm almost in tears every time. Imagine if there were 20 or 30 or 50 of those things, how convicting that would be? We've broken all the Commandments. And Peter says here that Jesus suffered to deal with that, too. If you read in verse 18, it says, "For Christ also died for sins, once for all, the just for the unjust."

The word "just" there is a legal term, the *dikaios* which means "something that is right according to the law, something that is innocent." When the judge says you're innocent, he means you kept the law. Jesus was the *dikaios*, He was just, He kept the law, He was innocent. He obeyed all the Ten Commandments all His life, and then He died, Peter says, for those of us who didn't. That's what happened at the cross. Jesus was killed, so the guilty could go free. As Matthew Henry said that, "He who knew no sin suffered for those who knew no righteousness." You knew no righteousness. I knew no righteousness. I got two little kids, like a lot of you do, cute little guys. They're already sinning and I'm thinking, "Oh, what are they gonna be like when they're 18?" I mean, they're three years old and if I ask them, "Do you remember when the first time you told a lie?" They don't even remember. I'm 37, how in the world could I remember the first time I told ... That's the idea here. Martyn Lloyd Jones said, "He died to give favor to those who don't deserve it." That's the idea of favour. You don't deserve it.

In fact, you could translate verse 18 this way, "For Christ also died once for all, the just one for the unjust ones." There you see the word "one" again. One death, one just man dying for the rest of us. We don't often look at it this way, but there was a legal exchange that took place at the cross. This was a judicial payment. In fact, it's been called the divine exchange. God looked down on Jesus and exchanged His life for ours. He exchanged His innocence for our guilt. It's been called a penal substitution, meaning Jesus was penalized for us. Penalized, punished in our place. We should've been there on the cross. We should've been suffering like He did. We should be in hell. But He suffered so we wouldn't have to.

Another way to look at this is that Jesus' death was the most illegal act in history. If anyone deserved to die, it was never, ever Him. In fact, there's a book on this called "The Murder of Jesus," because that's what it was. This was a murder, plain and simple. The Romans and the Jews broke their laws over and over and over again in order to do this. Matter of fact, you read the Gospels, they were hitting Him before His trial. You guys understand, you're not supposed to hit people before they are on trial. You're not supposed to hit them at their trial. And you don't try a man in the middle of the night. That's all illegal. And yet, if He could go through all of that and still come out of it okay, then you could do the same thing with your trials this morning. If He could bear up under the unfairness of that and still forgive people, still love them, then surely you could do it, too.

And we talked about forgiveness several weeks ago, but forgiveness, it's more than just letting go and letting God, it's an active desire to do good to the other person. In his book on forgiveness, Jay Adams says that, "When you forgive someone, you promise never to bring up the hurt in a vengeful way, ever." You might bring it up to talk about it or work through it, but you don't bring it up to slap someone in the face with it. He says, "You don't meditate on it, you don't dwell on it. You don't gossip about the other person or slander them." I think we could add to this that when you forgive someone, you consistently pray for them.

And I've talked to several of you and you've said, "Boy, I want to forgive this person who did this thing, but they've never asked for forgiveness, so I can't say it." Well, that's true, but you can forgive them. Or you can pray for them. After all, thinking about Jesus here, Jesus, after all this happened, He wasn't best friends with the Jews and the Romans after this. I mean, they weren't buddy-buddy. But He did say, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." He prayed for them. You can do that, too. But you can forgive your enemies like He did. That's one of the applications of this.

You can exchange the just for the unjust, and you can let the guilty go free in your heart. Some of you have a cage in your heart where you punish the guilty day in and day out. There are chains in your heart where the people that have wronged you are locked up. And you just whip them and beat them and hurt them in your heart, in your head all day long. You can't do that. God didn't do that to you. As a matter of fact, if you want a real humbling thought, God forgives people. And if you want to be godly, you have to do the same. You may not be able to say it out loud, but you can do it in your heart, just like what Christ did here. And that brings us to one more good thing that came out of the cross, and that is personal salvation.

We've talked about complete salvation. We've talked about universal salvation, salvation that's available for everybody. We've talked about legal salvation - He saved us by the law. And then there's personal salvation, this is salvation that is personal - just directly between you and God. There is a personal element to what Christ did on the cross. Because God takes sin that way, He takes it personally. It offends Him deeply. And Jesus died to deal with that, too. If you read in verse 18, it says, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God."

The word "bring" there is an interesting word, it could be translated "introduce." It referred to a messenger who introduced people to the king. In ancient times, when the king forgave you, it

didn't mean you could come into his presence whenever you wanted to. You couldn't just march in and talk to him. You could lose your head for doing something like that. You had to be introduced. You had to be invited and brought through someone else. Maybe a way to compare this, if I wanted to go to a Canucks hockey game and walk out on the ice, someone would have to bring me there. I couldn't just do that. I'd have to know somebody. Same idea here. Someone had to restore the relationship, someone had to make it right with God in a personal way, and that's what Jesus did on the cross. He restored our relationship with God.

And He did it, Peter says, going on in verse 18, "Having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." That's a reference to the resurrection. God hates sin. You see that all throughout this passage. He can't stand it. So the only way you're gonna have a relationship with God in heaven is for you to have a sinless, resurrected body. And the only way for you to be fully restored with God for eternity is to have a body without sin. And Jesus' resurrection allowed you to do that. As He rose, so we will rise in Him. As He came back to life, so we will come back to life as He did.

And Isaiah says that will bring us peace. Isaiah 53 says, "And the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him." We'll have peace with God. Paul says, "It will reconcile us to Him." To say it this way, just as nobody can pull Jesus down out of heaven, once you get there, nobody will pull you down either. It won't happen. Just as nobody can pull Jesus off the cross or out of the grave and punish Him again, nobody will pull you down and punish you for your sins. They've been dealt with. They're over. Do you guys know what double jeopardy is? Double jeopardy is when you punish the same person twice for the same crime. You can't pull double jeopardy on Christ, or on you, if you're a believer. The sins have been punished and dealt with on Him.

I'm blown away with how many Christians I've seen trying to punish themselves for their sins. You guys know what I'm talking about? You mess up and watch something bad on TV, so you say, "I will never watch TV again, ever." You're just trying to assuage the guilt, right? Or you say something harsh to your kids, and you say, "I'm gonna go make them ice cream with sprinkles," even though it's 7 o'clock and they're about to go to bed. You don't have to do that. The sin has been paid for in Christ. You don't have to punish yourself, because Jesus has already been punished for you.

But the idea in all this passage and the idea in this, basically, this whole book of 1 Peter is that God can bring good things out of your suffering. He brought all these good things out of Christ's suffering, gave His salvation that is complete, universal, legal and personal. Took care of everything, every guilt, every sin, every crime we committed against God. Because of that, He can do the same thing for you and your suffering this morning, as well.

The Scottish preacher Robert Murray M'Cheyne once said, "For every one look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ." For every one look at your sin, every one look at your pain, every one look at your broken marriage, your broken home, your broken health, broken whatever, take ten looks at Christ. "Don't look at yourself", Peter says, "look at Him. Don't look at your problems, look at how He dealt with them at the cross." That's the hope that you have. A woman was sick and dying of cancer and so she told her pastor that every night before going to sleep, she would hug

her Bible and hug the promises of God, and then she said, "Is that weird? Is it strange to do that?" And the pastor said, "No, it's not. What else are you gonna hug in a time like this?" Friends, maybe some of you need to be thinking that way this morning. What else can you hug at a time like this? What else do you have? You have all these promises. You have all of this kindness from God. I don't know what you're going through, but God does. I don't know what's causing you pain, but He does. And He's taken care of it at the cross. He's brought you to God, He's paid for your sins, and He will one day resurrect you. Listen, whatever you're going through today, remember if God can bring His Son through this, He can bring you through it, too. He will take care of you. That is your hope. Let's close on a word of prayer.

Father, we pray for and thank you, Lord, for this wonderful gift of the cross that we're going to celebrate here this morning in the Lord's Supper. Father, thank you that on one hand we grieve and have to think about it for a minute how dark the cross was, how terrible a thing it was. But on the other hand, Lord, we rejoice, because we know that if You can be sovereign over such an event, over such evil and pain, then you can be sovereign over what we are going through today, and You can take care of it. And we rejoice in that, Father. May You be glorified as we remember your Son's death and resurrection here together. Father, may You be glorified as we remember Christ. And we pray this in His name, amen.