

Protected

1 Peter 1:3-7

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. (1 Peter 1:3-7 (NASB))

May we begin our worship study of these words today by first reminding ourselves again that as our “Heavenly Father”, God will do everything that it takes to preserve and to protect the salvation that He has wrought within our souls! Those words again that we shared in an earlier message from Romans 8, verse 38 and 39. . .

38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 (NASB))

Precious promises of protection . . . and here in our worship text of 1 Peter 1, I have used the NASB translation because I particularly like the word translated there in verse 5 as “protected”. Listen!

5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time!

The ESV translates this word “protected” as “guarded”. The NIV translates it as “shielded”. And the NKJV translates it as “kept”. All of those translations give the proper understanding of the meaning of the word, but I like “protected” the best, because it gives me a greater sense of assurance and confidence that nothing in existence can ever fully take away the salvation that God has given to me. My eternal life, your eternal life, and the eternal life of every other person who gives their whole heart to Christ is absolutely guaranteed by God himself.

May I offer us an analogy from our “natural world”? Considering these words of “guaranteed protection”, I’m reminded of the measure of confidence that we place in many of the natural things of our daily life. In particular, I think of the words that

describe the confidence that we can have in our American monetary system, the American dollar. We have no concern or doubt at all that the money in our pocket or the money in our bank account is fully trustworthy, or that it will not remain that way. Yes, we grimace when we think about how our U. S. Treasury just keeps on printing more and more dollars, and we complain about it. But the reality is, when we go to bed at night, we are not really worried about our money being worth the same tomorrow that it is today.

And even further, we count the Treasury Bonds that our government issues as being the most trustworthy investment instruments available to us for our retirement plans and such. Those bonds are said to be backed by the “full faith and credit” of our U. S. Government. And they are.

And when we do take a moment to worry and complain about them, we seem to quickly also add, “But, treasury bonds are still the safest investments on the market.

Such was a similar conclusion that Peter voiced about the Lord Jesus on an occasion when Jesus was preaching some “hard sayings” within a sermon. Most all the mass of disciples deserted Jesus because of His “hard preaching” leaving only the twelve. When Jesus asked the twelve why they didn’t leave also, Peter responded, and I paraphrase, “although we may not fully understand these things, Jesus, you are still the best choice we can make. Only you have the words of eternal life”.

Perhaps it could be said of these promises that we read here in these scriptures, that “they are backed by the full faith and credit of God”. And if we can accept and trust in that kind of assurance about the safety of our money, why can’t we all the more so accept and trust that same assurance about God and about His promises to us?

Folks, He, God really is the best choice that is available to you and me. And while many times we are not able to fully understand His ways, we really still ought to put at least as much faith in Him as we do our dollar bills . . . and actually far, far more.

But note here that God understands our nature, especially as it regards the troubles that beset us and the way that our “faith” responds to those troubles. Listen to these words again, beginning in verse 4!

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.
(1 Peter 1:4-7 (NASB))

God is ever and always fully trustworthy in every circumstance, but note here that He has also ordained that your and my “faith” must also play an important role in the encounters of daily life. And, as we well know, when our faith becomes part of the equation and the distress of the various trials spoken about here begin to weigh upon us, that is when our “spiritual knees” often begin to buckle. Those words again . . .

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 (1 Peter 1:5-6)

May I share with us a portion of the commentary that Matthew Henry gives regarding these words! He tells us,

Preservation by God's power does not supersede man's (freewill) endeavor and care for his own salvation; here are God's power and man's faith, which implies (about man) an earnest desire of salvation, a reliance upon Christ according to his invitations and promises, a vigilant care to do everything pleasing to God and to avoid whatever is offensive, an abhorrence of temptations, a respect to the recompense of reward, and persevering diligence in prayer. By such a patient, operating, conquering faith, we are kept by the assistance of divine grace, unto salvation; faith is a sovereign preservative of the soul through a state of grace unto a state of glory.

May I say that sometimes these commentaries are as difficult to understand as the original scriptures! But here, Matthew Henry is simply saying that our faith is tightly interwoven into the fabric of God's ordained divine will, so tightly interwoven that sometime it is difficult to discern the difference between when God's hand is at work and when it is our own “freewill” that is at work. But both are necessary, and intricately woven together, and together they will carry our salvation on forward into eternity. And listen! As these scriptures promise, especially verses 6 and 7, no matter how difficult the trials come to be, God will not let our faith fully fail. Listen again to those words!

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.
(1 Peter 1:6-7 (NASB))

Considering this interaction between our freewill faith and the divine working of God's hand brings another analogy to my mind. It is this. When I hear our healthcare professionals refer to extending the life of a person, perhaps helping them to live another year or so, my mind quickly goes to those scriptures like Hebrews 9:27 that plainly tell us that there is appointed unto man a time to die, and then comes the judgment. Or perhaps the words of Psalm 139 that tell us,

16 your eyes (Lord) saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Psalm 139:16 (NIV))

Both of these scriptures, and others like them, make plain the reality that God has ordained both the day we were to be born and the day that we will die. We will not live one moment longer, nor will we die one moment sooner than the days God has ordained for us. Therefore, it is not a question of when we will die and leave this earth. God has already ordained that. But rather, our part in the "equation of life" is the "quality" with which we will live out our daily life while we remain here. If we treat our bodies in unhealthy ways, we will suffer through the days that God has ordained for us much more than if we take good care of them.

And so it is also with this matter that God has presented to us here in this passage. Our eternal life has already been determined from the moment that we received Christ as our Savior and Lord. And our inheritance in heaven is guaranteed without question. The only thing that is now in question is the "quality of our Christian life" that we will experience during these days of our living years. And that will be determined by the "faith" that we choose to exercise. If by faith, we hold fast to the promises of God and fully trust Him for all the matters of our daily existence, then our "quality of life" as a Christian will abound with great favor and joy.

And yes, we will surely still experience struggles. That is the nature of our souls, and that is the permissions allowed by God to the world, the flesh and the devil, by whom we are continually tempted. But folks, such things as that are a "given" for this fallen race. The desires of our flesh are erratic, and the nature of demons is always to tempt. But the response of our faith should be to simply look at who now is on "our side" in our daily battles. And "greater is He who is within us than He who is in the world". God is stronger and more loving and more protective than we can ever hope or imagine. And we must continually put our confidence and our trust in Him.

I do hope that my analogy has made sense to you. It does to me! And I do want you and me to have that special joy-filled "quality of Christian life" that God wants to give to us as we surrender ourselves into His hands.

In the moments remaining today, may we take these considerations one step further and may we address this matter of what seems to be “foreordained suffering” that we might have to undergo. Those words, beginning in verse 6!

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.
(1 Peter 1:6-7 (NASB))

Note the words, “if necessary”.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, (1 Peter 1:6 (NASB))

Often our sufferings are necessary because we have behaved wrongly and sinfully and God needs to use suffering to bring us back to Him in repentance. He is ever and always a loving and responsible Father. And good fathers do punish their children to bring them back to right behavior. Those words in Hebrews 12,

6 . . . The Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

And in verse 11 of Hebrews 12,

11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:6-7, 11 (NIV))

Praise be to God that He loves us enough to discipline us and to bring us back to Him when we go astray.

But may we also accept that there will be times when we will have to undergo difficult trials and sufferings even when we have done nothing wrong. That was the case with God’s servant Job! Job was upright and blameless, but yet God purposefully allowed satan to work his worst suffering upon Job.

Here in these words of 1 Peter 1, we find a similar inference being given, that sufferings may come upon us even when there has been no misbehavior on our part. These words points instead toward another “necessary” form of suffering, suffering that will bring special praise and glory and honor to the Lord Jesus. Listen to the words of verse 7.

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. (1 Peter 1:6-7 (NASB))

Here, the Lord is telling us that this kind of suffering is sure to become necessary at various times within our lives, and that this special kind of suffering will probably be very painful and demanding and “wearing” upon our faith. The words, “tested by fire” suggest a compelling strain that might make us wonder if we will make it through some of the sufferings.

Later on in chapter 3 of this Book, God speaks to us about those times when we will suffer though we have done nothing at all wrong, but still we must respond rightly to our suffering. Listen!

9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. 11 He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." 15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 17 It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:9-17 (NIV))

In Philippians 1, the Apostle Paul voices the response that you and I must have . . .

20 . . . it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
(Philippians 1:20-21 (ESV))

This is the goal of our suffering and of our faith, that we will with our behavior bring praise, and glory and honor to the Lord Jesus.

I can't emphasize this enough. You and I are bearing witness to who Christ is. We are a “testimony” to His grace. And we must be ever so careful that our witness and our testimony is always an excellent one.

I'll close with these words from verses 6 and 7,

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.

(1 Peter 1:6-7 (NASB))