

Peter 1B

One night in 1903, after delivering a sermon on the sympathy of Jesus at Chicago's Salvation Army Citadel, Frederick Booth-Tucker was approached by a man who was rather unimpressed. "If your wife had just died, like mine has," he declared, "and your babies were crying for their mother, who would never come back, you wouldn't be saying what you're saying."

Incredibly, a few days later, Tucker's own wife was killed in a train wreck. Her body was brought to Chicago and carried to the same Citadel for the funeral. After the service the bereaved preacher gazed into his wife's silent face before turning to the assembled guests.

"The other day a man told me I wouldn't speak of the sympathy of Jesus if my wife had just died," he declared. "If that man is here, I want to tell him that Christ is sufficient."

- Nothing tests the faith of a Christian quite so much as a trial of life
 - It's in those moments that we discover what we truly believe
 - And like the fire that tests precious metal, the trial proves the worth of our faith
- Peter understood trials, and Peter understood that Christ was sufficient in the face of those trials
 - And as we began to study last week, he knew that if his readers could share his perspective, they would also face their trials with the strength of Christ
- In his first letter, he's opened in Chapter 1 describing the reader's faith from three vantage points
 - Past, present and future
 - With each vantage point, Peter gives the reader something to cherish
 - Something to grab hold of to appreciate just how special their relationship in Christ was
 - To build some perspective, in other words

[1Pet. 1:6](#) In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

[1Pet. 1:7](#) 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;

[1Pet. 1:8](#) 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,

[1Pet. 1:9](#) obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

- Last week Peter began in verse 3 looking at the future of our faith
 - It was a view of the permanent and imperishable reward, the inheritance that our Father has waiting for His children
 - These are the gifts of reward and substance that remind us of the love our Father has for His children
 - And inheritance that was prepared before the foundations of the earth for those who love Him
 - In the passage we begin with this morning, Peter moves to the present nature of our salvation
 - If the future holds rewards, the present seems to hold trials
 - Well it certainly did for his readers
 - What a strange means of encouraging his readers
 - Perhaps Peter knows something about the spiritual benefit of trials
- The first thing we observe in verse 6 is the temporary nature of our present vantage point
 - Remember how he described the future of our salvation?
 - Verse 4: imperishable, unfading, reserved in heaven
 - Verse 5: the reality of our future in heaven protected by God
 - Friends, what's permanent is the unseen reality of the eternal realm
 - What's temporary is what we experience here today

- The material world, the achievements, the relationships, the trials, disappointments
- The heart of Peter's point begins in verse 7
 - Peter draws a comparison between faith itself and gold
 - Gold was the most valuable material found on earth in Peter's day
 - Now gold is still very valuable today, but there are some things more valuable than gold
 - But in Peter's day, gold was in fact the gold standard
 - Nothing in earthly terms was more precious
 - But Peter says faith is far more valuable
 - On what basis is our faith more valuable than gold?
 - On the same basis as everything else
 - Because gold – as valuable as it is – perishes at the end of this age
 - But faith brings about the salvation of your souls, which is an eternal commodity
 - Here again, worth is measured in the economy of eternity
 - When you look around your life and take note of the things you place value on
 - Ask yourself are you assigning value according to the measuring stick that scripture uses?
 - Are you measuring against the standard of eternity?
 - It will be impossible for Peter's readers - and for us - to successfully whether the trials that may come so long as their eyes remain focused on the temporal rather than the eternal
 - Because if we see our safety and security and peace and happiness and contentment originating in the world rather than in our relationship and future eternity with Christ

- Then we will inevitably make bad choices, and decisions and judgments
- And our obedience and witness to the Lord will suffer
- In fact, Peter's next point rests entirely on his readers maintaining eyes for eternity
 - Peter says that our trials are the proof of our faith
 - Look in verses 6 Peter says his readers were distressed by various trials and in verse 7 he says these trials are so the proof of their faith may be revealed
 - So trials in our faith mark our present experience in the faith, and they serve as proof of our faith
- First, Peter says that trials provide an opportunity for proof of faith
 - More specifically, our response to trials reveals our the character of our faith
 - Before we understand what Peter is saying here, let's be clear on what Peter is not saying
 - Peter isn't saying that trials create faith, or bring us to faith, or increase our faith as if it were growing along some continuum toward salvation
 - Scripture is absolutely and consistently clear that saving faith is not measured on a continuum

[Rom. 10:9](#) that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

[John 5:24](#) ¶ "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

- Remember the poor jailer who was terrified when the jail was rocked by an earthquake

[Acts 16:30](#) and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
[Acts 16:31](#) They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

[Acts 16:32](#) And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.

[Acts 16:33](#) And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*.

[Acts 16:34](#) And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

- The testimony of scripture is unambiguous on this point:
 - Our faith in Christ saves us immediately, completely, permanently
 - Then what is the effect of a trial on our faith
 - By necessity, it is limited to one of two effects
 - A trial either reveals that we have not yet truly believed
 - And by the trial, the wheat and the tares are separated
 - Secondly, the trial strengthen the believer's hope and reliance in their faith
 - In the first case, the trial reveals the unbelief of a pretender
 - In the second case, the trial confirms the presence of faith to the doubter
 - Both purposes have eternal value to a God who wishes to separate the light from the darkness
- Remember how James begins his challenging letter:

[James 1:2](#) ¶ Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

[James 1:3](#) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

[James 1:4](#) And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- He says we have reason to rejoice in trials
 - The reason for joy?
 - Because the trial has tested our faith
 - And testing is a good thing

- Testing verifies the truth of our confession
- Because there is only one thing worse than an unbeliever who knows they are an unbeliever
- And that is an unbeliever, who doesn't know it
- James says that our faith having been tested leads to confidence and hope...just as gold is purified through fire
 - We will develop confidence in our future and endurance in our walk with the Lord
 - And endurance, James says, will result in the result that we lack nothing
 - Ultimately our glorification
- Later in James letter, he uses Abraham as an example of what this process looks like
 - In Gen 15:6, God declares Abraham to be righteous because he heard God's promise of a son and believed God's word
 - Abraham was righteous
 - James reminds us of that moment in chapter 2 when he says this:

[James 2:21](#) Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

[James 2:22](#) You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

[James 2:23](#) and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God.

- In the decades after God declared Abraham to be righteous on the basis of faith, Abraham didn't have such a great testimony
 - He tries to make his own heir through Hagar
 - He goes to Egypt and lies about his wife
 - Then after Isaac does come along, Abraham allows his wife to mistreat Hagar

- If you had been looking for proof of Abraham's belief in God's promises, I'm not sure if you could have found it
 - Which is why James uses that fascinating phrase
 - Scripture was fulfilled
 - Abraham was declared righteous by faith in Chapter 15, but the fulfillment, the opportunity to see the faith of Abraham lived out finally occurred in Chapter 22
 - God gave Abraham the trial, the test that was needed to demonstrate Abraham's faith
- Peter says much the same thing in the verse we read
 - In verse 9 we will obtain as the outcome of these trials the salvation of our souls
 - Not because we earn salvation through trials – such a misinterpretation not only misunderstands all that Peter is saying, but also the rest of the Bible
 - No, because in the trials we come to understand that we are saved, that we have a faith that can survive trial
 - And trials like fire purify and reveal the truth of our confessions
 - But if trials reveal the true believer, then we should also remember that some times the trial reveals that not all confessions of faith are genuine
 - Some are shown to be true, but some fall away and are shown to be false
- By the way, have you stopped to consider what it would mean if in your life you never experienced trials that tested your faith?
 - It might sound good at first, but remember what James said...
 - Count it joy that we have trials
 - So if it's joy to have trials, what would it be not to have trials?
 - We said last week that the Greek word for trial indicates an eternal event that comes upon us
 - Not an event we bring upon ourselves

- We'll have plenty of those too, but we're talking here about something that comes upon you without any perceived blame
- Well, consider what the writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter 12

[Heb. 12:3](#) ¶ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

[Heb. 12:4](#) You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

[Heb. 12:5](#) and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,

“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,
NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;

[Heb. 12:6](#) FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

[Heb. 12:7](#) It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

[Heb. 12:8](#) But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

[Heb. 12:9](#) Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

[Heb. 12:10](#) For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us for our good*, so that we may share His holiness.

[Heb. 12:11](#) All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- In quoting from Proverbs, the writer of Hebrews reminds his readers how discipline from the Lord is not only a good thing
 - It's an essential thing
 - And it is for discipline – for trials - that we endure
 - And we will desire discipline if we understand what discipline means
 - It means we are legitimate sons
 - Because a loving father will discipline his children
 - And if we didn't experience discipline, we would be illegitimate children

- The literal word in Greek means bastard, or a son who has a mother but doesn't know who his father is
- So according to scripture, if we have not experienced God's discipline in our lives (trials), then we are illegitimate
 - And illegitimate child is one who tries to claim a father who is not truly their father
 - We are not of our Father in heaven, but we remain of our father the devil
- Consider all the things a father can do in caring for his children
 - He can feed them, clothe them, protect them from injury or other harm
 - He can teach them, he can play with them and he can care for them when they are sick, etc.
 - But all these things are things that this same father could do to any child
 - That father could feed, cloth, educate, nurse, or play with anyone's child if necessary
 - But the one thing that distinguishes a true father from an illegitimate one is discipline
 - A true father can discipline a child, but he can not discipline someone else's child
 - First, he will probably risk a charge of assault or child abuse
 - Secondly, the child himself will not receive the correction of a man who is not his father
 - In blended families where a stepfather comes into a family with children, that man will know when he's truly received by those children
 - It will be when they receive his loving discipline
 - The writer then adds in verse 10 that our earthly fathers disciplined us for a short time for reasons they felt best

- But our father in heaven is disciplining us for eternal purposes
 - Here again, the perspective we need can only be found in an appreciation that God's timescale is the one that matters, not the world's
- Just as the writer say, trials don't seem joyful,
 - But if you consider that trials that discipline us and test our faith are proof that we are a child of God
 - Then we can take joy in them, but only if we see them through the eyes of eternity
- There's an important principle represented in this passage and in the passage of Hebrews
 - Instant gratification is the opposite of God's call on the life of a Christian
 - If we take the goal of instant gratification that reigns in our culture and try to make it a spiritual goal as well
 - Then we will completely distort the nature of the Christian experience
 - And we will be utterly frustrated and disappointed
 - And ultimately, we may fail to achieve anything of spiritual substance with the life God gives us here and now
 - Before we leave this passage, we should take a second to note how Peter again reminds the readers how much they have rejoiced in their faith
 - A faith that relies not on the physical manifestations of Christ
 - Not on physical proof, or personal experience
 - Rather, just on the hope that comes from supernaturally derived faith
 - Eyes for eternity
- Finally, Peter moves to the final vantage point

- The past character of our salvation
- We might even be tempted to ask how could our salvation have a past?
 - We can understand how it has a present reality and a future reward
 - But what do we mean by a past?

[1Pet. 1:10](#) ¶ As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries,

[1Pet. 1:11](#) 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.

[1Pet. 1:12](#) 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.

- Peter begins with the phrase, as to this salvation...
 - In other words, as to God's plan for redemption
 - He's not speaking strictly in a personal sense now
 - Your salvation, my salvation
 - Our individual experiences in becoming believers
 - He's talking about God's plan to save men from their sin
 - The plan of salvation, as to this plan
- The prophets of the Bible spoke prophetically of the coming grace of a Messiah
 - And with that revelation, Peter says these men also learned two things
 - First, they learned that this Messiah was to be revealed in a future time and to another people
 - In verse 12 we're told specifically that they were not serving themselves, but you (the church)
 - We know Peter means the church because he just said these people have never seen the Lord in person

- Peter doesn't mean the prophets were merely serving those who needed to know who the Messiah was when He came
- He meant all those who would live in the church in the generations after the Messiah
- These are the people the prophets served
 - They were not serving the nation of Israel in their day
 - Not their own countrymen
- Rather, the ultimate purpose of their prophecies was in how it would draw men to Christ after His death and resurrection
 - How do think it must have felt to be a persecuted prophet, striving to bring truth to God's people in an apostate nation
 - Only to realize that it wouldn't produce fruit in their day
 - It was being recorded centuries in advance
- And secondly, Peter says these prophets searched the Spirit of Christ that lived within them to know who the Messiah would be and when He would arrive
 - They wanted to privilege of knowing about this Christ they spoke of prophetically
- But even more importantly, they had a hard time fitting the two pieces of the Messiah's ministry together
 - How can a Messiah suffer and glory?
 - How does the king die and reign?
- They longed to understand God's redemptive plan
- But it was not to for them, as we said
 - It was for the church
 - For you and I

- We are the ones who have the grace to know who Christ is and when He came
 - The prophets were serving us
 - Finally, even the angels are jealous in a way of what God has reserved for us in this age as His bride for His Son
- This is the magnitude of what we have been given
 - What a privilege! Can we even begin to appreciate how special our time is in all of human history
 - Does that help give you a little perspective on your circumstances and the nature of your faith in Christ?
 - You have a reward, you have the privilege of sonship even in the trials you face
 - And you have God's entire redemptive plan orchestrated for you and the benefit of the church
 - So how do you and I respond?

[1Pet. 1:13](#) ¶ Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[1Pet. 1:14](#) As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance,

[1Pet. 1:15](#) but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior;

[1Pet. 1:16](#) because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

- Therefore...Peter says
 - Therefore...if you understand and agree with what I just wrote
 - If we see these things the way Peter explains them
 - Then we have an obligation to respond
 - And not just respond in any way, but in a specific way
 - Our response is holiness – holy living – righteousness in our thoughts and words and actions.
- Peter begins by saying we must first prepare our minds for action
 - The phrase in Greek literally means gird your mind
 - The ordinary dress of Peter's day for a man was a long garment made of linen that reached to the ankles
 - So when decisive, forceful action was needed, a man would gird himself
 - He would pull up the hem of the garment and tie it off at the waist
 - So, gird the garment was always a preparatory step before active work or battle
 - So Peter says we should gird our minds
 - Get them ready for action, or make up your mind to act decisively
 - We know that holiness in any form depends on having the Holy Spirit in us by faith
 - Apart from the Spirit, we cannot hope to achieve any measure of holiness
 - But given that, our first step in personal holiness is in the mindset to seek holiness
 - It doesn't come by chance or luck or wishful thinking
 - It is made possible by the Holy Spirit in us but it is ultimately realized to some level by our mental agreement that holiness is in fact our goal

- If we agree with all that Peter has said concerning our salvation, then the proper response is to first prepare our minds for hard work
- This is then followed by keeping sober
 - The NASB adds the phrase in spirit, but I see no reason to include that phrase
 - The NIV says be self-controlled, which may be closer to the meaning, though the word in Greek means to abstain from wine
 - I think the issue here is literally to remain sober, which implies to remain in control of the flesh generally
 - I think this fits Peter's point better
 - We prepare our minds for action while controlling our flesh's desire
 - It's a two-prong attack on sin
 - And then with the mind ready for action, the flesh under control, set your hope on the grace to be revealed with Christ
 - The writer of Hebrews puts this thought a little differently

[Heb. 6:18](#) so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

- Our hope as believers is a certain expectation of salvation
 - Not a wish, a certainty
 - Only that kind of hope can bring joy
- And the writer of Hebrews wants his readers to take hold of the hope set before
 - He implies that some who are, in fact saved – they have taken refuge
 - These believers should take hold of the hope set before them

- That it is possible for believers to not even recognize that they have a hope, this certainty of salvation
- But we must take hold of it
 - We must choose to fix our hope on Christ
 - Not be distracted by this world such that we assume our hope, our reason for joy is found elsewhere
 - Not seek some other hope in an attempt to solve our problems
- And our girding of our mind and restraining of the flesh and focus on our hope in Christ then prepares us to seek holiness
 - In verse 14 we are not to be conformed to the lusts of our former life
 - Lusts that we pursued in ignorance, Peter says
 - Each of us may have a slightly different list of things that consumed us and focused our attention
 - Lusts for money, power, excitement, sex, or control, or fame, or whatever
 - These things are the marks of an unbelieving life
 - One that is ignorant
 - And when Peter says ignorant, he's not saying that we were ignorant of the fact that these activities were wrong and sinful
 - Romans says that men are without excuse for their sin
 - Peter's point is that they were ignorant of God and His expectations on them for holiness
 - Before faith, we didn't know the Lord nor understand how much He detests our sin
 - Of how much God demands that we be like Him
 - Some suggest that this shows Peter was writing to Gentiles, since the Jews did know God and His expectations for holiness

- This may be true as well, but it's also possible that Peter was speaking to Jews who simply couldn't appreciate God's expectation for holiness until they came to know the Lord
- As Peter says in v 15, be like the One who called you
 - There's that idea back again
 - He calls us chosen
 - We were the ones that God selected to be in His family
 - Therefore, we have a responsibility, an obligation to live our lives in honor to Him
- And the best reason Peter can give us for why we should strive to live a holy life is in v 16: because God said so in Lev 16
- Holiness means set apart, set apart from sin to be specific
 - That our response to our salvation comes down to holiness before God
 - Our salvation has already achieved positional holiness before God by Christ's blood
 - Our future will bring an eternity of holiness made possible by our resurrection to a new incorruptible body
 - But our present is to be marked by a life lived out in holiness to the glory of Christ's name
 - This is a response based in decisive thought, purposeful action, hopeful expectation, fearful reverence
 - It is a response that understands the magnitude of what's at stake
 - Of how our eternal reward is on the line
 - Of how our choices and decision here and now bring with them eternal consequences
 - And most of all, it is a reflection of our faith in and love for our Lord
 - As the Apostle John writes:

[1John 2:3](#) ¶ By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

[1John 2:4](#) The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

[1John 2:5](#) but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

[1John 2:6](#) the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.