

A Tested but Living Hope

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[0 : 00] Well, let's begin our worship this morning by singing to God's praise in Psalm 1a. We're singing the Sing Psalms version, Psalm 1a, page 1 of the Psalm books.

Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinners' paths, or sit with those who mock. We'll sing the whole of this Psalm to God's praise, and we stand to sing.

Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinners' paths, or sit with those who mock.

Instead he finds God's holy law, his joy and great delight.

He makes the peace of the Lord, his study day and night.

[1 : 31] He prospers ever high, a tree that's planted by a stream.

And then to season yields its fruit, its leaves are always green.

Not so their wicked they are like their chaff that's blown away.

They will not stand when judgment comes, or when the righteous stay.

It is the Lord who sees and knows the way the righteous fall.

[2 : 51] But those who live an evil life, the Lord will overthrow.

I will come to God in prayer. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, as we give you thanks anew today for the blessing that is ours, and coming to gather us your people and worship your name.

We thank you that there is a reminder in these words that we have sung, that we are blessed as we come around your word. We are blessed as we do as your word says, and do not turn away from it.

And we pray today that your word will indeed be our instruction and our guide day by day. We thank you that we come to study and learn from it together here in the service, and also with the young ones, as they will go out to Tweenies and Cresce and Sunday School.

We pray, oh Lord, your blessing on each of us together today. We thank you that your word instructs us, whatever age we are, that we are to learn it in our youth, that we are to encounter it in our middle years, that we are to remember it in our old age.

[4 : 16] For that is the command of your word. And we thank you that there is blessing to be found in it, and blessing through your people in all ages as well. We thank you that we can encourage one another together and bless one another together.

And so we pray that you will unite our hearts in praise and worship of you today. We do pray, Lord, that your people today will be encouraged.

We know that there are so many discouragements around us, so many people who feel weak and afraid and unsure of so many things just now. But we thank you that with you there is a great security and a great surety that you are God, and there is no other.

So help us to worship you as we should. We do thank you for all our young ones and pray your blessing on them. We thank you for our day schools and pray that children, teachers and staff, they will be blessed by you, that you will watch over them during the week, keep them safe and encourage them as they learn together.

And as we see children growing up in years, Lord, that your protection and blessing be over them. We continue to remember those who have gone away from home just now and pray that you will bless them as they settle into new studies or new work experience.

[5 : 38] We ask, oh Lord, that you will surround them and take care of them. We thank you for all the work that goes on in our Sunday school too, and pray your blessing on the children and teachers there as well, Lord, that you will look after them and care for them.

And as we think of other work going on just now with the explorers to start in the presbytery camp, we ask, oh Lord, in all of these ways that you will use it to your glory and for the building of your church.

So Lord, look down upon us now, continue with us throughout this day and encourage us day by day to fix our eyes on you, to trust in Jesus with all our hearts and to worship him with all that we are.

We ask it all in his precious name and for his glory. Amen. Before you go out, just a wee word to the young ones. I'm sure you all like watching telly.

Everyone maybe has their favorite TV program. You either watch when it's on or you record it, and then you come back and watch it. Maybe there's some programs you watch over and over again because you love them so much.

[6 : 47] It might be cartoons. It might be films. It might be documentaries. There's all kinds of things that we watch on telly, and they take us in and they speak to us about different things going on around us.

What do you think my favorite TV program is, I wonder? I wonder if anybody would know what my favorite TV program is. There's a hand going up. BBC One. BBC One?

Well, it's actually on BBC. It's the Antiques Roadshow. And it's very interesting to watch the Antiques Roadshow. You wonder to yourself, why on earth would you watch the Antiques Roadshow?

Well, it's fascinating watching people bringing things in. And they're bringing them in to see what they're worth. And some people bring in rubbish. And they'll be told that's actually broken.

It's just a copy. It's a fake. Or it's just not worth any money at all. But sometimes people bring in things and they're wondering, I wonder if it could be worth something.

[7 : 49] And it turns out it's worth much more than they even imagined it to be worth. There was one clip I saw this week and it was a man who brought in a watch. And it was a watch his brother had given him many years before.

And for all these years, more than 20 years, this watch had been sitting in a drawer. The man wasn't interested in it. He didn't really like it. He tried it on once, but he thought, it's too heavy.

I don't like it. I'll put it away in a drawer. Then he thought to himself, I wonder if this watch is maybe of any value. So he took it along to the Antiques Roadshow.

And one of the experts there was looking at it and saying, this watch is actually very interesting. There wasn't many of them made. What's the story behind? And he told him this story that his brother had given to him.

Didn't like it, so he just stuck it in a drawer all these years. And he said to him, well, how much do you think it's worth? And the man said, well, it was bought maybe for a few hundred pounds.

[8 : 49] Maybe it's worth maybe 500, maybe even 1,000 pounds. But he was sort of hoping more than anything that it might be worth that. But the man said, well, actually, this watch is worth 80,000 pounds.

The man got a real shock. All this time, the watch had been sitting in a drawer. He thought it was rubbish. He didn't like it. And it was worth 80,000 pounds.

And it reminded me of a story in the Bible, in the Old Testament, about how sometimes we find things, we don't realize just how much they're worth until we look at them more closely.

And then we realize, actually, this has great value. And in the book of Chronicles in the Old Testament, 2 Chronicles chapter 34, there's a story there of a king called Josiah.

And this king, he was a good king. And he loved God. But all the time that he was living in his early reign as a king, he was very focused on making sure that the temple, the place they worshipped God, was in good order.

[9 : 55] And they were spending loads of money bringing the best wood, the best jewels and everything into the temple or the church, as we would call it today, the place they worshipped God.

And there was workers coming from all over the place. And while they were working on the temple, some of the workers found this book. It was a scroll.

And everybody was wondering, what is it? It was tucked away. It was hidden away. And they brought it out. And everybody started looking at it, wondering, well, what is it? They were asking each other. And eventually, they brought it to the king, to King Josiah.

And Josiah realized, this is God's word. It had been tucked away. It had been hidden away. Just put away somewhere in the building. Nobody knew it was there.

And all of a sudden, here it was before them. And they realized, we've been ignoring the most important thing. Instead of making sure that the building was nice and everything was good about it, we should have been focusing on this.

[10 : 54] Because this is the most precious thing that we have. But it was hidden away. And what they did was, they brought it out. And they began to realize the value of it.

And so they called everybody to hear about it. Young and old alike. They gathered everybody together to hear this word from God. And it was a reminder to ourselves today that this is a Bible that we have before us.

We have the word of God before us. It's such a precious thing. Imagine coming into this church. Workers came into this church. And Roddy, the church officer, was showing them around. And he said, what's that over there?

Oh, I don't know. Roddy wouldn't say that about the Bible, would he? No. Because he knows the Bible. And that's the most important thing we have here. It's good to have all the lights working.

It's good to have the heating working. It's good to have comfy seats. But the most important thing for us today as we come, young and old alike, is that we have God's word before us.

[11 : 55] We take it out not having forgotten how precious it is or not realizing its value. We take it out recognizing it is so precious to us. And so today we worship God who speaks to us through his word.

And let us always realize just how precious this word is. And never tuck it away in the church here thinking that's not important. But always keep God's word as the most important thing, the most precious thing that we have.

So may God bless these thoughts to us. We're going to share together now in the Lord's Prayer and say the Lord's Prayer together. Amen.

Our Father, we chart in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.

[13 : 02] Amen. We're going to sing together now in God's word in Psalm 73. Psalm 73 in the Scottish Psalter.

We're singing at verse 11. Psalm 73 at verse 11, page 315.

And thus they say, how can it be that God these things doth know? Or can there in the highest be knowledge of things below?

The psalmist here has many questions he's asking of God. He's confused by what he's seeing happen. And he's wondering, can God see these things and really care? But as we see throughout this psalm, the Lord has an answer.

So Psalm 73, verse 11 to verse 17. The tunes kill Marnock. And we stand to sing. And thus they say, how can it be that God these things doth know?

[14 : 18] Or can there in the highest be knowledge of things below?

Behold, these are the wicked ones, yet prosper at their will.

In worldly things they do. In peace, in wealth, on riches still.

I bet there in these things. I bet there in heaven.

My heart to purify To know him Infected innocence, washeth my hands abigh.

[15 : 43] For daily and all day throughout, great plagues I suffered have.

Yea, yea, be mourning I of new did justice men receive.

If in this manner foolishly to speak I would intend.

Thy children's generation, behold I should offend.

When I this thought to know it was too hard to pay for me.

[17 : 08] Till to God's sanctuary I went, then I let enter sea.

We're going to read God's word. Two readings. First we're on the letter of James. The letter of James chapter 1. We'll read from verse 1 to verse 12.

Then we'll turn to 1 Peter chapter 1. First reading in the letter of James chapter 1. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To the twelve tribes in the dispersion. Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

And let steadfastness have its full effect. That you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God.

[18 : 24] Who gives generously to all without reproach. And it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting. For the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation.

Because, like a flower of the grass, he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flower falls and its beauty perishes.

So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed be the man who remains steadfast under trial.

For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Then we'll turn to 1 Peter, next book along.

[19 : 34] 1 Peter, chapter 1. Let me read from verse 3 to verse 7. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

May God bless these readings from his word. We'll come to God in prayer again. Let us pray. As we continue in our worship of you, O Lord, our God, our Father in heaven, we thank you that we call upon the name of the one who is high, the one who is lifted up, the one who is Lord and God over all.

And we thank you that your word speaks to us of the reality of this world in which we live. It reminds us of the many great blessings that are ours through Christ Jesus, who is our Lord.

[21 : 23] We thank you that there is the blessing in faith of knowing that you are always with us. We know that there is a blessing of fellowship around your word and with your people.

We know that there is many blessings of all the gifts that we receive on a daily basis, the blessings of our homes, our families, of food, of warmth, of clothes.

But we are reminded too in your word that that reality is often different for many and may be different for many of ourselves here today. That although we still know your blessing, the way is sometimes hard, the way is difficult, the way seems so uncertain to us.

But we thank you that your word speaks into that reality as well. It reminds us that even though we go through many various trials, that you are with us, that they will purify us for your glory, that there will be for a day when we will see the revelation, the full revelation, of Jesus Christ who is Lord, when we will see his face and when we will worship him.

We are assured through your word that you will hold us and uphold us and take us through all things as we put our hope and our confidence in you. And we thank you that that is true for your church down through all the generations, that when there have been experiences of persecution and many different trials, be it collectively or individually, that your people can always take heart and take confidence in you.

[23 : 08] And so we pray that you will bless your word to all your people today, that it will be a reminder to us, Lord, to always set our hope and our trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and that we would find our refuge in him, that we would find him as the rock of our salvation.

And we pray that your word too will challenge those who are maybe not putting their hope in you, who are setting their hope in the things of this world and who are finding this world a very comfortable place to be, confidence and wealth and security of the many different things of this world, but that are only temporary.

We know your word reminds us that all these things will pass away, that in the shaking of this world, a day will come when the hope that we have and confidence of what we have put in will be put to the test.

And it is only those who are found resting in Christ that will be secure. So we pray, Lord, for your spirit to convict, your spirit to convert, your spirit to work powerfully in our midst and in the midst of people far and wide today, that throughout your world, there will be a great day of repentance, that there will be many who are called by you, who would call upon your name and praise your name on you.

So, Lord, we ask your blessing upon us as a people. We thank you for one another. We thank you for our communities, our homes and our families. We thank you for our workplaces, our schools and all that goes on around us on a daily and a weekly basis.

[24 : 48] And we do commit, O Lord, all our people into your hands. We know that we live in such uncertain times. There are many pressures, many worries, many concerns upon so many people.

And we thank you that, again, your word guides us to cast our cares upon you, for you care for us. And may you stir us up in our care and compassion for one another.

May you help us to be a body of your people, functioning in that way, that when one is hurting, we all feel that hurt. When one is rejoicing, we all share in that rejoicing.

And we do pray, Lord, that that bond in Christ will ever increase day by day. That as we go through such days of great uncertainty and times when we have been leaning upon our own wisdom and understanding, we thank you that these are days when we do not understand many things, when we lack wisdom.

But you say that if we lack wisdom, we are to ask God. And so may these be days when we are guided back to you, when your word is opened up to us and becomes a fresh and a new word to us, that the things that we have taken for granted, we would no longer do so, but instead that we would turn with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind and all our strength to love you as God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

[26 : 17] So guide us, we pray, and may your blessing be upon us. May your blessing be upon our land, upon our leaders. May you help them. May you give them wisdom. May you, O Lord, come in a day of your power to show us that we cannot rely on anything in this world, but that we can rely on you.

May you bring peace and help in many different parts of the world, whether our conflicts, whether our natural disasters. We've seen the power of the hurricane that struck through the Caribbean and in the United States and the devastation it leaves.

We pray, Lord, for people in need in these places and throughout the world in many different situations. Lord, may we remember to pray and to call upon your name for all who need you.

We thank you that your word goes out in the midst of all of these things. and we pray for all your servants far and wide. We pray for those who are called into the mission fields, near and far.

We ask your protection and your help towards them. May you bless every endeavor to reach out with the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ. We thank you, Lord, that we can commit ourselves into your hands now, asking your word to be blessed to us and that you'll continue with us throughout this day.

[27 : 38] And as we go into the week ahead of us, may we know your spirit guiding us and with us. So we ask all things, acknowledging our sin anew, confessing our sins before you, the sins of thought, word and deed, the sin of action and inaction.

We know that there are many. And so, Lord, we come anew, confessing how far short we fall from your glory, but asking your forgiveness, your mercy upon us and your building up of us to serve you for your glory and for your sake.

We ask all in the name of Jesus, our Lord, our King, our Saviour, and for His glory. Amen. Let's sing again to God's praise in Psalm 73.

Psalm 73. Continuing in the psalm we sang before, verse 23. It's a psalm with many different questions and many different challenges that the psalmist has.

Then you have this great turning point at verse 23 where he says, Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with Thee. Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me.

[28 : 51] We'll sing from verse 23 to the end of the psalm. And it should never be. O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, I am with Thee.

Thy dost me hold by my bright hand and still upholdest me.

Thy way, Thy counsel, while I live, wilt me conduct and guide, and do thy glory afterward receive me to abide.

Whom have I in the heavens high, but ye, O Lord, O Lord, alone and in the earth whom I desire, besides thee there is none.

My flesh and heart doth fail and fail, but God doth fail me never.

[31 : 06] For of my heart God is the strength and portion and portion forever.

For lo, they that are far from thee, forever fair they shall than that a hole ring from thee go, thou hast destroyed all.

but surely it is good for me that I throw near to God.

In God I trust that all thy words I may declare the Lord.

God If we can turn back together to our reading in 1 Peter chapter 1 and this morning together we're going to look at verse 3 to verse 7.

[32 : 54] 1 Peter chapter 1 just read again the first part of verse 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and so on.

We began looking at this letter from Peter last week by seeing just how precious a letter it is the precious word of God to a people in need of encouragement.

Peter wrote as a pastor to these people with very much a pastor's heart a real longing and concern for them and having experienced much in his own life he was seeking to encourage and build up God's people not just then in his own day but recognizing the same challenges that God's people would face down through all the generations.

Here was a people who were scattered far and wide throughout many different parts and they were persecuted for their faith they were suffering as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and they were wondering to themselves why was all this happening?

If you have trusted in the Lord surely the Lord wouldn't allow his people to go through such trials and yet we see the reality for God's people is that they're not immune to any of these things.

[34 : 27] Now how would you encourage a people who are going through such experiences? how do you seek to encourage people maybe to do today who are going through hard times?

We can often feel that we just don't have words to say we don't have words to share with them and you can imagine almost Peter writing to these people wondering what am I going to say to them?

They are suffering what am I going to say to them? But he's not stuck for words because God has a word for them he remembers them and he seeks to encourage them and to build them up and to let them know that they are a people who are precious to him and so here are people meeting together as we saw they were scattered throughout Pontus Galatia Cappadocia and so many other different parts here are people who would be meeting in small groups maybe house churches in some places maybe larger gatherings in towns and cities but a people who are gathering together and God has a word for them we belong to the free church of Scotland as a denomination we have churches scattered far and wide we have large congregations we have small congregations congregations from the north of Scotland and Thurso and Wic and places around there down through to the borders to Dumfries and Galashiels and surrounding places there and towns villages and cities in between we go further than that too with people from the free church and congregations in London

Canada Australia South America South Africa and many other different parts of the world people sent out as missionaries through all corners of the world you can very much say we are a scattered people we are a people who are part of a dispersion a scattering of God's people to all ends of the earth and the vision of the free church is a healthy gospel church in every place it's more than just a denomination it's wherever God's people are gathered together and whatever God's people are experiencing in these situations it's not a new vision though it's a vision that we see throughout the scriptures from the Old Testament into the New Testament that God has his people scattered far and wide but that they have a real sense of purpose and together as a people we have a purpose and a focus and Peter makes that abundantly clear to us here in verse 3 our great purpose as a people wherever we are and wherever we gather is to say blessed be the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ to be able to say these words together to unite our hearts in worship of God giving thanks to God who remembers us in every situation we are to worship the Lord with one heart and with one accord and we do indeed join in with the worship of God today with many people scattered far and wide we come together to say blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for all that he has done for us and sometimes as we seek to come together and encourage one another we may feel stuck for words and so often our focus can be then just to look at the positives encourage each other with the positives and Peter does that for us here he encourages with positives he encourages them with what we have in Christ this hope that God's people have he encourages them with what they have to look forward to there is an inheritance for all of God's people but he also gives a word of the reality for God's people too he says there will be trials there will be difficulties along the way but yet he says there is hope there is a real and a living hope there's a poem called

[39 : 02] Out of the Darkness I'll just share some words from that with you it reminds us that so often it's out of the darkness that good comes it says this out of the dark forbidding soil the pure white lilies grow out of the black and marky clouds descends the stainless snow out of the crawling earthbound warm a butterfly is born out of the somber shrouded night behold a golden morn out of the pain and stress of life the peace of God pours down out of the nails the spear the cross redemption and a crown you see the darkest time of all was when Christ Jesus was crucified but yet God speaks to us through his word here and says blessed be the God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ because he has given us hope a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and so we want to look at these three things this morning the Christian's hope the Christian's inheritance and the Christian's trial first of all the Christian's hope the first encouragement that Peter gives to us scattered and disillusioned people here and to be able to say blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is this that according to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead the Christian's great hope now what is your hope today and what kind of hope is it so many of our hopes today they can be built on things that will let us down things that will ultimately fail us or things that can seem just wishful thinking things that aren't realistic things that we cannot attain and there's no surety there's no security in them and as

Peter is writing to these people who are scattered as he's writing to these people and who are seeing so many people as it were prospering in their lives getting on so well it's almost like he's reminding them of the words of Psalm 1 blessed is the man who walketh not astray not like the ungodly who just turn away from God and pin their hope and things of this world there is no ultimate blessing in that those who are blessed are blessed by having hope in the Lord Jesus Christ and this is where Christian hope comes in it is a living hope G.K.

Chesterton he once said hope means hoping when things are hopeless or it is no virtue at all as long as matters are really hopeful hope is mere flattery or platitude it is only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength and that is the hope that Peter is reminding the people of here this living hope that they have he has caused as he's saying to them to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead it is a real hope it is a secure hope it is the hope of the resurrection it is often in our darkest times that God makes his presence known most clearly it is often through the hardest trials through our sufferings that he shows us that he is our only source of strength our only hope for life and for eternity and just as Peter is writing to us gathered people here he's writing to us today as well he's writing to remind us of the hope that is ours through the resurrection of

Jesus Christ through faith in him it is a real hope so as you are facing trials you can take heart as you face the reality of this world you put yourselves in God's hands and you wait upon the Lord but you wait with patience you wait with hope if Jesus has not been risen from the dead then our faith is foolish but as we come to God's word we are seeing the great reminders to us that he is risen that he is alive that he is at the right hand of God this is no hopeless situation the reminders that we have throughout the scriptures are many Jesus himself predicted his resurrection he told his followers that he would be put to death but on the third day he would rise again as you look through the

[44 : 48] Old Testament you find that it prophesies about it it speaks about the Lord who would come but that the tomb could not take hold of him forever indeed as we read in the New Testament we see they came to the tomb and it was empty the grave clothes were there to be seen but Christ was not all the people had to do who opposed the Christian faith was to produce a body but they couldn't why not because he was risen and many people saw the resurrected Christ they met with him they looked on his face they touched him they heard his voice and they saw him eat all of these things are reminding us of the living hope that we have in Christ we are born again to a living hope the lives of the disciples the lives of the early church were transformed because

Christ was risen Peter himself as we saw last week he met with a saviour who restored him even though he had denied him and let him down and here he is later on in his life looking back having been a faithful servant to him the resurrection was the central message of the early church and to this day men and women boys and girls testify to the power of the risen Christ who transforms our lives the Christian's hope is real it is founded on Jesus Christ who is risen who has appeared to his people and who has now gone to the father's side we await his return we await that great day of the final resurrection when God will call his people to himself and how do we live with that hope well we don't look to the things of this world and pin out hopes in these things as someone said they that deny themselves for

Christ shall enjoy themselves in Christ and that is the Christian hope we turn away from the things of this world that cry out you can hope in us you can hope in this there is no hope there but it will perish but Christ is our hope the Christian's hope is a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead so we have this great hope that is such a great encouragement to us the second thing we see here is the Christian's inheritance again we see here Peter giving his people real encouragement in verse 4 that we are born again to a living hope to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you again we can say blessed be the

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the inheritance that is ours his people's and that we can look forward to what is an inheritance it is something that is passed on to a people something we receive often at no cost to ourselves but usually it's when someone has passed away we receive an inheritance and our Christian inheritance is the same in many ways and more because where does our Christian inheritance take us to it takes us to Christ and to the cross and what we see that he has done and is doing for us everything we build here in this world is temporary but what God builds is eternal and if we were to go back to just before the crucifixion to the gospel of

John chapter 14 there Jesus is with his disciples and again they're anxious they're afraid but Jesus says to them in verse 1 let not your hearts be troubled believe in God believe also in me in my father's house are many rooms if it were not so would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you what is he saying to them he is reminding them that the things of this world are temporary but he says I am going to prepare a place for you an eternal place a place that will not be temporary but forever a lasting place and that's the encouragement that Peter is reminding them of here as well an inheritance imperishable undefiled unfading kept guarded in heaven for you this place he is preparing he has gone to prepare it through the way of the cross through his death through his resurrection through his ascension through all of these things he is reminding his people that he will take care of us that his plan is sure and secure that everything will work out and yet as a people here on earth we find our satisfaction in so many other things we push away the glory of

[50 : 55] God we push away that hope for eternity and just look at the temporary C.S. Lewis in his book The Weight of Glory he speaks about how often believers underestimate the full riches that there are in Christ he says this if we consider the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the gospels it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong but too weak we are half hearted creatures like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea we are far too easily pleased he says are you far too easily pleased today by the things of this world that you think this is wonderful I've got it all and you're missing out on this glorious inheritance if you look at the way the inheritance here is described you see it's the complete opposite to the world first of all he says this inheritance is imperishable anything that this world offers us will perish one day it will be no more but not the

Christian inheritance it will never perish it's also described as undefiled we live in a world where everything is defiled by sin everything is ruined by sin and it's hard for us to imagine the opposite but it will be so that is the Christian inheritance a place where there's no moral corruption a place where there's no greed for self gain a place where there's no war or famine or natural disaster a place where no more is sin polluting everything because everything will be made new that is the great reminder that he gives us here that is the great reminder that we see our Christian inheritance is also one that is unfading again when we look around the world we see so many things that are fading in this world we look at ourselves and we see ourselves as it were just fading away creation is groaning so much is groaning around us under a great weight and a burden but he says our inheritance is unfading the hope that is ours through the resurrection of Jesus

Christ is this inheritance that will never perish and these great words of Isaiah we will know the reality of them Isaiah 40 verse 30 even youths shall faint and be weary and young men shall fall exhausted but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings like eagles they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint that is the Christian hope and the Christian inheritance it is a living hope and a glorious inheritance but and there is a but what else does the Christian life entail well as Peter goes on here he says that your faith will be tested your faith will be tested

Peter writes to encourage but he writes with the reality in mind too it's not all going to be plain sailing it's not all going to be easy he says there will be trials you have the living hope you have the inheritance you have all this that is guarded by the power of God through faith for our salvation ready to be revealed in verse 5 it says then you have verse 6 in this you rejoice though now for a little while if necessary you have been grieved by various trials so the tested genuineness of your faith more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire may be found to result in praise glory and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ and yet we can still say blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ how can we say that well just like the psalmist in psalm 73 we can say nevertheless continually oh Lord I am with thee thou dost me hold by my right hand and still uphold is me we have that surety that certainty that God is with us he keeps us he guards our hope he guards our inheritance he has all of these things even like it said in James chapter 1 verse 2 counted all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the trusting of your faith produces steadfastness he will keep you this is something God willing we'll expand on as we go through this letter too but as we come to a close today I just want to remind you of these three things there is a Christian hope it is a living and a real hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ there is a Christian inheritance it is one that is kept guarded for you one that is imperishable undefiled and unfading these are great encouragements but we can be encouraged too as we face up to our trials that he is with us a man called James M Gray he was once president of Moody Bible Institute he wrote a hymn regarding the fiery trials that the Christian goes through and the words of it say this he sat by the fire of seven fold heat as he watched by the precious ore and closer he bent with a searching gaze as he heated it more and more he knew he had ore that could stand the test and he wanted the finest gold to mould as a crown for the king to wear set with gems of price untold so he laid our gold in the burning fire though we fain would have said to him nay and he watched the dross that we had not seen as it melted and passed away and the gold grew brighter and yet more bright and our eyes were dim with tears as we saw the fire not the master's hand and questioned with anxious

fears yet our gold shone out with a richer glow as it mirrored a form above that bent over the fire the one seen by us with a look of infinite love can we think that it pleases his loving heart to cause a moment of pain I know but he saw through the present cross the bliss of eternal gain so he waited there with a watchful eye with a love that is strong and sure and that his gold did not suffer a bit more heat than was needed to make it pure it's hard for us to understand the trials that we go through and we have to confess that but I'm reminded of the words of an old Christian man many years ago he said it's a fight to the finish but at least there's a finish to the fight and as we read these words we're reminded of the reality of life the

[59 : 59] Christian life there is a great living hope there is a wonderful inheritance for all of God's people but there are also the trials that we go through but we can rest assured that he is with us and may we be able to say blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ may we look to him and remember his many gracious benefits remember his promises that he will never leave us let us pray our Father in heaven we thank you for the wonder of your word how it reminds us of every circumstance we have that yes there are times of great blessings and joy we have all the great hopes not just this world but what is to come we have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus

Christ we have a wonderful inheritance to look forward to we thank you too for the reality of the truth of the trials we thank you for your promise that you will not put us through more than we can bear that you will strengthen that you will uphold us and may we know these things as we go through our own trials may we recognize how precious you are and lean upon you more and more Lord be our strength be our shield guard as we pray and forgive our sins in Jesus name amen we'll conclude by singing to God's praise in psalm 66 verse 8 psalm 66 at verse 8 to verse 12 on the tune Selma O people praise our God his praise and song repeat he has preserved our soul alive from slipping kept our feet we'll sing from verse 8 to 12 and we stand to sing to God's praise oh people's praise our

God his presence all we paid He for that he died and we pardon our heart As ever as we find, You laid so burdened on our backs, In chains we were confined.

You let us be oppressed, We went through flood and fire, But yet you brought us to a place Which made our hearts decide.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close the benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Rest upon and abide with you all, Now and forevermore. Amen.

[64 : 07] Amen.