

Refined through suffering

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[0 : 00] I want to invite you to turn to 1 Peter chapter 1. We'll be looking there in just a moment.

This sermon today is the fifth, actually, in a series on suffering that I have preached as I have had occasion to speak over the last few months. And in that series, we've seen how suffering is so much a part of our lives as God's people.

Paul assumes the universality of suffering in Romans chapter 8 when he says, I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

And the scripture we've observed in earlier sessions reveals a whole range of suffering to which we are subject as God's people. The loss of fortune, remember Job, who lost everything in a single day.

Or physical suffering, again, Job, he suffered with head, covered from head to foot with boils. Or political affliction, like James, the brother of Jesus, who Herod had put to death.

[1 : 12] Or persecution for faith. Paul talks about the persecution he suffered in Iconium and other cities. Or David speaks in the Psalms of suffering at the hand of enemies.

Or even betrayal by friends. Or family suffering, like Hosea, who was married to an unfaithful woman. Or deep spiritual oppression, like the psalmist expresses in Psalm 88, where he says, The darkness is my dearest friend.

And he ends in that hopelessness. Or circumstantial suffering, like the Apostle Paul describes in 1 Corinthians chapter 1. He says, we despair of life.

We had given up even the hope of life because we were so desperate. Or the suffering of chastisement. Remember Jonah running from God, cast into the sea.

And he was suffering the chastisement of God. And in the third message in that series, we saw that not only do we suffer the things that we suffer, we also suffer how we suffer what we suffer.

[2 : 19] Our suffering is often compounded by the ways we respond to our suffering. And we saw three traps of suffering. The trap of doubt, where we doubt the goodness of God and the worthiness of God, and whether we can trust Him.

Or the trap of worry. We get consumed with the what-ifs. And we worry about the future. Or the if-onlys. And we try to rethink the past.

Or the trap of envy. If only I had his life. Her health. A family like that. Their financial security. And this morning, I want to turn your attention to this passage in 1 Peter.

Let me read the passage. And we will look at it. Beginning with verse 3. 1 Peter chapter 1. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead.

[3 : 21] To an inheritance that is imperishable. Undeified. Unfading. Kept in heaven for you. Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time.

In this you greatly 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 which perishes, though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Christ Jesus.

Though you haven't seen Him, you love Him. And though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him. And rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Let's pray together. Beseeching God to illuminate our hearts and minds and apply His word to us.

[4 : 30] Lord, we come to you this morning, not just as a matter of liturgy, to pray before a sermon. But we come to you with a deep sense of how profoundly we need your grace.

We need for you to work within our hearts. We need for you to enliven us. We need for you to fill us with the courage and hope that this passage fills us with.

We need to have your words of comfort and rebuke and admonition spoken to us. We need the ministry of your spirit to each of us personally to enable us to embrace your word and embrace the teaching of this passage.

And be people who live our lives in this world, not in hopelessness and despair, but live our lives with a view to the large work of redemption that God is carrying forth inexorably from eternity past to eternity future.

And help us, Lord, to understand how our trials and our daily struggles and tribulations we face are part of that wonderful story of grace that you are unfolding in our lives.

[5 : 38] We need you for this, Lord. So we pray that you would transform our thinking, that you would work in us by your spirit, that these next minutes we have together would be minutes in which your spirit is sanctifying us and renewing us.

And enlivening in us our love of Christ and our hope of glory and our capacity to interpret life experience in light of your revelation.

Give us grace, Lord. We need you. We pray for your help, for Christ's glory. Amen. Have you ever reflected on the ways that your life doesn't go exactly as you would like it to go?

If you think about it, you know, this year has not taken the shape that you hoped it would take. Last week didn't go according to your plan. There were the unexpected things, the unanticipated, the undesirable things, the bumps.

Even today hasn't gone as you anticipated. And that's true for us because we are not orchestrating the events of our lives. The events of our lives unfold according to the plan of another.

[6 : 55] And each of us, in some sense, are theologians who are trying to make sense of God and understand what God is doing. We're like philosophers who are trying to make sense of life and to understand our lives.

And we're like archaeologists who are sifting through the chards of our existence and trying to piece together our lives in some pattern that makes sense to us and in an effort to understand the things that we experience.

And I think this effort is particularly true for Christians. It's particularly for Christians who believe the word of God, who believe that life is not just a haphazard collection of events that happen to us.

They're just random events that come at us from nowhere. We know that God is sovereign. We know that God is the one who writes the chapters of our story.

That we believe that God is at work in our lives. And because we believe that, we're always wrestling with these two questions. What on earth is God doing in my life?

[8 : 03] And how am I supposed to respond to the things that he is doing? I remember one time, as a young man, I was fixing the brakes on my car.

I didn't have enough money to afford to take the car to a garage, and the brakes were grinding away inside the drums of the wheels. And so I thought to myself, this is a mechanical device, and if I'm careful about how I take things apart, and I know carefully how it comes apart, I think I can make this repair.

And so I went to work at it every night after we'd have family time, and I would help Margie tuck the kids into bed. I would go out into the garage, and with poor light and lacking adequate tools and no real experience as a mechanic, I worked to try to fix the brakes on my car.

It took a week. And of nights working into the late hours, trying to put this thing back together, finally I got the new brakes on the car and the drums that I had purchased on the car.

And I turned to put the wheels back on the car, only to discover that someone had broken into the garage and had stolen all four wheels. So now I've got to replace the wheels and the tires, and it's going to cost me far more than if I had just taken the thing to a garage to begin with.

[9 : 32] I came in disconsolate and so frustrated that night. And the next morning I went out to survey the car again to make sure I hadn't somehow missed the wheels, only to discover that that night they had broken in again and taken all my tools.

And I was disappointed. I was angry. I was confused. I couldn't make sense out of what God had brought into my life. And God's plan seemed unclear to me.

My mind was racing with questions that I ought not to ask. God, where are you? Why would you let this happen to me? You know I don't have any money. You know I'm trying so hard to care for my

family.

And why would you bring this to me? Where are you? What are you doing? What's this about? I thought you were loving and gracious. I don't get it. I don't understand.

We've all had those kinds of circumstances where the things that came to us in life left us bewildered and confused and overwhelmed.

[10 : 34] And we can't make sense of those moments without the large perspective that we're given in this passage in 1 Peter.

Because unless your perspective on life stretches from eternity past and into eternity future, you'll never be able to make sense out of those moments.

Because those moments can only be understood from the point of view of eternity. Those moments of confusion, those perplexing moments, those baffling moments, those bewildering moments, can only be turned into moments of faith, moments of hope, moments of mercy, moments of grace, moments of redemption, as I embed those moments in the larger story of God's great redemptive purposes.

And that's what Peter is doing for us in this passage that I read to you a moment ago. Because Peter has given this passage a very unique structure. It starts out with the past redemptive purposes of God.

And it moves to the future glories of a complete redemption in which God is glorified and all things are brought together under Him.

[11 : 56] So it deals with the present, with the here and now, enabling us to interpret life experiences, people who have been redeemed, whose future is secure.

And so the structure of this passage is redemption in the past, redemption in the future, and living in light of the gospel in the here and now.

So that's the structure. Past redemption, future redemption, present living in the light of the gospel. It's an amazing passage.

Because it summarizes your story. It summarizes my story. This passage literally wraps its arms around the whole purpose of God's redemption in your life.

And there's a reason why the passage has this structure. Peter understands that you and I cannot possibly interpret any moment of our Christian life unless it is connected to the history of God's work, both in the past and in the future.

[13 : 03] It's got to be connected with the whole redemptive plan of God, the whole redemptive purposes of God, both in His past work of redemption and the future glories of redemption.

They are what is being played out in your present momentary experience. So Peter recognizes we have been redeemed in the past.

We will be redeemed in the future. And we are being redeemed in the present. And even our moments of suffering, our moments of trial, our moments of affliction, even if it's something as superficial as losing the wheels on your car or as dramatic as wasting disease or brokenness in relationship, whatever the suffering and affliction that we face, these moments are our redemptive moments.

They're moments that God is at work in us. And Peter is helping us to understand those moments.

These are not moments to be endured while we wait for redemption.

They are moments of redemption. Because this moment of suffering that you face is not an isolated moment. It's not unique.

[14 : 18] It's not cut off from the rest of God's redemptive purposes for you. It's attached to God's past work of redemption, to the future glories of redemption.

And one of the mistakes we make is the mistake of detaching the moment from past grace and future glory. And if you do that, you will miss the present.

You'll miss the present grace of God. You'll miss the present mercy of God. You'll miss the present plan of God because you've detached it from the large story of God's redemptive purposes in your life.

And Peter is writing in this epistle to people who are experiencing all manner of suffering. And Peter recognizes that any moment of suffering is attached to the historic plan of God, is connected to the future plan of God.

And he knows that you cannot interpret a present moment of suffering in isolation. If you detach any moment from past grace and future grace, you'll never understand the work of God in the here and

now, in the present.

[15 : 29] You won't understand the present grace of God. You won't understand the present plan of God because your present life experience is attached to the whole redemptive purposes of God.

That's what Peter is telling us in the passage. That's the purpose of this passage. And so as Peter prepares to launch into the question of what on earth is God doing, why on earth is he doing it? How should I respond? He embeds the current moment of suffering both in past redemption and in future glory. So that's what we have here. Past redemption, future glory, the present.

Now Peter's real focus is the present. It's the here and now. But he's connecting the dots for us because Peter is showing us the importance of embedding our moments in God's great redemptive work.

Because you can never view a moment of your life and interpret it biblically if you disconnect it from the broad picture of God's redemptive plan, both in the past and in the future.

[16 : 37] And it's vital for you and me if we're going to make sense of our difficult moments in life, our present sufferings, our afflictions, our trials, our difficulties. We've got to embed each moment in the larger story of God's redemptive work.

And that's what Peter is doing for us in this passage. So let's look for a moment at redemption past. He says in 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 into a living hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Now, there's far more here, obviously, than just your personal experience of the grace of the gospel and God's redemption. It's more than just a celebration of new birth.

Now, he is celebrating new birth. You have been born again into living hope. Life has been given to you. You've been made a new creature in Christ. Peter is certainly celebrating that grace of the gospel that has come into your life.

[17 : 44] But there's more than that here. Because Peter is reminding us of God's redemptive purposes throughout time. Even before time. Even before the foundations of the world.

God has been at work. He's been at work planning and executing our redemption. We have a God of the universe who has organized all the events of human history.

who's been working relentlessly to bring about salvation for a vast company of people more than anyone could ever number. From every kindred, tongue, tribe, and nation.

And he's orchestrated all the events of human history to provide redemption through the sinless life of Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice for our sins on the cross and his resurrection from the dead conquering death so that you and I might be born again and might have living hope.

That's what Peter is celebrating in this passage. This great work of redemption that God has been working at. And we've been caught up in it. We have our own personal experience of that redemptive grace.

[18 : 48] But it's bigger than us and it's bigger than our experience of it. Because he's pointing to these redemptive purposes that are so profound.

He's reminding us that every prophet in the Old Testament spoke for you. Every miracle was for you. Every moment of deliverance throughout Old Testament history was part of this great work of redemption through which God was bringing grace to his people.

And I don't know how you read the Old Testament stories. But these stories are your stories.

They're my stories. They're our stories. The Old Testament is our family album in which the events of our history are being orchestrated and our heritage of redemption is being played out.

We have a God who is at work in time and space and orchestrating all the event of history and all the circumstances of human existence to bring redemption and grace to you and me and more people than could be numbered.

More than the sands of the sea or the stars in the heavens. That's redemption past. Peter begins by reminding us of God's great redemptive work that he's been carrying on that has swept us up in this movement and we're part of it because he has shown his grace to us.

[20 : 11] And he continues with the grace of redemption future. He says in verse 4, we have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for the salvation that is ready to be revealed at the last time.

What Peter says here is amazing. He says you have you have a spiritual inheritance. You have a vested inheritance that is completely secure.

It cannot be touched. And notice all the words that Peter piles up to overwhelm us with the security of that inheritance. It's an inheritance that is imperishable.

It will last forever and ever. It will never become devalued over time. It's an inheritance that is undefiled. The goodness and beauty of it cannot be spoiled.

It's an inheritance that is unfading. It will never become weak or suffer loss. It will never fade away. Your inheritance, Peter says, is kept in heaven for you.

[21 : 32] It's securely locked in the vault of heaven. It can never be lost, never be taken away. Peter says, your inheritance is secure. It's there for you.

Your salvation is ready to be revealed at the last time. The full glories of it will unfold in the day of the Lord. It's absolutely secure. But it actually, I mean, imagine with me, imagine with me that if you had a financial services guy that you consulted for investments and he assured you, he said, your investment with me is secure.

Nothing can happen to it that will reduce the value of your investment. I've taken care of everything. Your investment with me will never be devalued. No market failure will ever erode its worth.

Nothing can happen that will ever diminish its value. It's securely maintained for you. It'll be there when you need it. But not only have I determined to protect your assets, I'm going to protect you.

I'm going to give you the very best medical doctors. I'm going to give you the best dietitians. I'm going to give you a personal trainer and the best exercise programs and the very best security for your home.

[23 : 02] I'm going to do everything necessary to ensure that you are healthy and fit and ready to receive your inheritance at the appointed time. Nothing will ever happen to your inheritance.

Right up to the last moment, I guarantee that it'll be secure and it'll be stable. So we have redemption passed, new birth, living hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead, redemption, future, and inheritance that is ready to be revealed at the last time.

But Peter's concern, he's just setting the table for us because Peter's real concern is not just the wonders of past redemption, the glories of future redemption.

Peter's real concern is the here and now. It's the present. And he says in verse 6, in this you greatly rejoice. though now, and before we look at what he says about now, I want you to notice verse 7 looks forward to eternity, to the revelation of the glory of Christ at the end of time.

So Peter's connecting redemption past, redemption future with our present redemption. And he brackets any consideration of present suffering with the wonderful work God has done in the past to redeem and the future guarantees of redemption that are secure for us.

[24 : 27] So present suffering, what Peter's teaching us is present suffering can only be understood in light of redemption past and in light of redemption future.

And it is our experience of redemption in the present. So he says, in this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

So the testing of the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it's tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Christ. So when Peter thinks about describing what God is doing in the present and how God is bringing the fullness of his redemption to us at the present, Peter uses three words to describe what God is doing in the present.

He uses the word grief, trial, and test. Those were the three words you were looking for, weren't they? I mean, we've all prayed this week, haven't we?

[25 : 34] Lord, I want to grow in grace, so please bring me grief, bring me trials, bring me tests so that I can grow. That's what you prayed this morning, isn't it?

You know, we don't like griefs and trials and tests. We want to avoid them at all costs. But the question is, what is God doing through griefs and trials and tests?

How are these in expression of the zeal of God to bring the full fullness of His redemption to us? Because, see, these are very important questions.

If you can't answer these questions, you won't understand what God is doing in the here and now. And you'll be disappointed in God. You'll find yourself perplexed.

You'll be confused when you face griefs and trials and tests. You'll be tempted to doubt the goodness of God, to doubt His love, to doubt His mercy, to doubt His kindness.

[26 : 38] You'll have times when, like Asaph in Psalm 73, you'll look over the fence and you'll envy the life that someone else has. There'll be times when you will question the goodness of God, the

wisdom of God, God's presence in your life.

If you can't answer these questions, you will have an agenda for your life that is different than God's agenda. And you won't understand why God is bringing these trials to you. And see, this is so critical for us because if we don't understand what God is doing, if we don't understand the mercy of griefs and trials and tests, then we will never be able to make sense out of our lives and we won't have the same agenda for our lives that God has for our lives.

Because if you and I are to understand our suffering, we have to have the same agenda as God. And so Peter gives us two truths to hang on to in verse 6. The first one is that our griefs and trials are necessary.

God uses affliction to accomplish wonderful things in us. You see, griefs, trials, tests are needed. They're necessary. God's not arbitrarily bringing them into our lives. They are calculated to produce graces in us and to refine us and to make us more like Christ.

[28 : 08] The other thing he reminds us here is that they're only for a little while. Griefs, trials, and tests are only for a little while. It's the same thing Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4. These light and momentary trials are achieving an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs them all.

So viewed in the context of this redemptive work that stretches from eternity past into eternity future, whatever we suffer in this moment is only for a little while because it's got to be contextualized by God's eternal purposes to save us that stretch back into the past history and stretch forward into future, the future and eternity.

and Peter uses a very vivid metaphor to describe what God is doing through the griefs and trials and tests. He uses a metaphor that's drawn from mining.

You know, when a miner digs out gold or silver from a mine, the gold and silver that he digs out of the mine is not beautiful, it's not attractive, it's ore.

And ore is full of imperfections or is unattractive. I remember being in Zambia years ago and seeing these railroad cars heaped up with something, I didn't know what it was, but they're like the cars of coal you might see in Pennsylvania and these open railroad cars and they were heaped up with this kind of gray looking slightly greenish cast to it stuff.

[29 : 43] I didn't know what it was. I asked somebody, what is that in those railway cars and railroad cars and they said, oh, it's copper. Now, copper in its refined state is quite beautiful, but copper ore is ugly.

Copper ore lacks strength, it lacks beauty. The beauty and the strength of copper come from the refining process. It's refining that turns the ore into something that is beautiful and strong and useful and attractive.

And that's a picture of what God is doing in us through trials. God is refining you. He loves you too much to leave you weak and unattractive.

And if you're going to have strength and beauty, you've got to be refined. And that's the function of griefs and trials and tests. They're all part of this refining process.

And there's no cold refining process. refining means applying heat. And the refiner of metal, that's what he does.

[30 : 52] He applies heat. He heats the ore and he boils it so that the imperfections can be drawn off. And at the end, he's left just with pure gold.

That's all that's left behind. And refined gold possesses strength and beauty that is never present in the ore. So we want to think about God. We can think of God as a miner.

God is a miner. He has mined you out of the mass of humanity. He's brought you his grace. He's opened your blind eyes. He's shown you your sin and your need of him.

And you've cast yourself on his grace and mercy that's given to us in Christ. Now, stick with me here. God mined you out of the earth and you've cast your mercy on him.

You're his, but you're still in ore state. You're still full of impurities. You lack the beauty and strength that refining produces.

[31 : 55] And just like it would make no sense for a miner to mine ore and then leave it as ore and never refine it, it would make no sense for God to mine us out of the mass of humanity and leave us in our ore state.

And so God does what the mining company does. He brings the white hot heat of trials and grief and tests to boil off the impurities so that you can be refined and renewed and made into a person who has spiritual strength and spiritual beauty.

And so God in the grace of his covenant is relentless in his love and mercy and he's refining you. In fact, God's refining process will bring trials and sufferings to you that you would have never chosen for yourself in order to produce in you a beauty and grace that you could have never otherwise known.

That's what God's doing. He's going to bring trials that you would have never chosen because his purpose is to produce a beauty and grace that you could know in no other way.

What do you call that? That's grace. That's the kindness of God. That's the love of God. That's the work of God. And when we ask the question why this?

[33 : 19] Why me? Why now? The answer to the question is God dug you out of the pit and he's not willing to leave you as ore. He's going to refine you. He's going to bring the heat of refinement.

He's going to bring the heat of trials and tests and difficulties because he has an agenda to make you more beautiful than you could have ever imagined. And this trial, this suffering, this affliction, this pain that you live with every day and I don't want to for a moment deny the reality and difficulty of pain and suffering but this trial is God's mercy.

It's God boiling off the impurities in order to bring us forth like gold. See, God knows all about you. He knows all about your pride. He knows all about your self-righteousness.

He knows all about your self-dependence. He knows all about the ways that you are drawn to the world and its false gospels. He knows how much you can fool yourself.

He knows how you can think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. He knows how you can shift the blame to others. He knows how you can get enamored with lesser things and neglect the word of God and prayer.

[34 : 39] He knows your lethargy. He knows your laziness. He knows how much you need the disruptive benefit of trials and grief and tests.

He knows what it takes to make you humble. He knows what it takes to bring you to your knees. He knows what it takes to put the kind of pressure in your life that forces you to pray and forces you to cry out to God and makes the other things that obscure God seem less important and your focus is on your neediness and your need of God.

He knows exactly how much pressure to get your attention, to cause you to call out to Him. He knows how to burn off those things that adulterate loving God and loving others.

And the suffering God brings to us is not because God is being unkind. It's not that God is forgetting His promises. Suffering is grace.

It's mercy. It's the kindness of God who will not leave you in the ugly, unrefined state of being or. But He's going to refine you.

[35 : 48] He's going to use the heat of griefs and trials and tests to melt you and to skim off the impurities and to produce and make of you something that is beautiful and useful and strong.

He knows how to bring you forth is gold. And that's what Peter is describing in this passage. You see, one of the problems with health and wealth and prosperity teaching that is so popular in churches is that it distorts our vision of what God is doing in the present, in the here and now.

And see, God's purpose is not for you to wake up every day just saying, I just love my life. God's purpose through trials that He brings for a little while is to help us to see how much we need Him.

God's working through trials to bring me to my knees, to bring me to the point of crying out to Him because grace is for people who are broken. Grace is for people who are weak.

Grace is for people who are needy. Grace is for people who are sinners. Grace is for people who realize they have nothing and they stand before God in need of everything.

[37 : 11] Grace is designed to bring us to the place of crying out to God. So we're not crying out for God just for relief, but we're crying out to God, oh God, make me what you want me to be.

You see, those moments when you feel desperate, those moments when you feel overwhelmed, those moments when you're afraid, those moments when you feel forsaken, God has not forgotten His plan for your life.

They're the plan. It's the plan. It's what God is bringing to you because He loves you. And He wants you not to remain or that is ugly and unattractive.

He wants you to be beautiful. powerful and strong and useful. And so it's part of the plan. God is working in me to show me that this world and the things that it promises will fulfill me and make me happy are actually distractions from a life of humble conscience dependence on God and God alone.

God's at work in my trials to make me long for Him, to make me desire Him, to deepen in me a desire for Him. He's refining me.

[38 : 39] That's grace. That's grace. And see, if I believe that God's agenda is to make me prosperous and give me a life that is unfettered by suffering, then I am thinking about God's agenda in my life very differently than the way Peter describes it here in 1 Peter 1.

And the more I embrace the idea that God's job is to make me happy and make my life go well, the more I'm going to misunderstand what He's doing and doubt His goodness in those moments of trial.

And we've got to stop naming those moments of trial as moments in which God is letting us down. Those moments of grief and trial and test are sure signs of covenant love.

I mean, God's not moving away. Those moments of grief, trial and test are God moving toward me in love and compassion and mercy because He's making me like His Son.

And just as the Son suffered when He was tempted, He has the capacity to help me when I'm tempted. But He's taking me the way of suffering just as Christ went the way of suffering because God is not committed to making me happy on terms that the culture would identify as happy terms.

[40 : 02] God is committed to making me holy and producing in me a longing for eternal pleasures that are found in the right hand of God. God is at work producing in me those incredible joys and delights that belong to people who know God in the midst of great difficulty.

God's at work in me to produce in me that wonderful sense of joy that the psalmist expresses in Psalm 27. Even though evil men are advancing against Him to devour His flesh and enemies and foes are attacking Him and wars broken out against Him and an army is in pursuit of Him.

But He says, one thing I ask and that's what I seek, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord. That's what God is doing in your trials. It's to bring you to see Him, to desire Him more than anything else.

And it's to produce within you a mistrust of the world and your flesh and its fleeting pleasures and to give you a desire for something more wonderful, more glorious, joy that is unspeakable and full of glory even in the midst of suffering.

That's God's agenda. That's what God is doing for us through trials and tests. And one of the problems I have and perhaps you have sometimes is I'm reading from a different script from God than God.

[41 : 33] God is refining me. My trials and tests are grace. God's not being unfaithful to His promises. He's being faithful to His promises.

He's giving me grace. He's preparing me for the revelation of His Son throughout eternity. He's boiling off the impurities. He's making me ready for that great day of the Lord.

This suffering is a moment of preparation. God's refining my faith because He wants to bring me forth His gold to the endless and eternal praise of the glory of God.

That's what He's doing. That's what this moment is about. I can't measure this moment in time-bound, earth-bound ways.

As sure as I try to do that, I'm going to be totally off track. And I'm going to not see this as a moment of grace. I'm going to see it as a moment in which God is hidden rather than a moment in which God is present.

[42 : 35] And He's showing me grace. He's saving me right now. See, this moment is a moment of preparation.

God has written a script for my life. He's preparing me to be in the presence of God for eternity. And what He's doing in this moment is magnificent. It's glorious. And we long for the grace of relief.

And what we ought to be longing for is the grace of refinement. Lord, I embrace the trial. Refine me through it. Use it to make me like Jesus. Use it to break the hold that this world and its soap bubble charms has on me.

Use it to humble me. Use it to make me love you and cast myself on you. Use it to make me be lost in you and your goodness so that you and your goodness shine more brilliantly than even the trial that I'm facing at this moment.

Notice in verse 8, He says, Even though you don't see Him now, you love Him. And though you don't see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

[44 : 05] As you know, Margie and I travel a lot. And we've gotten pretty good at it. We know how to pack. And we have our list and we usually have everything that we need.

And we enjoy the fellowship of other Christians and seeing God's work in other parts of the world. But after a few weeks of sleeping on a different bed every night and eating delicious food that we're not accustomed to and living out of a suitcase and having all the background chatter every place we go, being a language that we don't know, and wearing the same three sets of clothing over and over and over again, we're ready for home.

We long for our bed. We long for for being home. And there's a joy that I have when I turn onto our gravel driveway and we're going home.

We long to be off duty. We want to be home. That's what God is doing in your trials.

He's making you long for home. He's making you see that this life is not where you're going to find life. This is all preparation.

[45 : 45] Eternity awaits. The joy of being in the presence of God. The joy of being confirmed in righteousness.

The joy of seeing the one whom not having seen we have loved. Those are the things God is preparing us for. And verse 8 reminds us of two other things.

It says that God is giving you the salvation of your souls. God is working to bring your salvation.

Those moments of perplexity and grief and confusion, salvation, those moments when his grace makes you uncomfortable, those moments that mystify and confuse you, are moments of salvation. You have been saved. You will be saved. You are being saved in those moments. Those moments of grief, trial, and test are moments of salvation.

You are achieving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. God is saving me through this trial. It is a present tense act of God's redemptive grace in my life.

[47 : 06] He has saved me through his past mercies. I will one day see his face, but right now I am experiencing the grace of salvation as I face this trial.

This moment of physical suffering is a moment when I'm being saved. You've got to preach that gospel to yourself all the time. This trial is God saving me.

He's emptying me of myself. He's filling me with himself. He's making me long for home. He's reminding me that life is not found in the stuff of this world. It's found in the presence of God forever. I'm being saved through this trial. So we should not be saying, why me? Why this? Why now? Because we're preaching to ourselves the gospel of hopelessness and despair.

And it will only increase our sense of despondency and defeat and discouragement. Preach to yourself the true gospel of hope. I'm being saved. This trial is God saving me.

[48 : 05] This trial is God showing grace to me. This trial is God redeeming me. This moment of trial, suffering, test is a moment of redemption.

God is redeeming me. He's bringing me forth like gold. He's turning me from being unattractive, weak, undesirable oar into something that is beautiful and sturdy and strong.

And it's all to the praise of the glory of Christ. You'll never understand God's plan for your life unless that idea that it's all for the praise of God's glory fills your heart.

God. Otherwise, you'll never understand all the twists and turns of human existence. You'll never understand until you embrace this truth that it's not about me.

It's about another. It's not about me. It's about God. It's about God's glory. I'm not going to be the hero of this story.

[49 : 11] He's the hero of this story. This story is not about me. It doesn't end on me. I'm not. It doesn't star me. I'm not the leading man. It's his story.

And it's all being done because he is worthy of praise and glory. And one day I will be part of a company of people more than anyone can number who will be testimonies to the incredible undeserved grace and mercy of God who showers love on undeserving sinners.

It's all about him. It's to the praise of the glory of his grace. I'm not. It's not my story. I'm not the leading man in the story. I'm not going to be the hero of the story.

It's not about me. It's about the one who is worthy of praise and glory and honor. The one who, even though I don't see him, I love him. And even though I'm facing trials, I can experience days that are truly full of joy that is inexpressible and glorious.

glorious. Is there someone here today who doesn't know Jesus Christ? You've heard me talking about the wonders of redemption and the glories of God and the goodness of God and how we

should be satisfied to face trials.

[50 : 29] And it sounds like crazy talk to you because you've never seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Maybe there's some child here or a young person or even an adult who has never experienced God's grace invading your life.

I want to tell you, you're made for God. You're made for him. It's God who is ultimate. And you need him. You need for him to forgive your many sins.

You need for him and his grace to be the reference point for understanding all the things that transpire in your life. You need God. And I want to invite you to him.

I want to tell you today that he is a willing, able, powerful Savior. That Jesus Christ came into this world and he lived in flesh like your flesh and my flesh without sinning.

And he died as an atonement for our sins so that God in righteousness could receive us into his heaven. And he is the willing Savior of everyone who will ever repent and believe.

[51 : 37] He says, come into me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Learn from me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.

And you will find rest for your souls. Oh, if you need him, I pray that today would be the day. That right now would be the moment when you cry out, oh, Lord, save me.

I want you. May God do that for you today. Let's pray together. Father, we give you praise for your glorious grace that has been given to us in Jesus Christ.

Oh, Lord, how we thank you for your word, for the ways your word moves us and thrills us and fills us.

And we pray, Lord, knowing that we are people who so easily lose our way and so easily are enamored by things that are just the pleasures of the moment.

[52 : 46] So we pray that you would fix your word in our hearts and in our minds and that you would enable us to leave here today with a sense of wonder at the great grace and mercy of God.

We pray this for Christ's glory. Amen. Please stand for our last hymn, 94, our Fearing Foundation.

And let's praise God in our hearts and mind. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[54 : 23] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. I'll follow my, my, my, just a little golden day. I'll follow my, my, my, just a little golden day.

When through the deep waters I'm falling to go, the rivers of salt shall come on the road.

For I will be with you, my troubles you rest, and sing with my youth.

My needless to stand, let's stand in your life. When through the deep waters I'm falling, I fear this whole submission shall be no surprise.

[55 : 46] But wait till on earth you find only desire. Your trust will come soon, and your soul will be gone.

Your trust will be soon, and our hope will be mine. When through the deep waters I'm falling, all my people shall come on the road.

My son is my heart, my chains are alone. And when the glory there shall the temples adore, My plans they shall spill in my wounds of pain.

My plans they shall spill in my wounds of pain. My heart, my sick, my chains are naiveteenth. May the Tomah was ladies day.

There shall the river to Roboam. Has■■■■ br Rhysvariel Haze■■■■ Receive this benediction After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

[57 : 53] To him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.