

New Hampshire resident, Jayne O'Conner said, "*I grew up thinking that someone was watching over me. I feel a little less watched over now.*" She was talking about the Old Man of the Mountain, a 40-foot tall natural outcropping of granite ledges in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, which looked like the profile of an old man.

Two hundred years ago Nathaniel Hawthorn wrote a famous story about it: "*The Great Stone Face.*" One of the paragraphs from the story reads:

It was a happy lot for children to grow up to manhood or womanhood with the Great Stone Face before their eyes, for all the features were noble, and the expression was at once grand and sweet, as if it were the glow of a vast, warm heart, that embraced all mankind in its affections, and had room for more. It was an education only to look at it. According to the belief of many people, the valley owed much of its fertility to this benign aspect that was continually beaming over it, illuminating the clouds, and infusing its tenderness into the sunshine.

The image was on New Hampshire license plates... and on the special quarter honoring the State of New Hampshire... and about a million souvenirs... it was the official state emblem. ... Everyone assumed that the famous rock face would remain forever... as part of New Hampshire's landscape. ... It seemed as though it had been there "forever" ... as it captured Indian folklore... as well as Early American folklore. However... sometime on May 1, 2003... in a heavy fog... the 700-ton face fell. ... It broke apart and slid down the mountain in the dark.

Steven Heath, one of the residents of nearby Franconia Notch, spoke for many of New Hampshire's citizens saying, "*It's something that has been a part of our lives forever. At first it was disbelief. No one could believe he came down. It's like a member of your family dying.*"

There are times when it seems the most dependable, reliable presence in your life disappears into the fog in the middle of the night. The next morning, that "mountain" you've depended on is gone..."

This is what the original readers of Peter's first epistle must have been feeling like. ... As believers in Jesus Christ they were facing persecution. Many of them had already faced it so severely... while they lived in Jerusalem... that they had to flee Jerusalem...and scatter all around the Roman Empire.

Now Peter is writing to encourage those believers who had to disperse. ...But what Peter has to tell them... ... is that things will be getting worse! He prepares them for more suffering and persecution... that is about to come.

(You know...) the prospect of suffering... is one that we do not naturally face **willingly**. ... (I don't care how spiritual you are...)

A person who goes to the hospital to face a major operation... with its accompanying pain and inconvenience... often does so with apprehension.

It may be helpful for a family member... a pastor... or the surgeon to assure the patient that the painful experience will last a only comparatively short time... and that a full cure can be confidently expected at the end of it all. ... And so... fortified by faith by such encouraging words... the patient can face the trial ahead with hope for the future... and even with a certain relief and happiness.

This is what we find Peter doing in this letter. ... With Peter's original audience facing uncertain and unpleasant experiences that were about to come... one of Peter's aims in this letter... was to encourage his readers... by giving them grounds for solid hope... in their ultimate future... so that they might face their immediate future with level-headedness... courage... and even joy.

Peter also answered concerns that might have arisen in the minds of persecuted believers... *“Will we be able to endure and remain faithful to Christ if persecution becomes more intense?”*

Have you ever asked that question... yourself... especially... as we see a growing hostility toward Christians... in our American culture today...? *“Will I be able to endure...? Will I remain faithful...?”*

Peter assures them... (and us)... that... in spite of persecution... even if it gets so bad that it includes a violent death... that God... in His mighty power... will always protect us. The most horrible persecution... will never cause anyone who is truly saved... to lose their salvation. ... We will see in Peter's answer... that he uses a word for God protecting our salvation... that is a military term used to refer to a strong garrison of soldiers that safeguard a city.

I must say... that even though we will see in our passage of study this morning... how strong Peter takes a stand on the matter of “eternal security” for every true believer... that a great many professing believers in Jesus Christ... do not share this assurance of their salvation. ...One of the pastors of a leading church in town... of whom I have often said is a good

friend... has chided me... even to the point of mocking me on occasion... because of what I believe Peter is teaching here... and what Christ taught ... recorded in John 5... chapter 10... and other places. ... The security of the believer is a doctrine that I not only believe... but I hold very dear to my faith... and I hope that by the end of our time together in this passage... that you will too. ... Why? ... Because suffering and the security of the believer need to go hand-in-hand. ... And do you know what happens when they do... what this produces...? ... It produces joy in suffering!

Do you need encouragement? ... Peter's words offer joy and hope in times of trouble... and he bases his confidence on what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. ... We can live with the wonderful expectation of eternal life... No matter what trials or persecution you may face... your soul cannot be harmed if you have accepted Christ's gift of salvation. ... You will receive the promised rewards.

Our verses today are loaded with very practical theology. ... So let's get started.

1st Peter 1:3

There really is so much here... but I want to begin with this opening phrase: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...*"

Peter adopts the form of a *berakah*... (the Jewish form of blessing that regularly began "Blessed be God who . . .") Using a familiar Jewish form of blessing makes sense... since most of his original readers are probably the Jewish believers who scattered from Jerusalem... at the initial persecution.

But observing what follows this blessing... we know that it is more than just a formal opening... This is an instruction to them. ... He is saying “Be thankful to God...” and then immediately gives them three reasons why they should.... He offers three reasons why God is worthy of our praise.

“Be thankful to God.” ... “Why?” ... Reason #1 - God acts in **mercy** ... Reason #2 - God **brings** believers to a new birth ... and... Reason #3 - Believers have a **living** hope.

You know... none of us should ever come in here on a Sunday morning... without having specific reasons for praising God. When we don't bother to collect specific evidences throughout the week... of how God has shown us His mercy and His grace toward us... our worship will never be all that God intends for it to be. ... (It will only focus on whatever the worship leader does to induce a spiritual goose bump.) ... While it is always nice to see fellow believers and to greet them and visit with them before the service begins... the prelude to the worship service is designed for worshippers to collect their specific reasons for praise from their week.

So... the first thing Peter does to encourage them... in light of the coming persecution... is to fine tune their worship. Does your worship need fine tuning...? Do you come each week placing all the responsibility for whether or not you go away with a sense of having worshipped... on the worship leaders...? ... Of course we will do all that we can to foster an atmosphere of praise... but let's be real... it does not all rest on the shoulders of the leaders. Come with specific reasons for praise that you have collected through the week.

Peter offers three excellent reasons. Let's take a closer look at each one.

Reason #1 - God acts in mercy... “According to His great mercy He has caused us to be born again...”

Salvation comes to each sinner not because of merit... but because of mercy. And please notice the word “great”... “His GREAT mercy...” It is “abundant” or great mercy because of our sins. Because of all those wrongful thoughts... not only sexually impure thoughts... but including every time we have thought of ourselves as more important than others... pride... prejudice... selfishness – those missed opportunities to die to ourselves and show love to someone who may not even deserve it... every time we disobey our conscious which had been telling us what is right... and many other sins we commit daily... ... God’s mercy has to be great! ...And it is!

I am convinced that whenever a believer is not thankful for God’s mercy... it is because they don’t comprehend it well enough. ... We will NEVER understand it completely... But understand this: God's mercy is not based upon our will... our works... or our forcing Him to show mercy to us. ... If this was so... it would no longer be mercy. It would be something earned. God's mercy is His loyal... faithful... compassion that we do not deserve. We deserve to go to Hell. ... The word in Hebrew is “hessed” which carries the strong idea of loyalty and faithfulness in this underserved compassionate acting. He keeps pouring it out to us!

And look at the action that His mercy has produced... Right there in verse 3 ... “*He has caused us to be born again.*” This is Peter’s second reason he calls his readers to praise God. Reason #2 - God brings believers to a new birth.

Last week we dealt with election and the foreknowledge of God... because these concepts were brought out by Peter in verses 1 and 2. We talked about being elect exiles. We are elect... because of the foreknowledge of God... and we saw that foreknowledge... when mentioned in Scripture is a decision God made to lay His affection on us in the future from when He decided this. Ahead of time... before He created us... He set His affection on you and I.

Now... here in verse 3... we read “He has caused us to be born again.” ... To be 'born again' means literally... to be born 'from above'. ... It is a miracle of God... performed by His Spirit... which Titus 3:5-7 describes as His being poured out upon us... and transforming our nature. ... We can no more contrive the new birth... than we could engineer our physical birth

We have been born again. ... Jesus when speaking with Nicodemus said, **John 3:3** - *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

We sometimes hear folks scoff at this wonderful Bible phrase. I have talked to people about their souls who immediately throw objections by pointing out folks who claim to be born again, but never change. ... The Bible says, **2 Corinthians 5:17** - *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* ... So the phrase “born again” is a powerful phrase and a good Bible term. ... Believers need not shy away from it just because the world doesn't like it. ... But one thing is for sure. ... Being born again means a changed life. ... When a baby is born a new life enters the world. ... The same is true of the spiritual birth.

When a sinner turns from his sin to Jesus Christ as his personal Savior... a new life enters the world.

Have you thanked God for your new birth...? Have you thanked Him for your election...? ... Let me encourage you... as Peter does... to celebrate your chosenness constantly. ... This means saying "thank you" to God for having chosen you... and "thank you" for everything that reminds you of your chosenness. ... Listen... you are not an "accident" - but a divine choice. Thank God for that! Don't try to understand your election... just celebrate it! ... *"God... I do not know why You chose me... but I thank You!"* Doing this in the right way... will not make you haughty. It will humble you.

Reason #3 that Peter gives... to start our praise to flow... is - Believers have a **living** hope. He mentions our living hope... and then he goes on to describe it in verses 4 and 5.

Now... lets get something straight here... There is a big difference between the way we generally use the word "**hope**"... and the way the Bible uses it. ... When we use the word hope... it is in the sense of *wishing for something*. ... However, when the Bible uses that word hope... it is talking about a **confident expectation** and reality. ... When we talk about our salvation being a **lively hope**... we're not just wishing for Heaven... we have *confident expectation* of Heaven. ... In this passage Peter speaks of our **lively hope**. ... You and I have a "Living Hope in the Midst of A Dying World."

There is something else to realize about this word “hope.” Bible often refers to the salvation experience as hope. The Greek word for hope... is the same word for “faith.” (“pistus”) ... *Hope* is one of the most characteristic terms in 1 Peter. ... It expresses the strong element of looking forward to what God will do in the future.

A "living hope" is one that has life in it and therefore can give life to us. Because it has life... it grows and becomes greater and more beautiful as time goes on. ... Time destroys most hopes... they fade and then die. ... But the passing of time only makes a Christian's hope... that much more secure.

Hope is faith as it looks forward... because we know that when God promises something, it will happen. There is not the slightest possibility that it will fail to come to pass. ... The writer to the Hebrews says that this hope is 'an anchor for the soul... firm and secure'

Hebrews 6:19 (ESV)

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain

An anchor gives stability to an object which is at the mercy of instability. That was certainly true of conditions surrounding the suffering believers to whom Peter is writing... who were about to undergo even greater suffering.

Let's move on now... to the descriptions that Peter gives... of our lively hope. ... First... he ties our lively hope to the resurrection of Christ... as he writes: “...*through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...*”

The power of God brought about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave... and that same power is essential for our salvation

There would be no Christianity if there were no resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:17-19

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

If Christ had remained in the tomb... we would have no hope.

Verses 4 and 5 complete the description of our lively hope.

1 Peter 1:4-5

Once again... let's digest what is proclaimed by these powerful phrases.

Our lively hope is to an inheritance. ... Few people are interested in this inheritance, however. ... But pity the poor souls... even those who claim to be Christians... who never rise higher in their interests of life... than what this earth offers.

In 1949, Mr. Jack Wurm was flat-out broke... and unemployed. ... One day he was walking along a San Francisco beach... when he came across a bottle with a piece of paper in it. ... As he read the note... he discovered that it was the last will and testament of Daisy Singer Alexander... heir to the Singer sewing machine fortune. ... The note read, "*To avoid confusion, I leave my entire estate to the lucky person who finds this bottle and to my attorney, Barry Cohen, share and share alike.*"

The courts eventually accepted the claim... that the heiress had written the note 12 years earlier... and had thrown the bottle into the Thames River in London... from where it had drifted across the oceans to the feet of a

penniless and jobless - Jack Wurm. ... His chance discovery netted him over 6 million dollars in cash and Singer stock.

How would you like to have been making Mr. Wurm's footprints on that San Francisco beach? ... What a find! ... But let me tell you something! ... 6 million dollars doesn't even **begin** to compare... with our spiritual inheritance in the Lord Jesus Christ. ... We have a MUCH GREATER inheritance coming to us! ... It is better than any earthly inheritance ANYONE has ever... or COULD ever receive. The full enjoyment of our inheritance is future... and it is CERTAIN !

Now Peter takes his time to describe the fortune we will inherit.... Peter goes to extremes to tell us that it cannot be corrupted... from inside... or outside... nor will it fade away.

Many of the 'things' which fill our lives and which are often thought to be valuable don't fit that criteria at all. ... They *are* corruptible... defiled and they *do* fade. So often we set our hearts on such things... and we always end up disappointed... and disillusioned. ... But none of this applies to our inheritance that God has for us.

Peter announces that it will be: “**imperishable.**” This word speaks of the permanence of the inheritance. ... It will last for eternity. It will never decay, rust, spoil, or be affected by inflation or depression. It will never diminish in value.

Also it will be “**undefiled.**” The undefiling aspects provides a twofold lesson. ... **First**, the virtue of the inheritance. ... This inheritance will not

defile the one who receives it. ... So many inheritances ruin the receiver today. Books have been written that chronicle the winners of lotto jackpots. Their lives very often turn for the worse. Those inheritances encouraged sin and profligate living. ... But not this inheritance. It will not defile the possessor. ... **Second...** the verification of the inheritance. A. T. Robinson, in his Greek Word Studies, says that "*undefiled*" also speaks of a title that is without defect. This inheritance has a clear title; it is not flawed. No court can take the inheritance away because it has a flawed title. The title is clear... clean and thus verified.

Because it is *undefiled*, it cannot be stained or cheapened in any way. ...

And then Peter says it will be "**unfading.**" We won't inherit it and then find it to be worthless, like some stock that once had value and then became completely valueless.

Ours will be an unending delight of this inheritance... As already noted: so often when one obtains an inheritance in this world it disappoints and brings more troubles than delights. ... But the Divine inheritance of the saint is nothing but pure delight and forever. The world has never experienced anything like it.

Next... Peter declares that it is being "**Kept in Heaven for you.**"

It will help us to appreciate this verse if we remember that Peter had in mind Jewish Christians who were suffering trial and persecution for their faith. They had been forced to leave their homelands and whatever inheritance would have been theirs.

This inheritance is protected and kept safe. How many earthly inheritances have been stolen... lost by poor investment... bank or loan company failures... and mismanagement. ... This protection beats the FDIC and the FSLIC. ... No government can protect an inheritance like God protects our inheritance.

Now... in verse 5... Peter transitions his encouragement to his readers just a bit. He had been discussing our inheritance... but now he shifts the discussion over to us... the heirs... Verse 5 speaks of the protection of the saints. The **inheritance** is protected... and so are the **heirs**. ... No insurance policy on this earth... can protect like this security.

Peter anticipates someone questioning... "But suppose we don't make it?" So Peter is quick to add... We all will... for all believers are being "kept by the power of God."

1 Peter 1:5

The salvation of the Christian is secure. ...What good is an inheritance kept in heaven... if **we** are not kept safe? ... So that issue is addressed here.

If you have trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are KEPT by the power of God. ... What does this mean? ... This word "**kept**" is derived from the Greek word **phroureo {frou-reh'-o}**... which means "to guard or protect by military guard; to keep by watching." And the tense of this verb indicates that it is a **constant** guarding. Our life is constantly garrisoned by God and He stands as the sentinel over us all our days. Our salvation is under God's constant care and protection.

And it is “**Through faith**” ... I am so glad for these two words that Peter adds – “through faith” ... because it means we cannot lose our salvation. ... If one could lose his salvation... it would be by works which would make salvation a matter of works not faith. ...The obtaining of this protection is not by works... but by faith... in which one receives Christ as Savior and **obtains** this great salvation.

If any believer were lost... it would rob God of His glory. God is so certain that we will be in heaven that He has already given us His glory as the assurance.

Complete rewards and blessings... will be revealed on the last day—that is... the judgment day of Christ. ... What has started will be fully disclosed when Christ returns. ... The believer may be insignificant on earth but in eternity... he will be revealed as one of God's family.

What a contrast that will be to many of the famous and powerful in this life on earth. They strut in this life in their glory... but the believer has a glorious vindication coming... when he will be revealed and extolled as a child of God.

All of this is certain! It cannot be altered.

(LISTEN!) We are eternally secure in Jesus Christ. ...Some folks... however... dispute this saying that we have to maintain good works in order to remain headed for Heaven... once we have been saved – apart from works. ... That doesn't make sense. ... Listen, if a person is saved by faith in Christ... but can sin his way **out** of God's grace... then Christians

would live in continual **uncertainty** about their salvation if you think about it. Peter's encouragement here is no encouragement at all! In fact what Peter has written... would have to be a lie!

(Just think!) ... How would I ever know that my work or life was good enough? ... To believe that salvation is **maintained** by works would mean that the salvation I received by God's power... was maintained by **my** own power. ... But let me tell you... I am not powerful enough to do this! ... and neither are you! ... If I forfeit my salvation by my sin... I would lose it right away... immediately after I was saved... (and so would you) ... because you and I struggle with our sin nature every day. ... No one outside of God's saving and keeping power could ever be secure. ... How could **you and I** remain faithful to God... when one third of the angels in Heaven could not remain faithful? ... These were angels that saw Heaven and God Almighty... but still rejected Him.

- *Let me put it this way, if you lose your salvation, when do you?*
- *What do you exactly have to do to lose it? Is it a big sin or little sin? Who says what sin is little or big? God says **all** sin is bad.*
- *How do you know when you get it back?*
- *When do you get it back?*
- *Who establishes the standard of acceptance, you or God?*
...And then once you get it back... it would be by the standard of a "works salvation."
- *Do my good deeds get my salvation back? If that is the case, it is my works that really save me. We know that is not the basis of our salvation. Paul made this clear, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9)."*

If we believe we can lose our salvation... we create a great deal of doctrinal problems and doubt. ... For example... if God has provided the atonement of Christ as only a means for us to *potentially* save ourselves... then that would mean that the death of Christ did not actually acquire salvation for us... because the final determination of our salvation is our individual performance... not the grace of God. ... We know that is not true at all. If God agreed to 99% of the work of salvation... we could have no certainty that we accomplished our part of the bargain. ... We would never know if we did our 1% until we were dead, and that's too late.

The doctrine of *Losing Your Salvation* is destructive and creates confusion for several reasons.

1. It creates *insecurity* or doubt in the believer. This robs the Christian of joy.
2. It creates *ineffectiveness*. How can a Christian witness and tell others about Christ and how to go to Heaven when he is not sure he is going himself? That's like asking someone to fly a plane and they ask, "Will this plane fly and make it to the destination?" If you reply, "I don't know" or "I'm not sure" or "It might make it," etc., do you really think people will want to fly on the plane? If we tell people, "I think Jesus will get you to Heaven; I hope He will take you there; I think it's possible." Do you think people will want Christ with answers like these? I don't think so. They already reject Him when we tell them they will definitely have eternal life if they are saved.
3. It creates *imperiousness* or pride. It creates a "*Look What I Do*" attitude. It fosters the "*I Deserve to Go to Heaven*" Syndrome. There are people who will have these attitudes when they stand before Christ one day according to the Bible.

The teaching of "losing one's salvation" adds self-trust to trust in the Lord because if it is lost by what I do or don't do, then my ultimate

trust is in myself and not in the Lord. We have three options at this point to pick from. If sin causes me to lose my salvation then...

- 1) All believers must be sinlessly perfect (That's not taught in the Bible). Christians are not sinless, but they do sin less.
- 2) We must be perfect in our confession of our sin ([1 John 1:9](#)) (That's not taught in the Bible either). What if a Christian dies with unconfessed sin? Realize he will go to Heaven because no one confesses *specifically* all their sins.
- 3) We are still lost because we struggle with our flesh everyday or we are secure in Jesus Christ. Praise God, the Bible says we are secure in Christ.

How sad that so many who profess Christ today do not believe what Peter gives for our encouragement. I want to encourage every believer within the sound of my voice – YOUR SALVATION IS CONSTANTLY GUARDED BY GOD HIMSELF AND WILL BE REVEALED WHEN CHRIST RETURNS.

Give thanks to God for this... celebrate... and praise Him!