

Text: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Title: "Speaking well of God the Father"

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Introduction: The book of Job is about God's allowing a righteous man to suffer great evil at the hands of Satan, our enemy. In the courts of heaven, God is glorified by Job's faithfulness as the Lord asks Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth [deliberately avoids] evil?" (Job 1:8).

Refusing to glorify the Lord for the testimony of Job, Satan instead accuses Job of a fake faithfulness. He proposes that Job serves the Lord only because the Lord has so richly blessed him with such ease. Allow Job to suffer, charged Satan, and "he will curse thee to thy face" (v. 11).

God did take up that challenge. He allowed the enemy to take away His blessings from Job, who lost his family, his possessions, and his health. But Job did not lose the genuine integrity of his faith. Job's faithful response was, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Scripture affirms that God won this challenge from Satan. "In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (2:10).

The book of Job teaches us many things about suffering, which God allows his godly people to endure. Two of those things are important to our study of this passage in 1 Peter, which was written to suffering believers. Job teaches that (1) God-allowed suffering is not always His chastening for sin in our lives (sometimes it is God's desire to glorify himself against Satanic disrespect, for instance), and (2) God-allowed suffering is always a temptation to think poorly

about God (Job's wife fell to that temptation; she counselled Job to "curse God and die" in her suffering).

The first word of our 1 Peter passage this morning is *blessed*. In Greek there are two words that our English Bibles translate as *blessed*. The first is one that we find in Jesus's Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 and Luke 6, statements like "Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled" (Luke 6:21). The Greek word used there means *to prosper spiritually*. It is the opposite of experiencing spiritual woe, which Jesus mentioned later in the sermon recorded by Luke ("But woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation," 6:24).

That is not the word for *blessed* that Peter uses here. Instead, the word he uses here is the word from which we get our English word *eulogy*, and it means *to speak well* of someone or *to say a good word* about someone.

Peter's burden in this passage is to help suffering believers not make the mistake that Job's wife made, to not fall into the temptation caused by our suffering to speak poorly of our God, to curse Him. Even when suffering, we can and must speak well of Him, call Him "blessed." Peter gives us many reasons, which we can organize under three truths this morning.

I. Speak well of God the Father because He gave us a second birth (vv. 3-5).

Illustration: We Hobis just welcomed a newborn into our family. His name is Judah Avner Hobi. You all helped us pray for a healthy pregnancy and birth, and the Lord answered our prayers. *Judah* means *Praise Yahweh* or *Praise Jehovah*, and *Avner* means *Father of lights*. It was Judah's parents'

desire to praise the Lord for their son and to recognize that he is a gift from the Father of lights as they named him.

Application: Peter wants suffering believers to speak well of God the Father in recognition of a different kind of birth. Peter wants us to remember in the midst of our suffering that God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, gave birth to us again. My grandson Judah has received his first birth from the Lord, but he will need a second birth too.

Everyone is born into this world spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. And yet, those of us who have trusted Christ as our Savior from sin know from the Father's promise that we have been made alive, born a second time, this time spiritually. Nothing we suffer can take this away.

It was the work of our Lord Jesus Christ that made this new birth possible for us. God the Father is Jesus's God because Jesus became a perfect man. It is one of the perfections of God's original design for man that he worship the Father as God. This Jesus did beginning with His incarnation.

God the Father is Jesus's Father because Jesus is His unique eternal Son. God the Father has been the Father of God the Son from eternity past. Because of the Trinity's desire to save sinners, God's Son became our Lord Jesus Christ, our Sovereign, our Savior, our Prophet, Priest, and King.

Peter wants suffering believers to remember what it means for them to have been born again. It means that we are the recipients of God's great mercy (v. 3). God's mercy is the help He gives to the helpless and undeserving. He gave us new birth when we were dead, helpless, and undeserving.

It also means that, in spite of our suffering, we now possess a hope that is alive since Jesus arose from the dead (v. 3).

Jesus did not just naturally swoon unconsciously among the living and then wake up after three days. He miraculously arose from the dead.

Our hope is anchored in this historical miracle. Investment experts tell us that past performance is no guarantee of future results, but when it comes to investing in the life of our hope the opposite is true. The historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the failsafe guarantee that our hope stays alive. Suffering can kill us, but suffering cannot kill our hope, because Jesus arose from the dead. We too shall rise.

Being born again by God the Father includes an amazing inheritance (v. 4). There are no words in our present existence suitable to describe this inheritance, so Peter has to use terms we can understand, which tell us what our inheritance is not.

It is an inheritance that is imperishable, meaning it cannot be spoiled by decay. Jesus told us to lay up treasures in heaven and not on earth, because on earth moth and rust do corrupt (Matt. 6:19-21). This does not happen to our inheritance.

It is also undefiled. Luke tells us that the marriage bed is undefiled in this sense (Heb. 13:4, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"). We own a share in an existence in which nothing is defiled, like sexual immorality and other sins.

And our inheritance is unfading. I am told that the inflation caused by the money-printing needed to finance the deficit spending of our federal government has destroyed the value of today's dollar. Our dollar today is worth only about what 11 cents was worth in 1970. Back then, 11 cents could buy what we need a dollar for today. This means all of our children's inheritances are fading away from deficit spending and inflation — not so with their heavenly inheritance.

Our inheritance remains imperishable, undefiled, and unfading because it is kept safe in heaven for us (v. 4b; John 14:1-6). God the Father secures not only the inheritance, but also the heirs (v. 5). The word *kept* in this verse is a military term. It means that we are *guarded against* our enemy. Job's enemy is our enemy. He can cause us suffering, but he can never go further than the Lord allows. We are guarded by the power of God to defeat our enemy, and we can trust that power, for God the Father has given a second birth to us.

II. Speak well of God the Father because He has a purpose for our suffering (vv. 6-7).

Application: The nouns and pronouns of Greek grammar possess one of three genders. They are either masculine words, feminine words, or neuter words. I mention that because the first words of verse 6 are the preposition *in* followed by a Greek relative pronoun, whose form can be either masculine or neuter.

Typically, English translations understand the pronoun as neuter, and so they translate *Wherein* (KJV) or *In this* (ESV). Those translations see *time* at the end of verse 5 as the referent to the pronoun, and so Peter writes of greatly rejoicing in the last time. I believe instead that the relative pronoun is masculine and refers back to God the Father. The context speaks well of God the Father, not primarily the last time. I would translate the phrase, *In Whom*.

Peter wants us to speak well of God the Father in the midst of our suffering because He is in control and has a worthwhile purpose for our suffering, which can cause us great joy. Peter explains this purpose in v. 7. God's purpose in our suffering is that our genuineness of faith might be found praiseworthy, honorable, and glorified when Jesus comes again for us. This is why our rejoicing in the Father is great.

Illustration: In his 1776 treatise titled *The American Crisis*, our nation's most skeptical founding father, Thomas Paine, felt compelled to refer to Heaven's wisdom when it came to the price of the praise, honor, and glory of freedom. He wrote: "What we obtain too cheaply we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated." Paine's point was that a price has to be paid in this sinful world of tyranny if men are to live free.

Application: Peter knew that the believer's faith is far more "celestial" than his freedom. Many of his readers would lose their freedom, as would Peter soon. But in the midst of this suffering, believers need not lose our faith. In fact, the suffering is necessary to make our faith praiseworthy, honorable, and glorified when Jesus comes and tells us "well done thou good and faithful servant" (v. 6, *if need be = since it is a need*).

The suffering certainly cannot be ignored (v. 6). We do not pretend that suffering is easily endured. But the manifold trials of 1:6 are always met by the sufficient manifold grace of God of (4:10). By this grace, we trust that it will be worth it all when we see Christ. And so trusting, we speak well of God the Father, because He has a purpose in our suffering.

III. Speak well of God the Father because He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to us (vv. 8-9).

Illustration: Ever since the ascension of Christ from Mount Olives, many artists have done their best to depict what He looked like. In our own time, actors have tried to do what artists have done. My computer tells me that over 280 million people have watched "The Chosen," a show that depicts the life of Christ on screen for all to see Him with their own

eyes. A number like that leads to the question, "What percentage of those have read the four Gospels of our Bible?"

Application: Peter mentions that his readers are loving and believing on One whom they have never seen. In spite of this fact, they rejoice by faith with indescribable joy. When Peter highlights this about their love for and faith in the Lord, he is not talking about a limitation, but a blessing.

Remember that Jesus had to rebuke Thomas for insisting on seeing before believing and loving. Jesus told him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believed" (John 20:29). That blessing is the word for spiritual prosperity. To see and believe like Thomas is a true gift from the Lord. But to not see and still believe like the readers of this Epistle is to be more blessed, to be more spiritually prosperous.

"It is as we free ourselves from the conception an artist may have of what he thinks the Lord Jesus looked like in His life on earth, and depend upon the Holy Spirit through the Word to reveal to us the likeness of our Lord Jesus, that we come to some true conception of Him in His glorified state" (Wuest, 28).

We read about the suffering believer's coming glorified state at the end of verse 8. The phrase *and full of glory* is a perfect passive participle, which can be translated *and having been glorified*. I think that is a better translation, and I would connect the phrase to verse 9 – "And having been glorified, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of souls" (notice that *your* is in italics in the KJV).

I think that Peter refers here to the crown of rejoicing that Paul described in 1 Thess. 2:19, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our

Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" Some day, when we have been glorified, we will see that the end or result of our faith in times of suffering was so that other souls might be saved and there with us. This is why Jesus suffered, and it is why He asks us to take up our cross and follow Him. Paul put it this way, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (Phil. 2:17). The end of faithful suffering is the salvation of other souls.

Conclusion: For the believer the question is never whether we will suffer, but rather whether we will be more like Job or his wife when we do. Will we continue to speak well of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in suffering?

May our answer be the one Job's faith found to be true, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Even in the days of our grief and suffering, may we remember that God the Father gave us our second spiritual birth, that He has an eternal and good purpose for us in our suffering, and that He gave us His Son, Jesus Christ, who first suffered for us. Like Him, we are called to suffer for the salvation of souls.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*