

Four Cornerstones To A Life Worth Living

1 Peter 1:3-9

Good morning, men! Brett is awful chipper today, I'm not sure if that's because you've been on vacation, but I've got to tell you when I hear somebody who's that enthusiastic this early in the morning, I'm a little suspicious! Right? Something's wrong with that. Come on! Give us a minute to wake up here!

It's great to be with you again here this morning, and we're actually going to continue a little bit of the series we started last time I was here in 1 Peter. So if you have your Bibles, turn to 1 Peter 1 and we're going to refer to the text quite a bit so you may want to keep your Bibles open there as we walk through this passage and look at what Peter promises us and says that God has done for us in the Gospel.

You know, I am fascinated by the things that we take for granted in our lives. There are lots of things that we take for granted. I was talking to somebody about cars earlier this week. Have you ever thought about a car? It's just crazy, right? Even the cars that we think are unreliable, think of everything that's happening in them and how often they work. I don't even know the details, somebody in here I'm sure does, but these things are moving at 2,000 RPM. You realize that's per minute, right? 2,000 little firings per minute and turnings and all this kind of stuff, and somehow that gets transferred down to the wheels and they power us along the ground. The thing just works, you just fill it up with gas and it works! And it works every day, pretty much. It's amazing! There are lots of things that we take for granted in our lives, and sometimes we take for granted what God has done for us. So let's look at 1 Peter 1:3, and I want to read this passage and then we're going to look at the different aspects of what God gives us through Jesus Christ:

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. Though you have not seen him, you love him; though you do not now 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.

May God add understanding to the reading of his holy word.

Four Cornerstones

That's a very dense passage, and we're going to unpack it step by step this morning, but I want to talk about something else that we take for granted, and that is clothing, fabrics. They didn't always exist, weaving started around 10,000 years ago or something like that, and so you have fabrics that folks can make and you can buy so inexpensively. You know what a pair of jeans cost at the store when I was a teenager? 35 years ago it might have been \$10-15, but guess what you can buy jeans for today at Walmart? \$10-15, how crazy is that? And they last, you just wear them and wash them. They just work! The secret to that of course is the weave, and you can see this little picture that I've put up here. The fact that those fibers are interlocked together changed everything when people discovered how to

produce materials that way. Now all of a sudden you had durability, sustainability that you never would have had before. So I want to use that as a little bit of a metaphor this morning to think about what we see God has done for us in our relationship with Jesus Christ and what he has woven together.

When you think about men today, what are guys looking for? We could probably come up with a long list of things that guys are looking for, but I want to start with just four, four things that I see in the men I'm dealing with. One of them is I know a lot of guys are suffering, especially in this economy. A lot of guys are underemployed, a lot of guys are unemployed. We have all kinds of health crises, relationship crises, children. We pray at Man in the Mirror twice a week with our staff, and one of those is focused on needs of the community and people we interact with every week, and every week those prayer sheets are filled with children who are making poor choices, or a spouse who has cancer, or a lost job and facing foreclosure on the house. Frankly, it can be a little depressing to see all of those things, but we love praying for folks, and there's a lot of men that are suffering today. When you're in the middle of suffering, a lot of the time you just want to believe that somehow it's going to be okay. You just want some hope. Many of you have been in a time of suffering where it felt just relentless, when is this ever going to end? You just want some hope that somehow you're going to be able to make it through.

A lot of other guys are out there just trying to be happy. They're not looking for anything extravagant, they're not trying to be Bill Gates or Michael Jordan, they just want to be happy. They want to have a decent family, they want to have good kids, they want to live in a good neighborhood, have some friendships, pursue some hobbies, and just be happy, and there's a lot of guys orienting their lives trying to find that, trying to find some way to satisfy themselves and to bring joy into their lives.

There's also a strong motivation that guys have to want to believe that I'm okay. Everybody knows that we've let down our friends or we've told white lies to people, we've done things we're ashamed of, and so how do I handle that? How do I deal with that brokenness, that fact that I'm not perfect, that I can't do everything I wish I could do? And so a lot of guys are trying to figure out how to make themselves feel that I'm okay. If I could just perform good enough at work, if I could be a good enough husband, if I could be a good enough father, then that will make me okay.

Another set of people are looking for something to worship. These are guys who are giving themselves to their kids, to their spouses, to hobbies, to sports teams, and their college allegiance. These are guys that are just so into something that when you spend time with them, you recognize that this has gone way beyond the bounds of any kind of rational investment of emotion. These guys are living and dying with this and it's an act of worship.

So in this passage, Peter shows us these four things that I just mentioned. He shows us that God actually brings these things to us through Christ. What I want you to see today is that everything I mentioned, joy, hope, salvation, and true worship, four things that every guy needs or wants, all of them are second things. Now what do I mean by that? It's a phrase that C.S. Lewis used, I don't know if he's the first, but what he meant is that you can't get joy, for example, by going after joy. It is a second thing, it is a consequence of finding something else. You can't get hope by going after hope, if you try to get hope it will always elude you because it's a consequence of something else. So Peter here in this passage shows us how that works and what that something else is. He gives us four cornerstones that make up a life worth living.

Four Cornerstones

The first one is hope. It's found in verse 3, he has caused us to be born again through a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. A living hope. Now you need to remember what we talked about the last time I was here, these people were part of this dispersion, probably in Asia Minor. He used this language that talks about them being considered outcasts. They were outside the political system, they were outside the economic system, and so these were people who were at least being informally persecuted, if not formally by the officials and the governments. They were definitely on the losing end of what was going on in the culture. So he talks about the trouble and the persecutions and the sufferings, and we get a little bit of that in this passage. What he is saying here is that even though your current circumstances are not going very well that you've been given a living hope, a certainty.

Now hope in the Bible is not what we might think, like when we say I hope it doesn't rain this afternoon. We have no idea if it's going to rain or not, that's kind of a wish. Hope in the Bible is a very different thing, it's almost like if you were to open a certificate of deposit. If you opened a one year certificate of deposit, put \$5,000 in it, it actually would sound kind of weird to say I hope I get my \$5,000 plus interest after a year. With the bank crisis, maybe that's an okay thing to say in America today, but normally that would be a weird thing, of course you're going to get it back, that's how it works. Well, that's the meaning of the word hope in the New Testament, it is a certain future that we are putting our expectation in. So that's what Peter is saying here, you have a certain future, you have a living hope that comes through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is the promise, his resurrection from the dead is the promise of the power that God is going to be working in you in spite of your present circumstances.

Look at what he says in verse 8, though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and full of glory. So Peter says that we have joy because of what God has done for us, it's inexpressible, it's filled with glory which implies this kind of supernatural aspect to it, that it's a joy beyond explanation. It's a joy that goes beyond just the current circumstances. If it was totally related to the current circumstances, everybody has that. When things are going great, you're happy; when things are going bad, you're sad. It's very normal, but Peter says no, you have a different kind of joy that comes through this.

Then he says in verse 9, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. The salvation of your souls. This is something that most people don't talk about or recognize today, but guys want salvation. They don't phrase it that way, but they want to believe that I'm okay, and so we see guys pursuing that kind of salvation in all these things I mentioned earlier. If I can be the best in my business, if I can be a competent person, if I can be a great husband, or if I can be a good little league coach. Whatever it is, what's the motivation behind that? The motivation behind that is if I can do this, this will make me okay and I will feel like I'm a real man. Salvation. Peter says we're not going to give you some kind of self help salvation, you're getting salvation through what Christ has done for you.

Finally, the ability to bring glory to God. It says in verse 7 results in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Guys are made to worship, every one of us is made to worship. You're going to worship something today, and in the natural man we end up worshipping all kinds of things that aren't worth it. Our boats, our golf outings, our hunting trips, our kids; there's a whole bunch of worshipping children that goes on in our culture today. We reorient everything we have to do everything they want to do for 18 years and then we wonder why they're so selfish when they're 21. Wonder how that happened? And so, every guy wants to worship, and Peter says we can, through Christ, learn to worship what really is important. We can

learn to bring glory and honor to God. So what Peter is talking about here is that these things are woven together, just like that fabric. They are a part of the way the universe works, that through our salvation in Jesus Christ we have these four benefits and they're just like this. God has somehow made it that when we trust Christ, that ultimately we can have hope, we can have joy, that we are saved, and that we can truly worship and bring glory to God. It's just as certain as gravity, it's a law of nature. It may not be as immediate, but it's just as certain. Now what does this really do for us today? It sounds good, these are a bunch of big words and theoretical ideas, but how does that help me on a Friday in September? Well, let's talk about how these cornerstones actually work in our lives.

Hope

What happens with hope? How do you really have hope? What difference does hope make? Well, hope leads to perseverance. You can tell if you have hope if you're willing to persevere, because if you're not willing to persevere, then you don't have hope. There's a famous story in the concentration camps about how in order to destroy the will of the prisoners, they would make them dig a bunch of dirt up, carry it in wheelbarrows across the camp, and pile it up on this side of the camp. The next day, they would take those prisoners and they would have them put that dirt back in wheelbarrows and return it to the holes and fill up the holes again. The next day, they dug the dirt out of the holes, drug it across the camp again, and what they found is that even though this treatment of the physical labor was not any worse than the things other prisoners were made to do, these prisoners began dropping like flies. The senselessness of what they were doing overcame them. It was even better for the men who were helping the enemy to create weapons or uniforms; they actually survived more than the ones doing the meaningless work, because at least it had purpose. There was some kind of hope in what they were doing. The reality is we all are going to need perseverance. Some of us are going to go through more hard times than others, but all of us are going to be hit by it, and when you have this hope, it allows you in the moment to have grace to do some things that are just incredible.

I know many of you probably know the story of Robertson McQuilkin. One of my favorite stories of an example of this. He was a university president, had just been elevated to that position, something he had worked his entire life for, when his wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. He resigned the position to care for her, and he spent the next 40 years caring for his wife. He said if I could spend the next 40 years caring for her, I would, because he had hope. That hope allowed him to persevere in the midst of some terrible circumstances. Some of you may be familiar with R.C. Sproul, Jr. He's a teacher and writer. His wife died of cancer recently, and he also lost a daughter. He wrote a blog just last week. I want you to listen to the hope he had in some unbelievable circumstances. He said that Denise did not get three score in ten, she did not even get 48 years. As such it is a temptation for me to consider all that we've lost. I look at my children, especially my youngest who was just a year old when she was diagnosed, barely two when she died, and grieve that they did not have more time with her. How we all would have delighted on this day, in all her favorite birthday rituals. I fight this temptation to dwell on what we've lost, however, by remembering what we have gained. I spent the first 26 years of my life without Denise... I'll skip down a little bit... Jesus was as he is indeed a friend to me when he gave me Denise. He was in turn a friend to her when he called her home. She would not even think of trading her years with him for more years with me. She was not cheated of her due, but blessed beyond measure. Last year was her best birthday ever, this year is better still. She has Shannon with her. Last year was in turn her hardest birthday for me, this year is better though because whether I reach that three score in ten norm or not I am one year closer to being with my wife, my daughter, and my friend.

That's the hope! That's the hope that can give us the power to persevere, and men we're going to need that. We're going to need that kind of hope in our lives.

Joy

What about joy? What does that do for us? Well, joy leads to gratitude. You want to know if you're a joyful person? Ask yourself are you a grateful person. Are you a complainer? Brett likes to tell the guys when they come in for training that there's one rule, no whining. No whining! Some of us need to remember that in our house, in our work place, in our friendships, because we're not grateful. We're not gracious, we are complaining, we are thinking about all the things that we are owed, we're thinking about all the things that people aren't doing that they should be doing for us. The respect we aren't given, the appreciation we are not shown; we are not grateful. This shows that we do not have joy, but instead we are trying to figure out all these ways to get it from things around us. Joy leads to gratitude.

My father-in-law is 82 years old and if you ask him how he's doing, the word he says is grateful, and he means it. He is grateful for everything, the least little thing, it brings him pleasure and joy and he is grateful for it. He expresses that gratitude all the time, thank you so much, I really appreciate that, thank you for calling, thank you for doing this, thank you to everybody. He means it because he is so filled with joy.

Salvation

The third thing that Peter talks about is salvation, and salvation leads to freedom. So many guys are posing today, they are pretending, they are putting on this false mask, they are trying to live up to expectations. I was reading this week, and the writer said one of the most important changes that can happen in a man's life is when he's really willing to face up to his true self. Most of us can't even admit who we are, much less share it with anybody else, because we've got to protect ourselves. We've got to look good, we've got to preserve our reputation, we've got to act like we've got it all together. We've got to be successful. So when that's our drive, it happens because we're not really experiencing the salvation that God has for us, that our righteousness is truly found in Jesus Christ, that our rightness is found in Jesus Christ. I'm not okay because of what I have done or what I will do, I'm okay because of what Jesus did for me, and if not I have no hope. But because of what he's done for me, I can live in the freedom of that, and I don't have to hide anymore, I don't have to pretend anymore. I'm not saying it's easy, it's very difficult, but if we experience freedom in our lives to really love, to really sacrifice, to really give, to really risk, then we know that we are experiencing this salvation that God has for us.

This is so critical! There's a young man that's kind of in our orbit now in his early 20's. This is not uncommon for a guy in his early 20's but as a little bit older guy now, it's hard to watch, because he can't really see who he is. So he's got this agenda about getting out of school and getting a job, and these things he's going to be doing. You just look at that and you think, that's not what God has for you. Probably not, I can't be certain, but that's not really where you should be putting your sights, that's not where you should be aiming. What's motivating you to want to do this? I don't think he knows the answer to that, because he doesn't really know who he is. He can't deal with that freedom that he truly has in Christ.

There's an older gentlemen that I know where everybody walks on egg shells around him. You can't say anything that might seem to be a challenge, you can't say anything that might imply he did something wrong or made a wrong choice, because there's just such sensitivity there. How does that happen? It

happens because somebody is not secure in the reality and breadth of the salvation that Jesus Christ provides. So we need to live as men who are free. Not free to just do whatever we want, to whoever we want, whenever we want, but free to love, sacrifice, risk, and serve because we're secure in what Christ has done for us.

Glory to God

The fourth thing that we see here is glorifying God, this true worship. Glorifying God leads to true worship. So when we find ourselves attracted to and worshipping pornography, or addictions, or work or money, sports, hobbies, family, whatever it is; when we end up worshipping these things, you can be sure that we have gotten off track, because what our relationship with Christ does is it allows us to bring praise, honor, and glory to God. Not to glorify the other things of the world that distract us from the truth, but to glorify him. So God's woven it together so that faith leads to these things, but how does it lead to them? How do we get them? This is great, I'd love to have hope, I'd love to have joy, I'd love to really experience my salvation, I'd love to worship God and bring him glory every moment of every day, but I know I don't, so how do I get there? Look at the text, I want you to see what it says in verse 8. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy. You love him and you believe in him, and so what Peter is saying is that our faith in and love for Christ leads to these cornerstones being in our lives. It's our faith in and love for Christ that results in these things. The question is, do we really have that faith in Christ moment by moment? Most men are putting their trust and faith in themselves. Even Christian men, spiritual men, guys who go to church, most of us most of the time put our trust and our faith in ourselves. I know what to do, I've been in this situation before, I know how to handle this at work. I've had conflict, I know what you're supposed to do, I know all the protocols, or I know how to make this sales call, I've made this presentation 100 times. I know every question they're going to ask. I know how to do this with my wife, we go out on the date and it's going to be a lot of fun. I know how to handle my kids, whatever it is, we're putting our faith and our trust in ourselves instead of moment by moment actively surrendering to Christ and allowing his Holy Spirit to empower us to be his agents in whatever circumstance we find ourselves in.

I said two weeks ago that every interaction we have is an opportunity to be a subversive, to be a revolutionary in this world that's not our home. This is what Peter is saying to these folks. Look you're, strangers, aliens, outsiders, you don't fit in, and that's no problem. Even though you are suffering, you have this joy, this hope. You have a sure salvation, you're able to bring glory and honor to God because of your faith in Christ, and secondly your love for him. You know what? This one's a hard one for me guys, and it may be a hard one for you. It's easy for me to think of Christianity as a set of beliefs. It makes perfect sense to me, it explains why people do bad things to one another, it explains details like why the universe seems random at some points and ordered at others. Human relationships, why is sex so crazily important and touches us at the core of who we are, on and on all these things are explained to me by Christianity, it makes sense. But that's not really what Christianity is. That's a set of beliefs, a set of principles and ideas, but Christianity at its core is about a relationship, and that's a lot tougher for me as a man. It's a lot tougher for me to say, do I really love Christ? Not the ideas of Christianity, not the principles of Christianity, but do I love Jesus Christ? Actively love, not committed to, not to serve, not glad that he saved me, but in this instance, in this moment, do I love Jesus Christ? And what does it mean to love somebody? Well, I think it means you care about them more than you care about yourself.

When I was in college I used to wake up in the morning, and for my freshman year besides going to class I would say David, what do you want to do today? And I may go throw Frisbee, play basketball, catch a

movie, go hang out with the guys. That was pretty much my agenda. All of a sudden in my sophomore year, something changed. Can anybody guess what happened? I met Ruthie, and all of a sudden when I woke up in the morning, I wasn't saying David what do you want to do today. You know what I was saying? I wonder what Ruthie wants to do today? I wonder where she's going to be? What time is her classes today? When is she going to be eating? Maybe we could eat together. All of a sudden my whole orientation changed from this navel gazing, focused on myself kind of stuff. Now I've got this other person that I care about more than I care about myself. That's what it means to love Jesus! When I wake up in the morning, I don't say David what do you want to do today, I say Jesus, what do you want to do today? Where are you going to be today? How can I join you today? How can I speak your truth in this conversation? How can I love this person even though they've harmed me? How can I have your strength in these circumstances? Jesus I want to love you, I want to demonstrate that I am yours, that I worship you, that you are the one that gives me the power and strength to be the man that I want to be. That moment by moment relationship with Christ, and it's very easy, especially in American Christianity to reduce our faith to these logical rational points that we hear about, three points and a poem on Sunday or whatever it is and think that that is what it's about. But Peter is saying here though you have not seen him, you love *him*. Not the ideas, not the principles, not the beliefs, but you love *him*. So I have to ask myself, do I love him today? Do I have an active, ongoing, moment by moment relationship with him? Because that's where Peter says these promises come from; our faith in Christ, and our love for him.

So the Big Idea this morning is **without faith in and love for Christ, it is impossible to _____**. You can fill in that blank with anything worth doing, and it's going to be true. Without faith in and love for Christ, it is impossible to be a good husband. You can be a nice husband. You can be a husband who gets along great with his wife, but you can't be a Godly husband. You can't be the kind of husband God's calling you to be. Without faith in and love for Christ, it is impossible to be a successful business man. Now you can be successful in making money. You can be successful in having a great reputation. You can be successful in having a long career, but you can't be successful in the way God defines success if you don't express faith in and love for Christ.

The second half of our Big Idea is equally true, and that is **with faith in and love for Christ, it is impossible NOT to _____**. Be a good father, be a great church member, be a super friend. How do these things happen? They happen as an expression and outflow from our faith in and love for Jesus Christ. Now let me tell you about the down side to this. I mentioned about the fabric and the weave at the beginning and how it all just hangs together. Of course the only problem with that is when you get one of those threads coming out. Has everybody experienced that, where you have the thread hanging off the sleeve and you start to pull it, thinking you can just pop it off? Then all of a sudden it gets like two or three feet long, and the sleeve's hanging off by the thread. The whole thing can unravel if one of those threads gets out of whack. Guys, here's the danger for each one of us. If you are living today in a way that doesn't base your life on faith in and love for Jesus Christ then threads are starting to unravel. It may not be enough to see yet. It may have only just begun, it may be just a tiny little pick, but at some point there's a danger that the whole thing is going to fall apart. That's what we see all around us today! We see guys who are desperately trying to hold their lives together and yet it's just unraveling around them. Why? Because they don't have the fabric the way that God designed it, where it's based on our faith in Christ and our love for him. That's what holds it together.

So I would just ask you today, where are you placing your faith? Where are you putting your love? What do you love this morning? Because if we're putting that in a place where we shouldn't, things are going to start coming apart. Some of you are starting to see those danger signs, if you'll wake up to them.

Maybe you're on websites you shouldn't be on. Maybe it's your relationships, maybe your communication with your spouse hasn't been good the past few months. Some of you are going to see things at work, that you've got situations where you've started to change some of your values a little bit, and you're willing to slip some things. Everybody does it this way, everybody quotes this thing at this rate. Or everybody puts this on their expense reports. I remember in the first career I got into, I would learn from one of the guys who had been there longer how you were supposed to fill out your expense reports to get as much cash as you could from the company. You get the blank slip from the cab drivers and you fill it in with a reasonable amount that is much higher than you paid, etc. etc. etc. He went through the whole thing with me and told me how I was supposed to do the expense report. So you're faced with all of these little choices and at first, none of them seem like a big deal. You know, having those conversations with that woman, you're just being nice. You can't just not talk to someone who's trying to talk to you. But you find yourself a little more interested in talking to her, and you share some things. Wow, I'm really surprised I shared that, I haven't really told that to anybody else. You don't realize, it's unraveling! And if we're not careful we're going to find ourselves with a pile of thread around us wondering what in the world happened, and unfortunately that's where too many guys are.

This morning we can live the kind of life that God calls us to, that is a powerful transformed life if we'll remember that it's all based on our faith in and love for Jesus Christ. Where's your faith today? What do you love today? Two great questions that each one of us should answer. Let's pray.

Closing Prayer

God we thank you so much for your word. We thank you for the truth and how it speaks to our hearts. Lord, I thank you for Peter's explanation of how you meet these deepest needs, how we can find our hope in you, our joy in you, how you save us, and how you allow us to really worship you. Lord, I pray that you, in each one of our lives, show us this morning where we have gotten off track. If there's some places where we have put our faith in something else, where we're trusting in something other than you to support us and fulfill us, I pray that you would show us that. If we're putting our love somewhere else, if we are committing to the idea of Christianity but not really loving you, Lord would you convict us. Show us that we need to come back, back to that place where we are walking with you in love and by faith. Lord, I thank you for these men, I thank you for the powerful testimony of your grace, I thank you that these are powerfully transformed men who are making such a huge difference in this community, in their families and their churches and cities. Lord, we pray that you would make us men of power, that even though we are strangers in a strange land, even though we're outsiders, aliens, that by your grace we could be subversive revolutionaries showing what it looks like to be a true man, a kingdom man, in this world. For your glory we pray, in Jesus' name, amen!