

The Peace of an Eternal Home

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[0:00] I'll be reading some verses from 1 Peter, and you can find the readings in your programs. 1 Peter 1, 1-3 1 Peter 1, 1-3 1 Peter 1, verses 18 and 19, where Peter speaks about Christ's death as a ransom.

A ransom. His precious blood brings ultimate rescue to human beings. Rescue from the terrible bondage of the power of sin. And in chapter 2, verse 24, he speaks of how his wounds bring healing so that we might die to sin and live instead for righteousness. So that in Jesus, we can have ultimate restoration to our true destiny, what we were created for, to be images of God himself. And then this morning, we spoke about the pledge of that empty tomb. That as Peter says in chapter 1, verse 3 of his letter, that our hope of resurrection is absolutely certain because Christ has risen.

And because we know that in his resurrection, our hearts have now been cleansed, cleansed forever, sprinkled clean, he says, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He now stands as a great high priest for us in heaven at the right hand of God. That's what he declares in chapter 3, verse 22 of his letter.

But we haven't yet exhausted Peter's proclamation of the wonderful fruit that comes from Jesus' death and resurrection. So this evening, I want to focus on one more aspect of our salvation that we must never miss and which Peter takes great pains to show us very clearly. And it's that the salvation that we have in Jesus is something wonderfully personal. Personal to us, but also something deeply personal to God himself.

[3:00] Our Lord Jesus, sent by God the Father, he came to save us not just from the misery, the guilt, the lostness of sin.

He came to save us for something, for a future, for a destiny of joy in the presence of God. God for whom we were created. And now in Jesus, for whom we have been restored. Jesus came to bring us back into the peace of an eternal home.

For, if you look there, says Peter in chapter 2, verse 25, for you were straying like lost sheep, but now have returned to the shepherd, the overseer of your souls.

For, chapter 3, verse 18, for Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.

Being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit. So what Peter's saying is that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have the present peace of personal reconciliation with God forever.

[4:13] And we shall have, at last, the permanent peace of personal resurrection with Jesus Christ forever. I want to think about these two things.

First then, Christian believers have received the present peace of personal reconciliation with God forever. Peter says here in verse 18 of chapter 3 that Jesus is the personal substitute who brings reconciliation to that wonderful relationship with God the Father that we were created for, in place of the woeful rupture that was caused to that relationship by our sin.

So the power of the cross is not just what we are rescued from. It's an end to the futility of our lives, the hopelessness of sin. And the pledge of the empty tomb is not just what we are restored to, that true human freedom, ultimate healing of the human condition, but it's about more than that.

It's about who it's all for. And it's about to whom we are restored, to God, our Heavenly Father Himself, and to a place in our true home, which is His true home.

Jesus came and died, Peter says, that He might bring us to God. He came to bring about the great reconciliation, to heal that personal rupture that lies at the very heart of this created order, at the

heart of our universe, is the tragedy of a great rupture.

[5:55] And it's the rupture of man's proper relationship to God. Where God is at the center of all things, the creator, the ruler of all, and mankind in their right place, as God's sons and daughters made in His image, to find blessing and fulfillment and meaning in life by being God's true image, reflecting God's glory, reflecting His truth, His beauty, His goodness, His faithfulness, reflecting it to the whole wide world, the whole created order, and rejoicing in God's rule, obeying God's gracious commands.

That's what we were created for, but everything that is wrong in our universe stems from a terrible substitution. Because man has willfully reached up to usurp God's throne, to try and steal God's place as the ruler of all things.

It's a terrible substitution. It's a tragic exchange, which led to disaster. Our complete estrangement from God, as the Bible describes.

God cannot allow His majesty to be assailed in such a way. He can't either allow mankind unfettered power, the power that we seek, otherwise we would destroy the whole world. You might find it hard to believe, but this world would be a far, far worse place if God had not cursed us with mortality and with futility.

[7:29] Just think what the tyrants of this world, the tyrants of history, would have done if they had not been cursed with mortality. Imagine it.

The evil would have gone on and on and on, unstoppable. No let-up, no relief. Imagine that. But that is our world nonetheless, isn't it?

At the heart of this universe lies a terrible substitution. Of man grasping up for God's throne. But at the heart of the Christian gospel lies a glorious substitution.

Where God Himself willingly stooped down, not clinging to His throne, but Himself taking the place of man as a willing servant to bear Himself the punishment of that rebellion.

And by that wonderful exchange to bring true reconciliation to sinful human beings, Christ suffered once for sin, says Peter, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.

[8:45] And only through that glorious substitution, only through that great exchange, can sinners be brought back to God.

The very heart of Christ's reconciling God and man lies in this, in what theologians call penal substitutionary atonement.

Now there's some people who are rather dismissive of what they call that theory of the atonement, as though that was something that was made up by some theologians.

Just one way of describing what Jesus' death was all about. But you don't need to think up theories to grasp this. You don't need to be a clever theologian to grasp this. You just need to be able and willing to read.

To read what the apostle Peter, the apostle of Christ himself, says right here. Let's just look at this one verse, because it's so clearly. Look at chapter 3, verse 18 there, the bottom text. First of all, Peter tells us Jesus' death is penal.

[9:46] It's a penalty for sins. Christ also suffered once for sins. He suffered punishment for sins against God.

That's very clear. It's penal. And secondly, Peter says his death was substitutionary. He suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous.

A great exchange took place. Well, that's very clear. And that is why it was a death that was atoning, putting away the barrier between God and sinful people to bring peace, to bring reconciliation with God.

He suffered this way, being punished for sins, and in this manner, in the place of the unrighteous, so that he might really and truly bring us to God, bring reconciliation.

There was no other way that we could be reconciled to God according to the Bible, the whole Old Testament, and the New Testament, because God is holy. And sinful unrighteousness, unrightness, can't come near God, can't be in fellowship with Him.

[11:02] Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, said Isaiah the prophet very bluntly. The Apostle Paul says the same thing. Summing up, is it, where the whole of the Bible, in his words in

Romans chapter 3, where he quotes from the Psalms, none is righteous, no, not one.

All have turned aside. All have sinned and lack the glory of God, the glory that we were created for, the glory that God requires of us. All are separated by sin.

And so none can have peace with Him. But because in Jesus, God the Son Himself became the personal substitute to atone for sin forever, we can now come home to God, He says.

Our personal substitute who bears away our sin forever and brings us the peace of real personal reconciliation with God forever.

And that reality, you see, is what the rather wonderful picture of the ritual of the Old Testament Day of Atonement was all about.

[12:25] It illustrated and it promised something that would one day be fulfilled. You might remember it was a twin sacrifice. There was one goat whose blood was shed for the sins of the people.

But there was a second goat. And symbolically, all the sins of the people were placed on the head of that animal. And it was sent away into the desert, into the wilderness, to carry those sins far, far away, never, ever to return.

It's a wonderful picture, isn't it? And that, friends, is what happened at the first Easter when Jesus Christ died on the cross, the Son of God. He carried His people's sins far, far away, forever away.

And because our sins are gone like that forever, you see, we can come home to our Father reconciled. He suffered once the righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God.

Or to use Paul, the Apostle's words in Romans chapter 5, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The peace of personal reconciliation with our Heavenly Father.

[13:45] Father. It's not just rescue into true freedom from sin's power. It's not just restoration to our true humanity as God's image.

Wonderful as that is, but it's more, it's much more than that. It's personal reconciliation with our true Father. Peter says, we were straying like sheep, but now we've returned to the shepherd, to the overseer of our souls.

And because already, you see, we have that present peace of personal reconciliation with God forever, we can be assured, assured that at last we will also have the permanent peace of personal resurrection in the presence of Jesus Christ forever.

But before we think about that, let's ponder that extraordinary love of a God who in Jesus suffered so greatly to bring us home to Him.

Peter says, we've already received reconciliation with God, peace with God personally through the Lord Jesus. But His promise actually is that the best is yet to be.

[15:03] The permanent peace of being raised personally, to be with Jesus personally forever. forever. When our full salvation is revealed in the last time, as Peter calls it in chapter 1, at the reconciliation, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, that is what will be ours.

He will personally bring us to God in the ultimate reconciliation of bodily resurrection, to be with Him in His presence bodily forever.

Look again at that second text, chapter 3, verse 18. That He might bring us to God, Jesus was made alive by the Spirit, Peter says.

And that means that we also will be made alive by the same Spirit. That is our living hope that Peter's talking about. Apostle Paul says the same thing in Romans chapter 8.

He says, If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

[16:21] Couldn't be clearer, could it? The past, the apostles are telling us, is a reality. He came and suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous.

And the present is a reality. He was put to death in the flesh, but He was made alive by the Spirit. He is risen today. And that means that the future is a certainty.

The glory that will be brought to you, says Peter, at the revelation of Jesus is that He will raise up your mortal body to bring you to God the Father, to be at home with the Father and the Son in His glory forever and ever.

Jesus Christ came into the world. He came to the cross as a perfect substitute so that here and now we can know the present peace of personal reconciliation with God and so that we shall have at last the permanent peace of resurrection, life with Jesus Christ in His glory forever.

Nothing less than that. And the Easter message, it sounds the revival, it sounds the call to wake up. It tells us that the dawn of a new creation has begun.

[17:43] It tells us that joy has begun. It breathes the warm wind that banishes the bitter cold of this dark world. It's like the warm air of spring that should be blowing in now after that cold winter.

Not much sign of it yet, is there? And maybe you don't feel either that you can really see anything of this new dawn that Peter's speaking about.

Because our world is still such a dark place, isn't it? With its wars, with its woes aplenty. And that's true, of course, but that's the very nature of daybreak, isn't it?

Begins with just the faintest streak of grey across the blackness of the sky in the eastern horizon. But it's begun. Dawn is breaking.

If you know C.S. Lewis' Narnia stories, he pictures it as that wonderful thaw in the land of Narnia to break the never-ending winter of the reign of the White Witch. And the beginning of that thaw signals to all who know and understand that Aslan is on the move.

[19:00] And friends, that's the message of Easter. Winter is ended at last. A new day has dawned. And so, the springtime and indeed the full warmth and the light of summer, it will surely come.

It's certain. The real meaning of Easter is that because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, a new day can dawn now in our lives through the forgiveness of our sins.

It means that the sunrise of that new eternal day can bathe your life now with the peace of personal reconciliation with God today and forever.

It can fill your life with the hope of that personal resurrection into permanent bodily peace in the presence of God forever and ever. That is Peter's message.

That is the Easter message of all those who witness the great events of the coming of the Son of God into the world from the time of His birth right through His death and His resurrection and His ascension to glory.

[20:13] The father of John the Baptist, Zechariah, he proclaimed that the announcement of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ that He came says Zechariah to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The way of peace. The peace of an eternal home. So friends, whoever you are, whatever whatever in the past you may have done, however dark you may feel your life is today, the peace of that personal reconciliation with God, your heavenly Father, can be yours, can be yours today.

On that very Easter Sunday evening, the risen Lord Jesus appeared, do you remember, to His faithful disciples, to those who had abandoned Him, every one of them, remember, not just Peter, all of them.

And His first word to them was what? Peace. Peace be with you, He said. And we're told He showed them His hands and His side.

And then their disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. They understood He was really alive. And Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you.

[21:44] Friends, in this gospel, in the message of the risen Savior, the Lord of heaven and earth is here today by His Holy Spirit in the midst to bring that same present peace to us, the peace of personal reconciliation with God to your life today and every day of your life from now on.

And at last, the promise of that permanent peace, of personal resurrection in His presence, in life eternal, true life, life with Him, life like Him, the life that we were made for and that He came to bring us back to forever and ever.

There is joy, there is Easter joy today and every day for everyone who knows the risen Lord Jesus. But the best, the best is yet to be.

And I can tell you this, it's nearer this Easter than it's ever been before. So let not your hearts be troubled, you who believe in Him.

Let not your hope be shaken, nor let your hope burn dim. Look to the risen Savior, God's ever-living word. Soon, from the throne of heaven, shall come our conquering Lord.