

## 1 Peter 1:3-9

How much of our lives revolve around healthcare? I'm sure more than one of us has an appointment this week. More than a few of us work in the medical field in some capacity or another. And we all have to figure out benefits, prescriptions.

When something real scary comes our way we are praying and hoping for treatment options that are effective and available. Have you ever stopped to think that in the new creation we won't need it. Any of it. There will be zero copays, or waiting rooms, or tests, or doctors. Because the Great Physician will sustain his people and will have eliminated every plague and safeguard us against all tragic accidents. You may go to bed with a good, slight, soreness in your legs from a long walk with a friend that day, but it won't keep you up at night, and it certainly won't require any pills. No, not with the Lord's health plan.

We talk about retirement homes. Dream homes that put us right where we want to be, around the people we want to be with, with all the amenities and without all the stairs, right? And then we grieve when we leave those homes for the assisted living, and we pray that we can go to the place that's clean and has good care and hopefully some decent food. And even then the transition is still hard. Ever stopped to think that our Lord has prepared for us a place? And he knows our hearts better than anyone. And he has promised us a feast. And he has promised to shelter us.

He promises us life to live doing what we love, not as work, but as joy and to serve others. Others, who are real people, those we've known that have gone before us or come after us. What a homecoming! What a reunion! That's the Lord's retirement plan for you.

He has promised us, through the resurrection of Jesus, "to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you."

That's good news, folks. That is good, resurrection news. Better than being born into royalty, better than having that great uncle who died and left you ten million dollars. Better than 99 years of health. Better than a nice house with great windows and a wrap around porch.

Everything here, even us, and our bodies, gets old, grows faint, rusts, and breaks. Even kings die, and even kingdoms fall.

But the King of kings, who did die, is risen again and has taken his throne and, that's right, has promised YOU a share in it.

And while me might sit here and think, joyfully, man I can't wait to experience the benefits of that inheritance, of, to be a bit cheesy, "God's benefits package." We might be waiting eagerly to receive the benefits of that package, but, Peter actually says you have it now. All those verbs are present tense or past tense. "He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time..." And there is where we get to the future. The fulness of salvation, the benefits package is to come yes. But you are already on the plan now.

And the benefits now? You receive a living hope. And you receive guards for your faith.

And we might say, "man, it sure would have been nice to have the healthcare part right now." But don't be so sure. Is it possible God uses your trials and this broken world to shape you, to mold you? He hasn't wiped out that devil yet (though he does have him on a leash). Why not? "Come on God? Wipe out evil already." Well he can, but as Christian apologist Dr Turek often says, "God could wipe out evil sure, but he just might start with you – or me." Is it possible God in his omnipotence and timelessness can work good out of evil? Consider the cross of

Jesus. The death of an innocent man, the work of the devil to have the Son of Man betrayed... God used that for the greatest good ever.

But don't take my word for it. Take Peter's "In this [salvation] you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials." Did you catch that, "If necessary"!? What a scandalous statement from Peter. Is he saying the death of that loved one, that cancer diagnosis, that depression, that chronic pain is necessary!? Is God a twisted, cruel genie, who doles out suffering without a care or concern?

Well, judging by Peter's imprisonments, pain, and death... I'm going to assume Peter knows suffering isn't fun or easy. He even says we are "grieved by them" – and we should be. That stuff hurts. But I think he is saying God can and does work in the midst of them. And that suffering is not a sign that God has abandoned you. And that, folks, is *actually* a comfort in suffering. The Gospel is not a prosperity Gospel that "if you believe enough you will be healthy wealthy and wise." What a false Gospel! What a slap in the face to anyone in pain or suffering – "I guess you don't believe enough for God to like you."

No, look at our Gospel lesson, how our God treats one who doubts – he goes straight to him and doesn't scream at him, no he holds out his nail pierced hands to him. Which is another reminder that our Lord, who does let pain come our way at times in his infinite wisdom, he doesn't ask us to carry crosses heavier than his. Not at all.

Our Lord knows suffering, he knows pain and abandonment and rejection and betrayal, and he knows a spiritual darkness greater than we ever will. But he has over come them, for you. And, back to our reading today now: He has promised to be with you to guard you in the midst of your trials, pains, sufferings, and temptations. He has promised to be your living hope. He is alive again, he is not a dead Savior and so neither is our hope dead. It is certain, it is alive. It is with you.

All of those are present benefits. Not to mention the gift of his presence with us in water, in word, in bread and wine. May that give us reason for joy even now, and if the brokenness of this world and in us has given you reason to grieve, may the living hope of an eternal inheritance give you strength and comfort. Because I have a hunch that Peter is so bold to “undersell” our grievances, solely to magnify how glorious the blessings of God are. And I also have a hunch that when we see the

fullness of God's blessings in eternal life, well, I think there will be very few complaints on that day, and many, many Alleluias.