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The New Birth, Part 5

The book of Hebrews was written around the same time as 1 Peter; as such it reflects the same backdrop of severe trial, persecution, and suffering- all of which occurred during the Neronian persecution of 64 AD. From Hebrews we learn that there was a significant number of Jewish Christians who initially responded to the persecution with amazing trust.

Hebrews 10:32-34, "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly, by being made a public spectacle through

reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one.”

But like many times in life when impulse gives way to contemplation, the Hebrew Christians apparently began thinking twice about their bold confession of Christ. Think of it! It is easy to understand the some of the questions:

- If I die today, who will be there to help my children grow up in the faith?
- If I lose my job on account of a bold witness for Christ, how will I provide for my family?

In fact, it got so bad that some even defected from Christ and rejected Him! The Hebrew writer pastorally addressed this.

Hebrews 10:35-39, “Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who SHRINK BACK TO DESTRUCTION, but of those who have faith TO THE PRESERVING OF THE SOUL.”

The word of encouragement here is threefold. The Hebrew writer exhorted the people of God:

1. To continue to live by faith and so GIVE THEMSELVES to the Lord and His purpose in their life.
2. To understand the seriousness of insignificant apostasy! If unchecked, it will end in the destruction of the soul. As that is the case, they must NOT give in to fear or doubt, not even for a moment!¹
3. NOT to let this be a concern, for as they were in Christ they most definitely would persevere!

This last encouragement should give us all hope! Yes, IF the “professing” Christian gives into the flesh and so rejects Christ, they will perish for, in accordance with 1 John 2:19, they clearly never knew the Lord. Yet such could never be named among the genuine servant of Christ! This in essence is Peter’s final word of encouragement in our text concerning the New Birth. And one of the results of the New Birth is its maintenance by God. Our New Life in Christ is able to persevere in a hostile, sinful world!

1 Peter 1:3-5a, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who

are protected...”

We begin with the “protection” referenced here. The word is φρουρέω (*phroureo*) and comes from the word in the Greek for a garrison (φρουρος [*phrouros*]). As such, it is a military term which can reference both the garrison built in a city (Isaiah 5:2) as well as the guards stationed there (2 Corinthians 11:32) whose purpose was twofold:

1. To protect the city from attack, and
2. To ensure that the will of Caesar would be accomplished amongst the people of the region.

In this regard, the believers in Asia Minor would have been well-familiar with these “guards”! For during the persecution which presently confronted them these guards were the very ones who broke into their homes and arrested their loved ones. They were the ones who forcefully dragged their fellow believers to prison to await trial. They were the ones you had to pass by in order to visit your loved one in prison.

And they were the ones who could arrest you while you visited your loved one if they suspected that you too were a Christian (which is what is described in Hebrews 10:34)! In the arena of keeping order, they had absolute power and so could do whatever they deemed necessary in order to guard the city or uphold the will of Caesar. From all of this, the Christians in Asia Minor again would have known them well, feared them, and so conducted themselves very carefully around them.

But herein contains a MASSIVE TWIST in our passage. For just as the Roman Empire had its garrisons and guards throughout the region to protect and manage the populace, get this: so does God when it comes to His Kingdom! According to our text, “We are protected/guarded by the power of God...”!

So who is the guard here? It is God! We are protected by “His power”! This may seem obvious, but persecuted Christians need to hear this! They need to take their eye off “the guards” of Rome and place it on their Divine Guard who keeps watch over their soul!

Psalms 121:5, “The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand.”

Speaking of His people as though they were a vine, God said this:

Isaiah 27:3, “I, the Lord, am its keeper; I water it every moment. Lest anyone damage it, I guard it night and day.”

1 John 5:18, “We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was [begotten] of God [Christ] keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.”

Did you get that? Evil and wicked people/Satan himself may direct their ire against the

Christian, but that which truly is important can never be harmed or “touched”.

Matthew 10:28, “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Truly the One we and everyone in this world ought to reverence is God! For He is the sovereign who reigns over this world. In light of this, at the dawn of the first persecution directed against God’s people, the apostles were emboldened, for they lived in light of a strong conviction. This is the prayer they offered after they were beaten and released:

Acts 4:27-28, “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.”

Accordingly, when they walked past Roman Guards, they did NOT shake; for they walked in the fear of the Lord!

Christian, just as the boundary of the waves are subject to God’s control (Job 38:11) so also is the persecutor bound by the will of God! So indeed, Rome might have its “garrisons” and “guards”, but they can do nothing other than what God has ordained. He truly is the one who stands guard over us to protect us! Spurgeon wrote of this verse:

Think of a city besieged... that is an emblem of your condition in this world. The enemy pours in their shot; they keep up the fire day and night and set the city ablaze. Even thus Satan bombards us with temptations and beleaguers us with all the hosts of hell. Our great enemy has determined to raze the citadel of our faith even to the ground. His great guns are drawn up around our bastions, his sappers and miners are busy with our bulwarks. Even now it may be his shells are tearing our hearts and his shot is setting our nature ablaze. Herein is our confidence: our great Captain has walled us around; He has appointed salvation ‘like walls and ramparts’ (Isa 26:1). We are safe though all the devils of hell surround us, for we are garrisoned by omnipotence. (Spurgeon, 2014, p. 1 Peter 1:5)

Consider how this glorious truth can and ought to emboldened us.

Daniel 3:16-18, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But *even if He does not*, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

How is it that we are “garrisoned by omnipotence”? Consider with me the two-fold protection of our soul. Speaking of the Christian, Peter said this:

1 Peter 1:5, "...are protected by the power of God..."

As it is God who does the protecting, it would make sense that it is "by the power of God" that He does the protecting. Yet in Scripture this means a whole lot more than meets the eye!

The word behind "power" in the Bible is *δύναμις* (*dunamis*) from which we get the English "dynamite." The idea behind this word is that of inherent capability or the ability to perform that which is desired. Yet that is NOT strong enough in light of the language here. Notice, we are kept by "the power OF GOD"! Scripturally this is significant... for it was/is BY "the power of God" that:

- The world was created, Jeremiah 10:12; 27:5.
- The lost are redeemed, Psalms 106:8-9; 77:15.
- The world is upheld, 1 Peter 1:5; Hebrews 1:3.
- Christ, who Himself is identified as the "power of God" in 1 Corinthians 1:24.
 - Was born, Luke 1:35.
 - Lived, Hebrews 7:16.
 - Performed miracles² in which He...
 - Cast out demons, Mark 5:1; Luke 4:36.
 - Healed sickness, Luke 5:17; 8:40.
 - Provided for the people's physical needs, Mark 6:30.
 - Stilled the storm, Mark 4:35.
 - Walked on water, Mark 6:48.
 - Rose from the dead, Romans 1:4; Matthew 22:29-32; 1 Corinthians 6:14; Philippians 3:10.
 - And will come again, Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26.

In fact, when it comes to "the power of God" the Bible says that it is great (Psalms 79:11), strong (Psalms 89:13), glorious (Exodus 15:6), unsearchable (Job 5:9), incomparable (Psalms 89:8), mighty (Job 9:4), everlasting (Isaiah 26:4), sovereign (Exodus 9:16; Romans 9:21), effectual (Isaiah 43:13), and irresistible (Deuteronomy 32:39).

From this it is clear that when Peter said that the Christian is guarded by "the power of God," he was NOT simply saying that our protection is certain (which it is). Rather, Peter here is asserting with as much energy as could be employed by the Greek language that the protection and preservation afforded to the Christian is certain, unthwartable, and undepletable! Daniel wrote this about God:

Daniel 4:35, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?'"

Do you know what it means to "ward off His hand"? You are a dinner guest and one of the

young children of the host family reaches out his hand to get a nibble of food before the giving of the prayer of thanks. What does the dad or mom do? They slap the child's hand away! That is the idea behind "ward off His hand." No one ever has or ever will smack God's hand of protection and say, "What are you doing?" God's preserving grace is unthwartable!

Accordingly, as Christians we live with the certainty that NO THING on this earth can keep us from that which God has saved us for! For truly, "...greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4b)! Peter Davids wrote this:

The picture is that of a fortress or military camp. They are within. Outside the evil forces are assaulting them. But on the perimeter is the overwhelming force of 'the power of God.' He it is who protects them. (Davids, 1990, p. 53)

On account of this we know that we could never lose anything of real value at the hands of the persecutor! In the end, all in Christ will inherit the blessings promised them by the Lord.

Philippians 1:6, "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*"

How could Paul be so confident? Because of the many promises found in God's word.

Matthew 19:27-29, "Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?' And Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life.'"

It is so true... they lose nothing who gain Christ! Having meditated further upon the truth before us, Peter in his next epistle would expand the thought given here:

2 Peter 1:3b-4a, "...His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of *the* divine nature..."

Do you understand? Anything and everything important in this life is secured by the Captain of our Soul! He guards and protects us in and through all things! Notice the impact that this conviction had on Paul.

2 Timothy 1:12, "For this reason I also suffer these things [he is about to be executed here], but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."

So truly, the New Life we have received (along with its multiple blessings) is safe and secure in Christ. Satan and this world can't touch it- and so neither can, "...death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing..." (Romans 8:38b-39). We are ever and always secure in Christ!

Yet Peter is not finished! For God uses means when it comes to the preservation of our soul- which brings us to the Second Element referenced here when it comes to our Protection and Preservation. Speaking once again of the Christian Peter declares:

1 Peter 1:5, "[that we] ...are protected by the power of God through faith..."

This is an interesting and yet important addition. On account of the "power of God" we know none of us will ever perish! And yet we also know from this text that our salvation is preserved through a secondary means; it is "through faith!"

Recall the *Ordo Salutis*³ which is arrived at by examining biblical passages which indicate the logical and at times temporal order of the normal workings of God when He saves an individual. When you do this, you arrive at the following; salvation begins with...

Divine Acts	Divine/Human Activity	Divine Acts	Divine/Human Activity	Divine Act
	(3) Repentance Unto Life	(5) Justification	(8) Progressive Sanctification	
(1) Effectual Calling thru (2) Regeneration	(4) Faith in Jesus Christ	(6) Def. Sanctification	(9) Perseverance in Holiness	(10) Glorification
		(7) Adoption		

Notice that the above order has five columns. The first, third, and fifth represent the exclusive work of God whereas the second and fourth represent the work of both God and man (the activities referenced in these columns are 100% God and 100% man)! With this notice the ninth element in the Ordo Salutis is the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints. This occurs as God "protects us by His power" AND we in turn "rely upon it" — NOT ourselves, our ingenuity, or the work of our hands! Our perseverance is 100% God and 100% us! We see this beautifully worked out in Zechariah.

Zechariah 4:6, "Then he [the angel] answered and said to me, 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel [who in 520 BC was charged with rousing the newly returned people of God to action in the rebuilding of the Temple] saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts."

This did NOT mean that God's people in rebuilding the temple were to sit back and wait on the Lord to rebuild it miraculously! RATHER, it means that their work was to be done in reliance upon the Spirit of God and not the wisdom, power, or weaponry of man!

That is how God would have us live and so “work out our salvation”! That is how “the power of God” preserves us... “through faith”! This is so important.

Spiritual growth and maturation is NOT mechanical. If you read the word of God every day, if you learn its doctrines, if you take up the daily practice of talking to God on your knees, you very well could become “twice the son of hell” then you were if you hadn’t participated in these disciplines. Don’t ever forget the rebuke Christ gave to the religious leaders of His day.

Matthew 23:15, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

How did they do this? Read the chapter... through their religious disciplines!

Hebrews 4:2, “For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.”

Spiritual health, welfare, and life is maintained NOT merely as we mechanically participate in spiritual disciplines, BUT as we rely upon the Spirit of God! This doesn’t mean that we ignore secondary means like Bible Study, prayer, and the like. It is that we engage them in reliance upon Christ! Solomon wrote the following:

Psalms 127:1-2, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors [if void of relying upon God]; for He gives to His beloved *even in his sleep.*”

So clearly the call is to cultivate a faith which utilizes the means God has given us to grow in grace, ever and always relying upon the Spirit of God! But this is where it gets difficult! As *Christians*, we want to live in reliance upon God. Yet *as sinners*, everything within us wants to do it in the flesh! As such, there are many enemies to faith... one of which is our feelings! C. S. Lewis addressed this in part when he said this:

Now Faith, in the sense in which I am here using the word, is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods [that is, our feelings]. For moods will change, whatever view your reason takes. I know that by experience. Now that I am a Christian I do have moods in which the whole thing looks very improbable: but when I was an atheist I had moods in which Christianity looked terribly probable. This rebellion of your moods against your real self is going to come anyway. That is why Faith is such a necessary virtue: unless you teach your moods ‘where they get off’, you can never be either a sound Christian or even a sound atheist, but just a creature dithering to and fro, with its beliefs really dependent on the weather and the state of its digestion. Consequently one must train the habit of Faith... That is

why daily prayers and religious readings and churchgoing are necessary parts of the Christian life. We have to be continually reminded of what we believe. Neither this belief nor any other will automatically remain alive in the mind. It must be fed. And as a matter of fact, if you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away? (Lewis, 2015, p. 125)

Christian, we feed our faith by reminding ourselves daily of the character of God, His will and purpose for our lives, and so the end and objective of our salvation! And what is that?

1 Peter 1:5b, "...who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation [which in the context is a reference to our glorification and so the realization of our inheritance in Christ] ready⁴ to be revealed in the last time"

This is where it is all headed! God regenerated us NOT to make us happy or fulfilled, BUT to:

- Conform us to the image of Christ.
- Restore us to the Kingdom of God.
- Enable us once again to co-reign with God as Adam and Eve were charged in the Garden prior to the fall!

And the fact that this "salvation" is "ready to be revealed" tells us that everything is set and awaiting the believer's arrival. All that we are waiting on is the filling up of the rolls of God's elect! Peter Davids made this wonderful observation\:

'Prepared' means that it is already prepared, as the meal is before the call to the marriage feast in Matthew 22:8 (where the same Greek term is used). (Davids, 1990, p. 54)

Can you smell the meal that is already prepared and awaiting us? All we are waiting for is the shout of the Archangel saying, "Come and get it!" That we might NOT lose our longing for this meal, God ordained another meal — a type of what is to come — the Lord's Supper! Let us receive the Lord's Supper as

- The confirmation that "...He is able to guard what we have entrusted to Him until that day" (2 Timothy 1:12)!
- The assurance that we lose nothing who gain Christ.
- The foretaste of the wedding feast that awaits us when Christ returns for His bride, the church (cf. Revelation 21)!

References

Davids, P. H. (1990). *The First Epistle of Peter (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Lewis, C. S. (2015). *Mere Christianity*. New York: Harper One.

Spurgeon, C. (2014). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Peter and Jude (Spurgeon Commentary Series)*. Titus Books.

End Note(s)

¹ This is akin to warning a child that if they fall off a building they will die. Now, do you anticipate that your child will fall off a building? No! So why warn them? Because it is the warning that produces the sobriety which prevents the child from playing on the roof of a building.

² Luke 11:20; Mt. 11:20-23; 13:54; Mark 9:39; Gal. 3:5; 1 Cor. 12; Romans 15:19; Acts 2:22.

³ The order of Salvation.

⁴ The word for “ready” means that our inheritance is already complete and so waiting the believer’s arrival (as the meal is before the call to the marriage feast in Mt. 22:8).