

# Death, Taxes, and the 3-Dimensional Grace of God (Part 1)

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## Introduction

### The Text

- A. Remember, Paul has now returned to Jerusalem, and the Jews have all gathered against him—enraged because they see his faith in Jesus and his embrace of the Gentiles as a threat to them: to their law and their people and their place.
1. So they want him gone. Or more accurately, they want him dead.
  2. The Romans had to break up the initial mob-violence earlier in [Acts 21](#).
  3. Then, just before Paul is rushed off into the barracks, he's given a chance to address the crowd in [Acts 22](#).
  4. But this address is cut short. The moment he mentions God sending him to the Gentiles, the Jews have heard enough.
  5. And that's where we pick it up this morning in [v. 22](#) . . .

<sup>22</sup> Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live."<sup>23</sup> And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air,<sup>24</sup> the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, to find out why they were shouting against him like this.<sup>25</sup> But when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?"<sup>26</sup> When the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and said to him, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen."<sup>27</sup> So the tribune came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" And he said, "Yes."<sup>28</sup> The tribune answered, "I bought this citizenship for a large sum." Paul said, "But I am a citizen by birth."<sup>29</sup> So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

<sup>30</sup> But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.

<sup>1</sup> And looking intently at the council, Paul said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day."<sup>2</sup> And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.<sup>3</sup> Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?"<sup>4</sup> Those who stood by said, "Would you revile God's high priest?"<sup>5</sup> And Paul said, "I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"

<sup>6</sup> Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial."<sup>7</sup> And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.<sup>8</sup> For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.<sup>9</sup> Then a great clamor arose,

and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended sharply, "We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?"<sup>10</sup> And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.

<sup>11</sup>The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome." (Acts 22:22-23:11)

## Death and Taxes

- A. Last week, Joey preached what was, in my opinion, one of his best sermons.
  - 1. If you weren't here, I encourage you to go back and listen to it.
  - 2. If you were here, you likely remember the subject: suffering.
  
- B. Well, that's really going to be the dominant theme again for these next couple of weeks in Acts.
  - 1. It's not popular or crowd-pleasing to talk about this, I'm aware.
  - 2. But it's important nevertheless.
    - a. Because we're all going to face it in one way or another.
    - b. Some of us are in the thick of it right now.
  
- C. We all likely are familiar with that famous statement Benjamin Franklin made in a letter he wrote back in 1789: "Our new Constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."
  - 1. He's saying: "I love what we've got going here in America. It looks great. But we all know empires rise and fall. Things change. Only two things remain constant: death and taxes."
  - 2. And here's why I bring this up now: both of these two certain things stink! We don't want them, but still they're coming.
    - a. In other words: suffering is inevitable. It's one of the only certainties in this life.
    - b. You're either coming out of hardship or heading into hardship, but you can't avoid hardship.
      - i. We don't want it to be true, but we can't deny that it is.
  
- D. So, with my sermons the next two weeks, I just simply want to ask: What do we do about it? How do we get through it?

## Opening Observations

- A. Before I really get going with my answer to that, let me first make a couple of opening observations regarding the text we have before us and Paul's relationship with the suffering here . . .

### Observation #1: He's Not Doing Anything to Deserve It

- A. Now, of course, I realize, Paul, like us, is a sinner. And, because of that, he deserves God's judgment, full stop.

1. But, I want you to see how, at least circumstantially, in the more immediate context here, he's not done anything wrong.
  - a. I want to make this clear up front, because I think this is, at least for me, the thing that would make the suffering depicted in our text here so troubling, so hard to swallow.
  
- B. It's one thing if Paul had turned on God. He was living in sin, he was chasing after his own thing, running contrary to God's will and way.
  1. Okay fine. Then we'd expect things might go bad for him. He'd get some discipline or something.
  
- C. But when you're following God with all your heart? When you're serving him and others, laying your own ambitions down? When you've made it your whole life's mission now to tell others about him?
  1. This is why he says, as we saw, in [Acts 23:1](#): "[Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.](#)"
  2. Can you say that? "I'm following him with my whole heart, there's no division here. I'm not holding back. I'm all in."
    - a. And then this is what he gets?! Rejected? Falsely accused? Beat up? Death threats? Heavy chains and prison bars?
  
- D. Do you remember why they even found him in the temple in the first place? What was he doing there?
  1. He wasn't trying to upset the Jews.
  2. He was trying to serve them.
    - a. James and the elders of the church in Jerusalem had said: "Hey, these Jewish Christians are worried about you, a little suspicious of you and what you stand for. Go show that you're not opposed to your Jewish heritage and tradition by helping these other brothers in the temple with the vows they're taking" (cf. [Acts 21:20-28](#)).
    - b. That's why he's there. He was trying to obey, to submit, to care for his Jewish kinsmen, putting his own freedom aside to serve them.
      - i. And yet, again, this is what he gets?
  3. That's troubling. That's hard to swallow.
  
- E. It's like in the Psalms, right?
  1. Sometimes the guy is walking with God and he's filled with joy because of all this blessing and things.
  2. But other times he's trying to do his best and things just get worse.

- a. So Ps. 39: “<sup>1</sup> I said, ‘I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence.’<sup>2</sup> I was mute and silent; I held my peace to no avail, and my distress grew worse” (vv. 1-2).
- b. And Ps. 44: “<sup>17</sup> All this has come upon us, though we have not forgotten you, and we have not been false to your covenant.<sup>18</sup> Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way;<sup>19</sup> yet you have broken us in the place of jackals and covered us with the shadow of death” (vv. 17-19).
- c. And Ps. 73: “<sup>13</sup> All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.<sup>14</sup> For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning” (vv. 13-14).
  - i. I’m trying to do good and it just gets harder.

F. Do you ever feel like that?

## Observation #2: He’s Not Going Out of His Way to Pursue It

A. This is going to get at the other side of the coin.

- 1. There are some of us who think that if we follow Jesus it means we’ll never suffer, we shouldn’t suffer.
- 2. But there are others of us who may think that suffering is, in fact, how you know you’re truly following Jesus.
  - a. Now, certainly, biblically, there is truth to this.
  - b. But people can take it too far.

B. They can start to, not just accept suffering when it comes, they look for it, they want it. This is where you get into Christian asceticism and things like that. Where I’m looking to bring suffering on myself.

- 1. After all, didn’t Jesus say: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24).
- 2. Didn’t he say: “<sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad . . .” (Matt. 5:11-12).
- 3. Didn’t he say: “[Y]ou will be hated by all for my name’s sake” (Matt. 10:22).
  - a. So we say: “Okay, if I want to know I’m right with Jesus I’ve got to make sure I’m hated by the world. I’ve got to suffer. So I’ll go get it.”

C. If I’m honest, I’ve had friends that, in my opinion, have pursued this sort of thing in an unhealthy way. It scratched an itch deep in their soul. They felt radical for Christ or something.

- 1. They’d put themselves in situations that in my opinion were unwise and unnecessarily hostile, where if they started preaching about Jesus on the street corner they were sure to get yelled at or worse.
  - a. They would stir a crowd and folks would get mad.
  - b. And they’d feel good.

D. But, listen, this is not Paul's approach at all. Though he suffers and suffers a lot, he does not look for it. It's not a goal he has: to get beaten for Jesus. No!

1. That's why, for example, in [1 Tim. 2](#), he calls the church to pray "for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life" (v. 2).

a. Man, it sure seems like Paul gets in trouble, things get rowdy, everywhere he goes. The authorities, everyone's against him. He's got the opposite of this.

i. That may be the case. But that's not what he pursues, that's not what he prays for.

ii. He prays that he might lead "a peaceful and quiet life" not a terribly painful and persecuted one. Make no mistake: he takes it when God gives it to him—but he's not praying for it.

2. Or later in [Acts 26](#), when he's testifying before King Agrippa, what does he say: "I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am [a Christian]—except for these chains" (v. 29).

a. Paul does not desire that others might suffer as he has.

b. But he does call them to accept it, and even rejoice, if God should will it for them.

E. But then it's also right here in our text. Did you notice? These Romans are about to get serious with Paul.

1. The chief officer tried to get to the bottom of the commotion by asking the crowd. That didn't work ([Acts 21:33-34](#)).

2. Now he's prepared to try another route. Torture. Scourging. Look at [Acts 22:24](#): "[T]he tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, to find out why they were shouting against him like this."

a. This was a terrifying prospect. They would take a wooden handle and attach to it leather straps with pieces of bone and metal tied to the ends of them. And they would go after your bare back with it.

i. It could kill you. It very well may cripple you.

ii. But they would get information out of you.

F. But how does Paul respond? [V. 25](#): "But when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, 'Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?'"

1. I love that! He waits for the last possible second, just to build up the dramatic tension it would seem, and then he lays down his trump card as it were. "You can't do this to a Roman citizen. You know as well as I do, Roman law forbids flogging a Roman citizen without a proper hearing or formal sentence, and you don't have either of those."

- a. They didn't realize he was a citizen.
- G. He shared this with them, perhaps for various reasons, but one of them seems to be: so that he didn't get torn to shreds.
- 1. Because he's not just pursuing suffering for suffering's sake.
  - 2. He's willing and submitted to God should it come, but he's not looking to suffer unnecessarily.
    - a. Just because it's inevitable doesn't mean it's desirable.
    - b. Just because God can turn it for good doesn't mean it's good in itself.
      - i. It's still hard and hurts.
      - ii. And it's okay to feel that, to not want that, to pray against it.

### 3-Dimensional Grace

- A. Nevertheless, as I said at the beginning, still it's going to come, isn't it?
- 1. For Paul, okay, he got out of this scourging, but he's far from done with the suffering, right? It still comes for him.
  - 2. And it's still coming for us.
- B. So back to that original question: What do we do about it? How do we get through it? How does Paul get through it?
- 1. Well, to put it simply: grace.
  - 2. To put it more completely: 3-Dimensional Grace.
    - a. Grace is coming at Paul here from all directions, from all sides, because of Jesus. There is (1) Past Grace; (2) Future Grace; and (3) Present Grace.
      - i. We'll look at the first two this morning.
      - ii. And, God willing, we'll circle back to look at the third one next time.

## Dimension #1: Past Grace

### Remember!

- A. How do you get through the trial when it comes?
- 1. Some of you right now, you're so rung up with pain, you're disoriented in your distress, you don't even know what to do, where to turn.
    - a. Well, this idea of past grace gently reminds you to, in a word: remember.
- B. It seems to me there's a sort of spiritual amnesia that so often characterizes the children of God.

1. When hardship comes, it's like we can't even remember God's previous goodness to us.
  2. We just know: it doesn't seem like he's here right now. Whatever he did for us in the past, that's in the past. "Great, he got me through then, but how does that help me now?"
    - a. Well, it helps a great deal actually.
- C. This is where we brush up against theology proper, or the doctrine of God—his person, his glory, his attributes.
1. You see, the Bible reveals him to be eternally consistent, immutable in his character and purposes.
  2. He's not shifting or changing the way you and I would according to his moods.
  3. He is, as the Scriptures put it, "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).
    - a. And what that means is: who he was for you in the past is who he still is for you in the present and who will be for you on into the future.
    - b. In other words: our present and future confidence is built on his past faithfulness.
- D. This is why all throughout the Scriptures we hear God calling his people to remember past grace as a way of encouraging them in present struggle:
1. So Deut. 7:17-19. Moses is preparing Israel to enter the Promised Land under Joshua and he says this: " <sup>17</sup> If you say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I. How can I dispossess them?' <sup>18</sup> you shall not be afraid of them but you shall remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, <sup>19</sup> the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So will the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid."
    - a. Who he was is still who he is and who he will be. Past faithfulness . . . present and future confidence.
  2. Or what about the example of the Psalmist in Ps. 77: " <sup>1</sup> I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. <sup>2</sup> In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord . . . <sup>7</sup> 'Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? <sup>8</sup> Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? <sup>9</sup> Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?' Selah
 

<sup>10</sup> Then I said, 'I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.' <sup>11</sup> I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. <sup>12</sup> I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. <sup>13</sup> Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? <sup>14</sup> You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples. <sup>15</sup> You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah" (vv. 1-2, 7-15).

    - a. What is the turning point for him? Remembrance! "When I don't see you in the present, I look for you in the past."

3. Perhaps the greatest example of all is what Jesus calls the church to do time and again when they come together for worship. The Lord's Supper. Communion. The bread and cup—symbolizing his body broken and his blood poured out for us on that cross.
  - a. He says: "Listen, I know you'll be prone to forget what I've done for you there. You'll be prone to question my commitment, my love, my presence. So here's what I want you to do: I want you to take these elements and I want you to '[d]o this in remembrance of me' (Luke 22:19)."

E. It's past grace. And it helps in present struggle.

## Paul's Testimony

- A. You say, "Oh this is well and good, but where are you getting this for Paul? Where are you finding this in our text?"
  1. Well, to be fair, I am getting this from what came just before, just prior to the boundary-line of our text here.
  2. After all, do you recall what Paul was just doing? We spent all of last time on it.
    - a. He was sharing with these Jewish brothers his testimony, his story of conversion—the way Jesus got ahold of his life with his grace (Acts 22:1-21).
- B. You know, last time, I talked about how we really need to spend time tracing out our story, outlining our story, remembering our story, because it will help us share the gospel with others.
  1. But now I'm trying to say you also need to that so you can more effectively share the gospel with yourself.
    - a. You've got amnesia. You're prone to forget.
- C. Paul never forgot. Paul never got over it.
  1. Remember, over twenty years had passed from the real-time events of his conversion (Acts 9) and his sharing of it in Acts 22.
  2. And yet by the way he shares it, you would think it was something that just happened to him yesterday. Why?
    - a. Because he remembers, because he's never gotten over it.
    - b. Past grace still moves him, still encourages him!
- D. We get indications of this from him all over his epistles, that his story, his conversion is something that's never far from his mind.
  1. He remembers who he was in and of himself and who would still be if left to himself.
  2. Oh but he also remembers, thereby, who Jesus has been for him, and who he still is and will be for him forevermore!

- a. So in Eph. 3, it's clear he remembers past grace: “<sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.<sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (vv. 7-8).
  - b. In 1 Cor. 15, it's clear he remembers past grace: “<sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.<sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.<sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am . . .” (vv. 7-10).
  - c. In 1 Tim. 1, it's clear he remembers past grace: “<sup>12</sup> I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,<sup>13</sup> though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,<sup>14</sup> and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (vv. 12-14).
- 3. Don't you see? He never forgot who he was in himself and the terrible road he was on.
  - 4. But he also never forgot how Jesus confronted him on that road, swept him up off it in his grace, and set him on a new course entirely.
- E. So you've got to know your story. You've got to be able to trace his grace—not just so you can share it with others, but so you can remember it yourself when things around seem bleak.
- 1. Maybe for some of you the story starts today. Jesus has been pursuing you. You've been kicking and screaming, running and hiding. Maybe today is the day of salvation. Maybe today is your testimony. May this is the day grace gets ahold!

## Dimension #2: Future Grace

### “The Hope and the Resurrection”

- A. But there's another dimension of God's grace here—and it's equally critical if we are going to get through the inevitable hardships we'll face.
- 1. On the one hand, as we've seen, sometimes when suffering comes you get so caught up in the present hurt that you go blind to the past.
  - 2. But now, on the other hand, I think we'd all admit, another thing that can happen is you go blind to the future.
    - a. You lose hope. Everything goes dark. You're not looking forward to tomorrow. You're dreading it.
    - b. You've lost sight of how God says the story's going to end.

- i. But, you see, Paul hasn't lost sight of this. And that's part of the way he's kept through this nasty business with everyone around him wanting to kill him. He knows how the story's going to end.

(1) It's future grace.

B. This comes out in particular with what he says there before the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin.

- 1. After a somewhat awkward altercation with the high priest in [Acts 23:1-5](#), we read this in [v. 6](#): "Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, 'Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.'"

C. Now, this certainly is a shrewd move on his part intentionally designed, it would seem, to divide the room.

- 1. Luke makes sure we see that with his commentary about Sadducees and Pharisees—how the one didn't believe in the resurrection and the other did ([v. 8](#)).
  - a. It's a way of dividing and conquering, we might say, getting them to fight amongst themselves instead of just with him.

D. But it's more than just a shrewd move here. It's also the truth.

- 1. The resurrection—not just of God's people in general, but of Jesus in particular—is the essence of the matter. This is why he's on trial. This is the big issue.
  - a. It is the resurrection of Jesus that's transformed him and his understanding of the Law and the people of Israel and the temple and everything.

E. And it's the resurrection of Jesus that gives him an unshakeable hope in the face of such terrible suffering.

- 1. "I know how the story is going to end, because I know the one who has me. He's already overcome death. He's faced the worst of it and gotten the best of it. He's risen. He's alive. And, therefore, so is my hope."
  - a. As Peter puts it in [1 Pet. 1:3-6](#): "<sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,<sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.<sup>6</sup> In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials . . . ."
- 2. Don't you see? There is no naïve triumphalism in the Christian life.
  - a. There will be trials. You are going to suffer. It's going to hurt.

- b. But do you know what else? It's also going to be okay.
    - i. More than okay, it's going to be good!
- F. What if it wasn't just death and taxes that we could be certain about? What if we could also be certain of the resurrection of Jesus and, in him, our own resurrection to glory as well?
- 1. That changes the whole equation doesn't it?
    - a. Yes, suffering is inevitable.
    - b. But so is our ultimate victory in Christ!

## Working Backwards (and Forwards)

- A. Dane Ortlund, in his wonderful book *Gentle and Lowly*, writes the following: “Those in union with [Christ] are promised that all the haunted brokenness that infects everything—every relationship, every conversation, every family, every email, . . . every job, every vacation—everything—will one day be rewound and reversed. The more darkness and pain we experience in this life, the more resplendence and relief in the next. As a character says in C.S. Lewis’ *The Great Divorce*, reflecting biblical teaching: ‘That is what mortals misunderstand. They say of some temporal suffering, ‘No future bliss can make up for it,’ not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory” (211).
- 1. Lewis says future glory is going to work back and reinterpret all of your previous agony, you’ll see it differently.
  - 2. Paul, in *2 Cor. 4:17*, puts it the other way around when he writes: “this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison . . .”
    - a. For Lewis, glory works backward and reinterprets the agony.
    - b. For Paul, agony works forward and prepares us for glory.
    - c. Both are getting at the same basic idea: hardship here and now will only serve to enhance our joy there and forever!
- B. In fact, I would dare say (as Ortlund himself clearly implies): the further the pendulum swings in the direction of sorrow, the further it will swing back towards joy in the resurrection.
- 1. Think about it. Isn't this true to our experience? The harder the trial is, the greater the joy and relief when it's overcome, when things are resolved.
- C. Consider the stories we tell, the movies we watch. What is it that makes the *Lord of the Rings* such an epic adventure? It's the travail of the journey.
- 1. If Bilbo found the ring of power and all Frodo needed to do with it was walk down the street to the local blacksmith and have him melt it down to nothing, well, that may be a relatively happy ending, but there's no enthrallment, there's no jubilation.

- a. No one would go see that movie. They certainly wouldn't sit through three four-hour sessions of it! It would be boring. It was too easy.
2. The joy experienced at the end of the story, when the ring is finally dropped into the magma of Mordor and Sauron is outmatched at last—it comes because of how arduous, even how painful, the journey was to get there.
- a. It's the agony of the journey that enhances the joy.
  - b. It's the depths of the valley that make the view from the peak that much more spectacular.
  - c. It's the dark night that makes the morning sun such a welcome sight.
  - d. Don't you see? The final triumph wraps back around and reinterprets the whole story. All that ends well is well!
    - i. Now we can sit around in our little hobbit holes and laugh about it over a pint and a smoke. We can tell our tales of adventure with a glimmer in our eye.
- (1) Because it ended well.
- D. And so it will be for the children of God—on the last day, in [“the resurrection of the dead . . .”](#) Because of Jesus. It's our hope. It's future grace.
- 1. It keeps Paul going in present distress.
  - 2. And it can keep us going as well.
- E. Some of you are looking at your situation right now and you're saying: “I just don't see how that's going to happen. I don't see how God could bring anything good from this.”
- 1. Do you know what? That's precisely what all the disciples were saying around the cross on that Friday some 2000 years ago.
    - a. But do you want to know what we call that Friday now?
      - i. Not Terrible Friday.
      - ii. Not Miserable Friday.
      - iii. Not Wretched Friday.
      - iv. We call it Good Friday.
    - b. Why? Because Jesus' resurrection, the glorious end of his story, wrapped back around and reinterpreted that day on the cross for us.
      - i. It's not terrible . . . it's amazing!
      - ii. I thought it was the day I lost my song . . . now it's all I sing about!