

1:1* ¶ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen

2* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.3* ¶ 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,

4* to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,5* who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.6* ¶ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7* so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;8* and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9* obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Our text begins with vs. 4 this morning.

4* to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you

It is reminding those early believers and us that there is nothing arbitrary about God's loving and choosing a people for Himself out of all the peoples in the world throughout the course of redemptive history.

The condition of all believers at any time in redemptive history is the same. They and we are residing in a temporal place until Jesus consummates His kingdom. We are aliens because God loved us by knowing us in a unique way apart from His love for all other created beings. He loved us graciously unto our salvation by His sanctifying work of the Spirit to bring us to obedience in Jesus Christ through His blood. We are attended with multiplied grace and peace because of who we are in Christ as the adopted ones of God. This salvation causes us to bless the name of God and to worship Him with all our love because we are born from above, we are regenerated by a work of a Sovereign God that gives us a living hope that is absolute and certain and cannot in any be compromised for us or by us because the living hope is Christ Himself. Christ who is our perfect sacrifice, our perfect high priest the Christ who is our New Covenant personified unto the glory of God.

We are alive in Him and therefore our hope is living in Him, and with Him and because of Him. In Him we see the beauty of our sanctification, our holiness, and in Him it is made complete. In Christ and Christ alone our souls find our rest and retreat for He

is our true Sabbath rest. It is because of Christ that we no longer work to merit a salvation for ourselves because it is and always has been impossible to do so.

He is the beautiful Savior who is more than I ever imagined He could be. He is the king of my heart never to leave, me never to part. In the beauty of His righteousness my soul is made complete and in the beauty of His presence my soul knows joy and peace.

The king of love my Shepherd is whose goodness faileth never. I nothing lack if I am His and He is mine forever. Because He is ours forever we know that we are meant: **4* to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you**

Now notice in this verse that heaven is not what the inheritance is. It is not heaven that is imperishable (although it never will perish), it is not heaven that will not fade away (although it will not fade away).

There is an inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us and what is it? It is not specifically some kind of rewards as some might teach. We must look to verse five for Peter's answer to our question:

5* who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The imperishable and unfading inheritance is our salvation in its final state, in our glorified state. The inheritance is that gracious provision in Christ that is secured and sealed and kept and preserved for us by the power of God and God alone. Our salvation is protected by the power of God and nothing in the created universe can remove us from who what and where we are in Christ.

Regardless of how informed we are by Scripture as to what our salvation is, there is an aspect of it that is only revealed in the last time. There is the experiential knowledge, at that revealing that we do not possess in the present. That knowledge is the fact that we will no longer be capable of disobeying Christ. We will no longer desire to question His authority in any matter. As much as we may really want to live like that today we cannot. We are limited in these bodies. We are still tempted and we still sin. It is a given. We cannot reach sinless perfection in this stage of our salvation but we will. On the one hand we are already perfectly sinless in Christ yet we live here and now in

the flesh and we will sin. Peter knew this. But we have the living hope, we have the living Christ we have the keeping power of God that guarantees us that we will see the revelation of the final stage of our salvation when Jesus consummates His kingdom.

This is a reminder from Paul about the same thing:

28* And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.29* ¶ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;30* and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.31* ¶ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?32* He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

At the revelation of the last time, concerning our salvation, we will know ourselves to be conformed to the image of His Son, our Christ. We have the absolute of assurance of Scripture and the teaching of the Holy Spirit that we will be with Christ in the completeness of our salvation.

Peter has given such encouragement to these believers and it should be nothing but great encouragement for us. Peter is now going to remind them again that persecution is waiting for them. However persecution or any other trial is not a reason to lose sight of the living hope of our Savior.

6* ¶ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

It is a terribly sad and sorry thing when Christians lose sight of what is really important. It is so sad because of all the promises that God has contained for us in his Word and in the comfort of his Holy Spirit residing in us as the temple of God, corporately and individually.

How is it that so many so called Christians have no real joy, or peace or ability to suffer through things that are difficult when the Scripture says we have the God enabled ability to do so and that these difficult times are a guaranteed part of living as aliens on this terrestrial ball? How shameful it is that there are so called teachers of God's Word who claim that all difficulty is from the Devil and if we are not sweating drops of joy and smelling like we are happy all the time then we have a problem with God.

The reason is that there is so little understanding of what it really means to be a Christian. So much of what is offered to people as the Christ way is void of the cost and demands of discipleship. The earnest truths that Jesus made clear on the Sermon on the Mount as to what the norms of the Christian life are and what He was laying down as a foundation as a serious commitment to discipleship is lost in most of what is called evangelicalism today.

But this was not so for Peter. He said greatly rejoice even when the trials are upon you. In the midst of trials what better thing is there to do than first rest in the promises and person of Christ. The intensity or difficulty of the trial is not what is the most important thing. Of course we do not just capitulate to our trial. We do not just throw up our hands and say God be praised and just sit and suffer (although that could be a possibility in certain circumstances) Normally, we are to persevere through it doing and facing up to what we must. But through it all we must never forget that we are born again to a living hope. Even if the trial means our death, we will be alive, forever with Christ. What is wrong with that?

Everybody tawkin bout heaven and nobody wantin to die!! – some truth from an old spiritual.

A number of years ago there was a Chinese pastor who was thrown into prison for preaching in an unregistered house church. This was not the first time and his jailers were determined to break him. He was placed among some very hard core criminal elements. His health was a bit frail. Anytime he tried to find a small space to occupy where he could just meditate on the beauty of Christ for comfort, it seemed that he was disturbed and forced to move, to the place where he could not do this. So he did his best to try to sing and pray out loud. Of course this made things worse. He attempted to speak the Scriptures to some, but this too was a failure. Not only was it a seeming failure but the guards were distraught over his constant attempts to worship God as a living sacrifice.

So the guards decided to give him a very particular work detail. The job assignment was to clean the latrines. In this prison the latrines were beneath the floor

of the cells. It was a small crawl space anywhere you could not stand completely erect. It would take a few hours to clean them properly every day. You entered through a covered hole in the cell floor. It was dark, either hot or cold depending on the season and smelled like a latrine. He was not given any special clothing, just brooms and buckets to sweep the tunnel clean to the drains.

The pastor tended to his latrine duty every day that he was assigned. The guards were surprised, disappointed and even angry when after each day's work, as exhausting as it was, the pastor seemed to have more vitality, even though tired and a look of calm on his face each day. This was too much for some of the guards who had to ask him why he was the way he was.

His first response was to thank them. Of course, they laughed and thought it ridiculous. But with a serious yet friendly look on his face, the pastor once again thanked them. When they asked him he responded by telling them that the hours spent in the latrine were the best hours of the day for him. He told them that down in the latrine it was quiet beneath the floor. He could hear no one and no one but God could hear him. He could sing hymns as long and as loud as he wanted to. He could pray out loud as long and as loud as he wanted to. He explained to them that even as they thought evil in what they were doing, God used it for good.

After some time the pastor was released and it is told that a few of the guards were genuinely converted and became members of the unofficial church.

What latrine have you been assigned to recently? Where can you see that the trial you were going through was being used for the glory of God?

6* ¶ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

For a little while, compared to eternity, we will go through various trials if God deems it necessary. Paul wrote:

2 Cor. 4:7* But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; **8*** ¶ we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; **9*** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; **10*** always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. **11*** For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. **12*** So death works in us, but

life in you.^{13*} But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak,^{14*} knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.^{15*} For all things *are* for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.^{16*} Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.^{17*} For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,^{18*} while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.^{5:1*} ¶ For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

This is to be the mature, normative experience of believers in Christ.

The purpose of these trials is very clear:

^{7*} so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

This is possibly the only defined reward that there is that concerns believers. The "crowns" that people speak of are all indicative of our salvation, our eternal life and that is a gift from God. But here we see that a result of a proven faith as gold tried in the refiners fire results in praise and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, at the time of our inheritance. But this is part of the inheritance of our final and full salvation if we see this correctly. And the inheritance is what it is because of Christ not because of what I have done. Christ receives all glory, praise and honor and in Him it is something that I will know.

The one thing we can be sure of is that PRAISE will be given to believers when they stand before the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ. Beyond PRAISE, we can be sure of nothing else. We will have come through the test, but again this is only possible because of what Christ did for us and how God perseveres with us. None of our works are perfect. They are all tainted with sin.

"Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his PRAISE from God." 1 Corinthians 4:5 (NIV)

If anything, this praise is received only because I have proven to be an incurable lover of God because of His grace and as such the praise that I receive only purposes more glory for Christ my Lord.

Now let me summarize what I have just said with a quote from John Piper:

“1) In verses 3-5 the point is that the inheritance is out there waiting for us imperishable and unfading, and that we are being kept for it, so that no matter what distresses we face we can look beyond them to the sure future that is coming and take heart. It is going to be worth it all.

2) In verses 6-7 the point is different: namely, that the distresses themselves have a part in getting us ready to enjoy the inheritance to the fullest possible measure. We don't just look beyond the distresses to the sure hope; we look at God's design in the distresses--and see how God is working the distresses together for our good.

So Christianity is a life of tremendous joy first because we have a great and fail-safe future to look forward to beyond all our distresses, AND second because God has a design to increase our joy in that future by means of all our distresses.”

Brother John is correct and this is too often overlooked by us.

We fail to have a proper view of God. We do not have a God-entranced view in our lives. A view that says God is absolutely sovereign in all things even the distasteful and the unpleasant things where I have made miserable choices and am held accountable and even when it seems I have had no choices, like being forced to clean a latrine. But God has a purpose in everything and we are to have our hearts fixed on the beauty of our blessed hope, the one to who is our living hope. This is not pie in the sky can't wait to get to heaven nonsense. This is the real viable hope that we have that causes us to endure all things until the end. Jesus said he who endures to the end will enter the kingdom of heaven or will be really saved. Where there is no real endurance there is no salvation. Every ounce of what it takes to endure comes from Christ who infuses me with strength to do all things unto the glory of God.

This is not contradictory to our experience. The true disciple of Christ when confronted with sin that does not glorify God or shows a lack of His strength, repents and seeks forgiveness from God as the genuine God lover pursues hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

This is why Peter continues with this idea:

8* and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

Even though we have not seen him we love Him. Why.

He knew us loved and us before we ever knew Him.

He purposed a life for us with trials and blessing beyond our imagination in Christ Jesus. We are no longer dead in our trespasses and sins but we are born again, regenerated unto to a living hope having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. The fullness of the God head in three persons has been incredibly involved in our lives and will be forever.

By the grace of God we can believe that this hope and all the promises of God that are yea and nay in Christ will come to pass and so if we are not greatly rejoicing as a normative expression of our salvation, regardless of our circumstance, then it may be that we will not be standing in front of Jesus receiving praise but rather condemnation on the final day. For that kind of person it will be the final day of rejection not reception.

We are not talking about perfection. Peter failed Jesus even after the cross. But, the course of his life was fixed on the living hope, on Christ his Lord and the overall pattern of Peter's life was a life of:

8* and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory

Peter saw Him. He saw Him before the cross, after the cross and in a vision of Christ's heavenly glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. He saw Him but he still had to live like any other believer and he was in the path of the persecution that was coming and he died a martyr's death.

8* and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory

Can we say the same thing?