

OUR HEAVENLY INHERITANCE

1 PETER 1:3-9

Good morning! If you need a bible..... a couple of months ago. I had been doing my devotional time one morning and while reading this passage and the Lord impressed on me that this would be a message of great encouragement. A couple of weeks later Pastor Brent told us that he was going to be away and needed someone to speak. It is always a blessing and an honor for me to be able to speak here at Riverside and I trust and pray that you will be blessed by the word of God today. We will be looking today at 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 3-9.

Let's stand for the reading of God's word.

1 Peter 1:3-9

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.

PRAY

Now our passage this morning begins at vs 3 but I want to give a quick look at the setting in which this letter is being written. Peter is writing here to the believers who had been scattered to the regions of what is now Turkey. There was such immense persecution of Christians under the rule of Nero that the believers fled to regions where they could be safer, and this persecution was one of the tools that God used to continue to spread the gospel message to the further reaches of the

world. I never cease to be amazed at the number of times we can point to the verse **Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.** It truly was in many instances that God used the persecution of believers to spread the news of the gospel to further reaches of the world.

Peter refers to the believers here as “pilgrims.” This is from a Greek word “**parepidémos**” which means stranger or sojourner. It is the combination of the two Greek words “para” meaning alongside and “epidemeo” meaning alien. So, an alien alongside, or even better, a resident foreigner. These believers are truly those that did not belong to the area that they now lived, they were residents yes but also complete foreigners, but the meaning is far deeper than just a physical displacement. It is really speaking of the fact that as believers, those that are “in Christ” have their citizenship transferred from earth to heaven. This is true of all who have put their faith and trust in the Lord. We, along with the believers of the first church, now have a citizenship that says our home is heaven. So, we are literally sojourners (foreigners) – we are a people "passing through" but still with personal relationship with the people in that locale. Oh our passing might take 70, 80 or more years but we are still only here temporarily. Only a mist in the wind when it compares with the eternity in heaven with our precious Savior and King.

The writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter 11, that those men and women of faith whose lives were recorded for us in the old testament, he declared that they too were, by faith, pilgrims.

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Hebrews 11:13-16

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

This brings us into the passage that we want to look at this morning. As we look into the wonders of just what that citizenship will afford for us. Verse 3 begins with the words “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Peter’s first thought to encourage those to whom he is writing is to give praise and honor to God. An interesting thing here is that the word blessed is from the Greek word **eulogétos** and is where we get our English word eulogy, and we know that when someone gives a eulogy at a memorial, they generally say all the best things about the one that has passed away and make sure that everyone knows just how special and loved that person was. Quite often they say things after the person is dead that they should have told them while they were alive. In any case Peter is eulogizing or praising our heavenly Father for His abundant mercy.

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All His goodness to us begins with mercy. “No other attribute could have helped us had mercy been refused. As we are by nature, justice condemns us, holiness frowns upon us, power crushes us, truth confirms the threatening of the law, and wrath fulfils it. It is from the mercy of our God that all our hopes begin.” (Spurgeon)

This is the mercy that saved us from the righteous judgment of sin. Remember that the definition of mercy is NOT getting what we deserve. We deserve judgment and death as a penalty for the sin in our lives, but Jesus came in human skin and took that penalty in our place. He paid the price of redemption for us.

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Isaiah 53:4-6

4 Surely, He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.

Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

5 But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, everyone, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

But as the Phil Wickham song says, “But that wasn’t the end, let me tell you what happened next” Peter goes on to say that we have been begotten again to a new and

living hope by the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ from the dead. You see Jesus didn't stay in that grave. He was resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit and He conquered death and hell and because of that fact and that fact alone, we who have put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, we have been begotten or born again into a life not overshadowed by fear and death but to a new and living hope that we will one day be seated in the heavenlies with Him. This idea of being begotten again is described so well in – SLIDE- **2 Corinthians 5:17 – Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.** And we read in **Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.** We begin a life that we no longer live on our own strength, but we are empowered by the Holy Spirit who now lives within us. Now that is **grace** in action. While mercy is not getting what we deserve, grace is getting what we do not deserve. Praise the Lord for His ultimate grace and mercy in our lives.

And this living hope is not the kind of hope like we have when we say things like; I sure hope it's going to be a nice day. Or I sure hope I get what I asked for for my birthday. No, the word hope here means a "confident expectation of what is certain." This is hope that is grounded in nothing less than the words of Jesus Himself.

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John 11:25,26

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

John 14:1-3

1"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

John 14:19

19“A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.

So, you see, we have the absolute confident expectation that what Jesus said, He will do and that our hope is in Him and nothing else. And because God is so amazingly gracious, He doesn't even leave our ability to hope in Him up to our own strength, but we are told in Romans 15:13; May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Again, it is by the power of the Holy Spirit living within us that we can move forward toward the goal and the ultimate realization of that living hope. This hope is referred to as living because it is based on the living resurrected Christ. Our assurance of this hope is as sure as the fact that Jesus is alive.

John Walvoord says that “the believers hope is sure, certain and real, as opposed to the deceptive, empty and false hope that the world offers.”

Now Peter can't tell us just what our inheritance is exactly because I don't believe that human words could describe it and our human minds could not comprehend the grandeur of it. But what he can tell us is, that it is incorruptible, it is completely pure and undefiled, and it does not fade away. You know, I don't know about you, but when I try to conjure up pictures in my mind about the things that we will see when we get to heaven, even some of those things that are described for us, my brain can't do it. I simply have nothing to relate or compare it to. When I am in worship and praise to God in song or in prayer, I sometimes try to picture standing before the throne of God as it is described in Revelation 4 and I know that I fail miserably in what my limited understanding can imagine.

We are told that this inheritance is reserved in heaven for every one of us who are “kept” by the power of God through faith for salvation to be revealed in the last time. The word kept here is really a military term that means “to guard” as though there is a sentinel keeping watch. Not only to keep watch but the word means to actively display whatever defensive and offensive means are necessary to guard. This is the function and the responsibility of the Holy Spirit within us. The bible

says that the Holy Spirit is our guarantee that we make it to our final destination, to the home of our citizenship and the place of our inheritance.

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2 Corinthians 1:21,22

21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, 22 who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Ephesians 1:13,14

13 In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

So, we can see that Peter is encouraging the believers who have been undergoing persecution, who have been forced to flee to areas that they are not familiar with and are feeling unprepared, alone and overwhelmed. He is encouraging them that they are not alone and reminding them that because of the grace of God they can have peace in their current circumstances and that there is a future awaiting them that cannot be described. He says that “in this, you greatly rejoice.”

But I love that Peter doesn't just leave them without the knowledge that he understands that they are going through trials. He doesn't just say yes, I know that times are tough, but you have great things coming so buck up and put a smile on your face and leave it at that. No, Peter, who was very acquainted with trials and persecutions, wanted them to understand that the trials themselves would ultimately help them in their Christian walk.

Peter says, “**In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials.** Peter acknowledges that they are indeed going through trials, and he understands that they are grieved. The word here means that it is a deep emotional pain or severe sorrow. He doesn't try to downplay the severity of the trial, but he balances it with the words “for a little while.” He says that the pain, although intense, is short term, brief and will not last. Especially

in comparison to the eternity that we will spend with Jesus. The apostle Paul tells us in **2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory.**

Peter goes on to say that not only is it for a short time, but that it is working something out in us that is for our benefit. He tells us that this trial we are experiencing is testing the genuineness of our faith. A faith that is not tested is a faith that is not proven. Guzik reminds us that – SLIDE - **Our faith isn't tested because God doesn't know how much or what kind of faith we have. It is tested because we often are ignorant of how much or what kind of faith we have. God's purpose in testing is to display the enduring quality of our faith. (Guzik)**

Whenever I am thinking about the testing of faith, I cannot help but to be reminded of an example I shall never forget. My wife's brother and his wife who had one child with no difficulty but then went several years to try to have another child. There had been multiple times when she would get pregnant only to lose the baby at some point in the pregnancy through miscarriage. Finally, she was able to go to full term and the baby was born over 8lbs and seemingly perfect, only to pass away a couple of days later due to unknown reasons that he never was able to breath on his own. I remember being at the funeral and seeing that little white coffin and seeing the pain on the faces of my brother-in-law and his wife. I remember that my brother-in-law said that he was told by a loving pastor that for some reason, God had entrusted them with this suffering and that they were not to waste it. I can tell you that they never have. They have been an encouragement to so many people in their lives who have gone through terrible suffering, and they are prayer warriors. I can tell you as well that they ended up having another boy and the two boys have grown, married, and have given them 7 grandchildren. God is so good.

Charles Spurgeon wrote:
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“Indeed, it is the honor of faith to be tried. Shall any man say, ‘I have faith, but I have never had to believe under difficulties? Who knows whether thou hast any faith? Shall a man say, ‘I have great faith in God, but I have never had to use it in anything more than the ordinary affairs of life, where I could probably have done

without it as well as with it'? Is this to the honor and praise of thy faith? Dost thou think that such a faith as this will bring any great glory to God, or bring to thee any great reward? If so, thou art mightily mistaken." (Spurgeon)

If our heavenly father who loves us beyond measure is allowing testing and trials in our lives, we can be assured that it is absolutely for our benefit. (Rom 8:28 again) Peter says that our faith is more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire. The same way that gold is purified by fire and heat, Peter says that our faith is tested and purified the same type of way. I love the example of the purification process of gold and how it so wonderfully pictures for us the way God works in us. The gold ore is put into a vessel that can withstand immense heat and it is brought to a molten or liquid condition. As this happens, because gold is so heavy, it sinks to the bottom and the impurities in the ore begin to float to the surface. The one doing the work will then skim off these impurities known as dross and discard them. This process continues until all the impurities have been removed and the way that he can tell when this is the case is that he puts his face over the top of the vessel and when he sees a clear reflection of his face in the gold, he knows the process is complete. You see that is what God does for us, as He puts us over the heat so to speak by the trials in our lives and He continues the process until He sees His reflection staring back at Him in us. It is then as we discover that our faith is genuine, that we praise, honor and glory at the fact that Jesus Christ has been revealed to us through that faith. And it is by faith that we believe because none of us has seen Him, yet Peter says you love Him. He says **Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.** God is so gracious, giving us that which we DO NOT deserve. When our salvation is complete, when we see Him and get to be with Him for eternity. That day is the day that is the end of our faith. Have you ever thought about that? That once we see Him, once we are with Him, we will no longer need faith.

Jesus truly is the author and the finisher of our faith. Who is the author? The writer or creator of the book, yes? And when the book of our life is done whether by death or by His coming to get us, that is the end or the finish of our need for faith. Jesus has written our life book, and He knows the end, and until we get to that ending, we walk or live it by faith.

If you are here or watching today and you are in the midst of a trial of some kind, whether it's sickness, loss, financial, persecution or anything that would cause you

to despair, please accept this message today as an encouragement and as a testimony to what God is perfecting in you as you lean into Him and trust Him for each day.

WORSHIP TEAM

And if you are here today or you are watching online or maybe even at some other time you are viewing this message, and you don't yet have the confidence or the understanding that I have been talking about. If you are feeling that you want to know this Jesus and to have the forgiveness of your sins and the assurance of an eternity in heaven with Him. That is the Holy Spirit working on your heart. He is prompting you to make a decision today that you will never regret. The bible says that today is the day of salvation. Don't wait another minute. If you want to do this right now just say a prayer something like this.....

If you have done this today, please come talk to someone and let us know or if you are not here in the building then send us an email and let us know. We want to be able to follow up with you.

PRAY