

An Incorruptible Inheritance – 1 Peter 1:3,4 – June 08 2007

We continue our study today in 1 Peter. Last week we saw a number of very important things as Peter begins his letter, which we know as a General Epistle. It is a General Epistle, because it is not addressed to a specific church, such as at Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus or Rome, but to group of Christians who were scattered because of persecution.

Listen again to what he says: 1 Peter 1:1,2 (READ). We see that Peter, whose name means the Rock, first tells them the authority with which he is writing this letter – that he is an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He was one of the original Apostles, chosen by Jesus himself. That is, he had been an eyewitness to the ministry, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Then we see that he tells his readers who he is writing to – those Christians of the dispersion who are in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, – that is, those who had to flee their home cities because of persecution.

But then we see, very importantly, that he reminds them of their special status – that they had been chosen by God. But he also told them that the whole Trinity was at work in their salvation.

As he continues, it is this great truth that causes him to praise God, as we continue in 1 Peter. Turn with me to 1 Peter 1:3-9 (READ). Here he begins to recite the blessings that those who had been elect according to the foreknowledge of God have.

He begins it all by praising God – *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...”* The blessings that God had given to His elect children causes Peter to praise God. He knows that they were God’s children because of what God had done! These pilgrims were such because God had chosen them, and as they trusted in Christ for their salvation, they had to flee. This is why Peter is writing to them.

Then he begins to tell them what God has done – *“who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”* It is only by the mercy of God that we have our salvation. As the Apostle Paul tells us in Titus 3:5: *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,”*

He then tells us that we have a *“living hope”* – Here *“living”* means that the believer’s hope is sure, it is certain, and it is real, as opposed to the deceptive, empty, false hope that the world offers. One someone says that they *“hope”* something will happen, it is a question, not a sure thing.

Our *“living hope”* is a sure thing and it is there because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our Savior is alive – we serve a living Savior. As I have said on other occasions – Mohammed is still dead. Buddha is still dead ... Joseph Smith and Brigham Young are all still dead. In fact, every so-called religious leader is still dead. Only Jesus Christ is alive.

And it is because he is alive that we have this *“living hope”*. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead means that God accepted his sacrifice for our sins. This is why the Apostle Paul summarizes the Gospel simply in 1

Corinthians 15:3,4: *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures...”*

This resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead means that we have a guaranteed inheritance – something waiting for us: *“to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”* Wow! That is a statement that should really cause us to stand up and take notice.

As Christians, because of the mercy of God and the living hope that we have, we have a place reserved in heaven for us. Talk about a guaranteed reservation – we have one and no credit card is necessary! To put it simply, the Christian never dies. Once we are born, and then born-again we are eternal creatures and we have a place in heaven reserved for us... a place that no one can take away.

Look at the words that Peter uses to describe what awaits us. First, we see that it is an inheritance, it is something that we, as Christians, have coming to us. As earthly children we sometimes inherit things from our parents. They leave us some of their earthly possessions, sometimes a house, and other material things, maybe even an insurance policy.

As God’s children, aside from all the blessings of our salvation – forgiveness of our sins, the privilege of worship and prayer, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and all the other blessings – we have something waiting for us – a guaranteed inheritance in heaven.

Notice that this inheritance is described in three ways. First, it is described as incorruptible. This means that it can never perish or decay. You want to talk about things that are guaranteed for life this is it – if you really think about, heaven is the only place that is guaranteed for life. It will never decay, it will never rot – it will indeed, last forever.

In 1 Corinthians 9, the Apostle Paul describes those who run a race for a “corruptible crown” – in other words, a temporary one that we will rot or decay. This is not true of heaven.

Second, we see that this inheritance is undefiled. This means that it is absolutely pure and that nothing impure, that is sinful, can ever enter it. It is a place of absolute perfection. That is why only the Christian can go there, because he has been washed clean by the blood of Christ. John, at the beginning of the Book of Revelation tells us this truth: Revelation 1:5: *“...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,”*

We say that a lot of things are perfect – but they really aren’t. Only heaven is pure and perfect. And it is filled with those who have been made perfect in Christ.

And third, we see that it is an inheritance that does not fade away. It is a metaphor for a flower that never loses its color or its scent. In fact, the word used in the original describes a type of flower – called “amaranths”, because they preserve their color and odor for a long time.

Again, lots of things are guaranteed not to fade of decay – but they eventually will. Only our inheritance, again, is guaranteed for life.

This is what is reserved in heaven for us. Our Savior, in the conclusion to the parable of the talents said this in Matthew 25:31-34: *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:’”*

My friends, as Christians, this is what we have waiting for us ... we have this guaranteed reservation.

But not only, as Peter goes on, he makes it clear that this inheritance that we will one day receive is kept by the power of God. Look at what he says in verse 5: *“who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* Those who have this living hope in Jesus are kept – the word means guarded – not by our own power, but by the power of God. The future benefits of our salvation are guarded by Almighty God Himself. What an awesome thought!

Again, we need to remember the context of 1 Peter – it is written to Christians who had to flee their homes because of persecution. But before he tells them to remain steadfast in their faith and to have joy in the midst of their suffering – he reminds them of all that they have received from God and what they have waiting for them.

But the interesting part, is that all that he has told the pilgrims of the dispersion, as they are described in verse 1, apply to us also. We are strangers or pilgrims in this world, we are just passing through. We too have been elect according to the foreknowledge of God ... the three persons of the Trinity are active in our salvation ... we have living hope because of the resurrection of Jesus from dead. And we have place reserved in heaven for us.

So, as the troubles and difficulties of life arise around us, as they most surely will, let us think on what God has done for us and the multitude of blessings that He has given us and as Peter so eloquently puts it: *“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, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*