

Lesson 2: The Believer's Eternal Inheritance (1:3-5)

“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, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

In the Greek language, the section of scripture flowing from verses 3 to 9 of our text is one long sentence. The translators have done the work of dividing this text up for us into a few sentences, so that the reading is a bit easier for us to process. My purpose in bringing that to your attention, is that you’ll understand Peter’s heart of praise here, as he begins to pour out from a heart that is overflowing in praise, and just keeps writing.

The first word that Peter writes as he begins this doxology (praise to God) is the word ‘Blessed’. We would do ourselves a favor to take note of the direction of Peter’s letter even at this point. He begins a letter to spiritually exiled believers, who are being persecuted for their faith in Christ, by blessing God. These brothers and sisters need encouragement, they need direction, they need to hear a word of truth in a world of falsehood. And there will be that word in this letter, but Peter addressed first things first. Though the day seem dark and lonely, there remains a God who has called, and graced, and upholds in His mighty hand, every single one that is His. Though persecution be here, perhaps even to the point of death today, He is still with us, our position before Him is still secure, and He is always worthy of our adoration.

Peter’s aim at drawing their attention to the blessing of God would not have gone unnoticed. Perhaps you can relate to these believers. Can you put yourself in their place? Do you feel when you’re here at church, like you’re safe at home? Have you come here today with cuts and bruises because you’ve been actively engaged in a war that is hostile to Jesus Christ this week? How much of your week has caused you to flee for refuge in the arms of your Saviour? How much of your week made you think about Heaven? How much of your week was spent longing for your eternal home? These are the people that Peter is writing to. In one sentence (verses 3-9), even in the first word (blessed), Peter has gathered a distant and scattered people together onto his wings and has carried them up to the throne of God to adore Him.

Peter encourages the believer’s to bless God, but he goes further to define exactly who that God is. Many reading this letter were Jewish converts, and would have understood to bless God, but Peter defines God in a way that is exclusive in a distinctly Christian way. Believers are to bless **“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** If the believers were to be encouraged properly in the way to think in a God-honouring way through this exile, they needed to bless God, and the first step in blessing God was getting the source of the blessing right. The God that is to be blessed is the God who is the Father of our Lord (our Master) Jesus Christ.

The Source

Every time that Jesus prayed to God (except for on the cross), He referred to God as “Father”, or “My Father”. While the Old Testament did teach God as Father (Deut. 32:6, Isa. 63:16, Jer. 3:19, etc.), the Jews thought it to be sinful to dare draw near to God with intimate language like that. They would refer to God as the general Father of Israel but would never dare to refer to Him as a personal, intimate

Father to them individually. When Christ came, speaking to God as His Father, He taught us to likewise pray to Him as such. Referring to God as Father became an offense to the Jews that observed the ministry of Christ, because when Jesus spoke to God as His Father, He was also claiming to share the same nature as Him. Do you remember John 10:25-30?

“Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

In other words, Jesus not only taught us to relate to God as our Father, as His child, but He also claimed to be God the Son Himself. He says it clearly in John 17:1, **“Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.”** Jesus the man was born in a manger, but the Christ has existed forever, John 17:5, **“And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”**

Heavy truths!!! The Father and the Son are the same in nature, they share the same eternal characteristics of God alone. If you know One, you know the other. If you don’t know One, you don’t know the other. Jesus said in John 14:6-7, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”** It is so critical that we get our theology right about the nature and existence and purposes of God as revealed in His Word, so that when we relate to Him it is according to His will.

The Motive

Now that we’ve understood who the source of our eternal inheritance is, so we’re blessing the one and only God according to biblical standards, we can move to understanding the motive behind our inheritance. Look again at one 1:3, **“According to his great mercy.”** Why does God save anyone? He does so because He desires to show His great mercy to some. Paul, in Romans 9, summarizes the motive of God to save certain sinners while justly handing out the appropriate punishment on other sinners. Paul raises a hypothetical question in Romans 9:19 (that is an all-too-common question) from narrow-minded sinners who wish to stand in the place of God and judge Him for His motives. Let’s read his question and response in Romans 9:19-24.

The motive is quite simple: God desires to show His great mercy on His people, and God is also justified in eternally punishing those sinners who are outside of Christ. God takes no pleasure in sending sinners to eternal torment. In Ezekiel 33:11, God says, **“As I live...I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?”** We see that it pains God to punish those who sin against Him. Not only is every sin done primarily against Him (which grieves Him), but He takes no pleasure in punishing the wicked for those sins. Yet God is a God of justice and must punish sin to remain good and holy. The motive to show mercy on some becomes quite costly. Choosing to save one, and not another, came at a great price. 1 Corinthians 6:20 reminds us that we **“were bought with a price”**, and that price was the life, death, and resurrection of God’s only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, on our behalf.

When we consider the motive of God in our eternal inheritance, and we think about His great mercy towards us, let's remember that it cost the Father *everything* to be merciful to us. If He takes no pleasure in destroying the wicked, who are deserving of destruction, then we know God is deeply grieved to kill His innocent Son, **"so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."** (Romans 3:26)

Getting our theology aligned biblically here is appropriate too. When did God show mercy to us? Certainly, we recognize our need of His great mercy, but at what point in our walk with God did it become available to us? Ephesians 2:4-5 is very instructive here, **"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,** (underlining God's motive, and next comes the timing of His mercy) **even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved."** When did God show us mercy? When we were dead in sin. Not only did God show mercy to us when we had no spiritual life at all, He is the one who breathed spiritual life into us in the first place! We required the mercy of God, all sinners are by birth **"wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."** (Rev. 3:17) **"Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."** (Rom. 8:8) We all need God to move in on us, because we're unable to move on Him.

Mercy and grace are two words that are spoken of together so often, that some may get the impression that they are interchangeable words. They do come together as a package, and there are similarities in that both are shown to the sinner, but they are very different. As we're considering how to praise the One true God for His mercy to us, let us define mercy simply: Mercy is not getting what you deserve. Grace is getting what you don't deserve. Do you see now, how the two are opposites of a coin, rather than synonyms? Once you agree with the scriptures that you're a morally bankrupt, dead sinner, you realize that you need mercy. Once you agree with scripture that you deserve Hell for your sins, you can only then praise God for the mercy that He has shown to you. Conversely, once you see in scripture that your undeserving self is forgiven in Christ, adopted as God's child, and a recipient of every spiritual blessing, you praise God for His grace that you don't deserve!

Every sinner needs God's mercy. Who receives it? The one whom God grants it to. **"For he [the Father] says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy."** (Romans 9:15-16)

The Appropriation

1:3, **"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."**

David Helm writes, *"This next sentence is meant to move the affections of the readers to ascendant heights. With the words, 'he has caused us to be born again to a living hope,' Peter soars high above all the difficult circumstances of life. It is as if by verse 3 Peter is flying at an altitude of 30,000 feet and is encouraging those of us yet stationed on the ground. He reminds us that our ability to arrive safely at God's home is rooted in God's mercy and is grounded in one great truth—we are 'born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'"*¹

¹ Helm, David *Preaching the Word: 1 & 2 Peter and Jude* Crossway, 2008 p. 31

God has sent His only begotten Son to live that perfect life of obedience that we could never live, to fulfill God's holy and perfect law in our place. If the **"wages of sin is death"** (Romans 6:23), then the wage of our sin ought to have been eternal death. Yet our God saw to be merciful to send His Son to die in our place, taking the punishment that we deserved on the cross. Christ died for our sin, but not only did He die, He arose from the dead, conquering death and sin, so that **"just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."** (Romans 6:4)

At the cross, a miraculous transaction occurred. **"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."** (2 Corinthians 5:17) God has brought us to new life, and that new life is not simply a continuation of the old life, it is a completely new life with a new mind and heart. God has caused us to be born again! Our old values, ideas, plans, loves, desires, and beliefs vanish, and in their place, God plants new desires, loves, inclinations and truths, so that we live from a fresh perspective.

In this new life, we have a **"living hope"** which is the opposite of the dying hope we had before Christ. Ephesians 2:12, **"Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."** Everything that the unbeliever sets before their eyes is fading. Every accomplishment, every future goal is something that has little significance for only a short period of time and then it's gone. But the hope of the believer is living, as it's hope is anchored to the Rock of Ages. Hebrews 6:19, **"We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."**

David Helm shares a helpful quote from the heart of a young Martyn Lloyd-Jones and relates his heart to these Christian exiles that Peter writes to, of which we too can relate. He shares, *"I must add that I suffered at that time from a—sickness—which has remained with me all along life's path—and that was hiraeth [the Welsh word for longing or homesickness]. —Hiraeth is an awful thing. As also is the feeling of loneliness, of being destitute and unhappy which stem from it. It is difficult to define hiraeth, but to me it means the consciousness of [a person] being out of his home area and that which is dear to him. —My three years at [boarding school] were very unhappy and that was only because of this longing. I had bosom companions there—and I enjoyed the lessons...but! I remember as if it were yesterday sitting in [church on Sunday night which I had come home for the weekend] and suddenly being hit by the thought— "This time tomorrow night I shall be in my lodgings [at school]"—and all the once I would be down in the depths."*²

Can we not relate to young Martyn's heart? On a physiological level, I'm sure we can all relate to homesickness, but Helm's point is to relate it homesickness on a spiritual level. Can we relate? Have we lived for Christ so much in the fallen world, that we feel as though we're on an island for Christ alone? Do we often feel and hear the persecution for obeying our Lord? Are you battle-weary from fighting against your sin nature? Do you long for the day when you'll see your Saviour face-to-face without a sin nature? Are you ready to go home yet? Watch how Helm connects Martyn's quote to Peter's readers,

"Do you see what Peter has done in these few short verses? He has moved his readers from the homesickness of exile (v.1) to the hope of an eternal inheritance (vv. 3, 4). And he has done so by the

² Helm, David *Preaching the Word: 1 & 2 Peter and Jude* Crossway, 2008 p. 29

power of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In showing the activity of God in the past, he helped his early readers regain hope for the future.”³

The means of Christians’ appropriating this living hope and eternal inheritance is spiritual birth, and the power for that appropriation was demonstrated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The Nature

1 Peter 1:4, **“To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.”**

We all know what an inheritance is, it’s wealth that is passed down from one generation to another. Typically, if they’re able, parents will plan to gift their children with all their assets and savings upon their death (or sometimes beforehand) to secure their financial future and help them to bless the generation after them. The limitation of an earthly inheritance is its shelf-life. Physical objects rust and decay, and money is only a number on a page until it’s converted into that physical object that rusts and decays. The inheritance that Christians receive however is of a heavenly nature, and it lasts forever. Colossians 1:12-14, **“Giving thanks to the Father, who has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”**

Our inheritance that we bless God for is imperishable, it has no expiry date, it cannot be destroyed. It is also undefiled, which means that our inheritance is unstained or unpolluted. Everything in the world is tainted by sin, but our inheritance is flawless and perfect. Finally, our inheritance is unfading, like a flower that will not die. Unlike a classic car or a family cottage that we may inherit that thrills our heart for a season but eventually loses its luster, our inheritance will remain just as sweet to our soul 25 million years after the first day.

The Security

1 Peter 4b-5, **“Kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”**

Peter, underscoring the permanence of our salvation, declares that our salvation is reserved in Heaven for us. By the exception of Erin’s 40th birthday party, when you reserved a table at a restaurant, the establishment protects a table with your name on it, so that even if five hundred people decide to eat at your favourite restaurant at 6pm, you have a table put aside especially for you. This is true of our salvation! There is a date and time where we will be called to a dinner, and our names are on a list! In Revelation 19 we read of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, where Christ and His pure and spotless bride (The Church) are finally wed together. Notice verse 9 of that chapter, **“And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”** Who is invited to this wedding feast? Let’s read Revelation 21:9-27.

Before the foundation of the world, God wrote down every name that He would call to Himself mercifully, by His grace. This is the security of our salvation, it doesn’t come from our ability to comprehend, or our ability to concentrate, or prioritize. It doesn’t come from our courage, or our

³ Helm, David *Preaching the Word: 1 & 2 Peter and Jude* Crossway, 2008 p. 31

determination. Our security comes from the Lord! It is by God's power that we are being guarded through faith for our salvation ready to be revealed in the last time!

What about our comprehension? Ability? Courage? Determination? Do those things matter then? Of course, they do, but a proper understanding of God's Word gets the cart behind the horse, and we praise God for His generating power to call, sustaining power to endure, and ultimate power to complete our salvation. We are to rest in the power of God and leave our feeble attempts to earn our own salvation behind us. **"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."** (Philippians 1:6)

God began a good work in us by justifying us while we were his enemies. (Romans 5:8) If He was merciful to us when we were at our worst imaginable moment, why would He relent on His mercy and goodness to us now? If our salvation was independent of our goodness at the beginning, why would it have anything to do with our goodness now? The Christian life isn't about getting good enough now that we know Jesus. The Christian's life is a story about the mercy and love of Jesus rescuing a dead sinner and calling him to Himself. Can we agree with Paul who said to Timothy, **"The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."** (2 Tim. 4:18)

Our eternal inheritance is sourced from God, motivated by His mercy, appropriated to us through the resurrection of Christ, is by nature eternal and pure, and is completely secure in His hand. Can there be a more encouraging word to a spiritually exiled Christian than that? What a most appropriate way for Peter to begin his letter, by re-focusing our eyes on the One who calls and sustains us. We may feel like a foreigner here on Earth, it's simply because we are. We're people passing through on our way to our eternal home, who are telling as many people as we can about our loving Saviour before we get there, praying that He will use our lives to call them also to Himself.