

1 Peter 1:3-12

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Introduction:

Last week Graeme gave us the introduction to the book of Peter. For me one of the things that strikes me when I look at 1 Peter is I see the same sort of structure coming through as we see in Paul's epistles – the first part is concerned with God and the great and glorious things he has done for us, the second part what that means for us, even though Paul and Peter had very different backgrounds and education. Our salvation is not primarily about us – it's primarily about God. The passage we are going to look at has already been read to us, so let's get straight into looking at it in more detail.

The Priceless Inheritance:

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation,

4 and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.

5 And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

Here we see Peter doing what Paul often does. He starts his letter with a greeting and then decides to start talking about the great truths of Christianity but ends up breaking into praise because of the great and glorious things God has done for us. All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father of our Lord, our King and our Christ, our Messiah, our Priest. And why? Because it is by his great mercy that we have been born again. Raised to life. As Jesus said to Nicodemus:

5 Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. 6 Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. 7 So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'" (John 3:6-7)

We have been born again of the Spirit. If that was not the case we would not belong to Christ and would share in none of these great things. And it's not because of anything we have done – it's all because of God's great mercy so it is nothing for us to boast in.

I must confess I find the NLT translation here a little disjointed. In the Message verse 3 reads:

What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for

The NIV has:

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

As we can see from these passages the gist of what Peter is saying is that this new birth has given us a living hope, everything to live for, and we can do this because God raised Jesus Christ from the



dead. This moves our resurrection from a nice possibility to a fact. God did it for Christ, he can do it for us. And so we have hope. Hope that this life is not all there is, hope that one day we will be resurrected and we will see Christ face to face. A living hope.

As Job said:

25 “But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last. 26 And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God 27 I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought! (Job 19:25-27)

And even more than that – we have a priceless inheritance, one that is kept in heaven for us where nothing can defile it and it will not decay. How do we know this is ours. If we are born again then we are born of the Spirit and therefore we are children of God. And if we are children then we are heirs, heirs to what God wants to give us. An inheritance is not something you earn. It the choice of the person giving the inheritance, it is a gift. And God has promised it to us and God does not change what he has promised. That's why Peter writes we have, present tense. We have it now. We may not see it but it is ours.

Even more than that God is the one protecting us by His power until we receive this inheritance and salvation. The word protecting here is a military term for guarding something. We are precious to God – as Jesus said:

28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. (John 10:28)

So what about the first part – And through your faith. Yes – you have a part to play. You cannot just turn around and say – well God is going to keep me so I can do whatever I like. That would show that you do not have faith at all. Paul puts in this way in Philippians 2:

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. (Philippians 2:12-13)

Many people struggle with this – is it God or is it me? One the explanations that I found helpful in this regard is in relation to our natural gifts which God has given us. God created us and has given each of us a set of natural gifts – things we are naturally good at. We have been given them, whether we use them or not is up to us. However, we seldom if ever learn things alone. People help us, show us better ways to do things or explain things to us. So there is a sense in which we can say that me exercising my gift is not just I, but I and all the other people that have helped me. I see faith in a similar vain. God gives us the gift of faith. If we understand in even the slightest what that gift has cost, if we love God in the slightest we will want to use that gift. So from the human perspective what I do with that gift is me working. Yet it is also Christ's Spirit within me, as well as other people, who is teaching me how to use that gift. So Paul can write in:

10 But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favour on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace. (1 Corinthians 15:10)



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And on that last day, when all the earth shall stand before their creator, all will see the priceless inheritance, both those who will receive it and those who won't. It is ready to be revealed now but we have to wait. The gift we have always wanted is under the tree already but we have to wait for the morning before we can have it.

The Gift of Trials:

6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while.

7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honour on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

So, given what we know we should be truly glad. We should be glad because of what God has done is doing for us. We should be glad because of the priceless inheritance that awaits us. But there is one problem. We are still living here on earth. We are still sinners, even if redeemed sinners. Sin still taints the world. And God wants to refine your faith. So you may, though far more likely, will have to endure trials. But we have a reason to rejoice even in our trials. Yeah, sounds mad doesn't it. It is because God is in control and those trials are not random events, rather they give us an opportunity to show that our faith is genuine. To refine gold (which melts at 1064.18°C) you have to heat it until all the dross is burnt off. God does the same to us. He allows trials to come our way so through our suffering and hardship our faith will be tested and the result will be a great faith in Him. It proves that we love him and will trust him, even with our lives. And when He returns the faith that we have will bring not only glory to Jesus Christ but also to us. As James says:

2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.

3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. (James 1:2-4)

Our Wonderful Salvation:

8 You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy.

9 The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

10 This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you.

11 They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward.

12 They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

So, even despite the trials, we love him, even though we have not seen him and it is purely faith that



keeps us following him. We trust him despite not being able to see him. And we rejoice with a glorious and inexpressible joy. There are two ways of translating this last part of this sentence. Some see it as associated with the wonderful joy mentioned in verse 6 so only experienced when our Lord returns, others see it as something that can be experienced now with the final fulfilment being at the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Either way there is a definite understanding that a full assurance of faith in Christ is possible here and now. I want to pick up on this later because I think it is a very important question that we need to look at more deeply.

And what will be our reward for trusting him, for believing in him – the salvation of our souls. In fact this is not future – it is present. That is why many of the translations translate it like the NIV does:

9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls (1 Peter 1:9 NIV)

And we must not take this lightly. This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about. They spoke what God told them but they also realised that it was not just for their own generation they were preaching for. They realised at some level that this was also for us, that Christ would suffer and be received into glory. They wanted to know more but they never got to see it. We on the other hand have the great privilege of knowing exactly what Christ did and the splendour of the salvation he wrought for us. This good news has been announced to us, to the people of Peter's generation, when Peter and the other preachers and teachers of the time preached to them in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

And it was not merely the prophets of old that wished to know more. Even the angels in heaven eagerly watch these things happen.

Application:

The applications of this passage are many and varied. For now we will have to be content with just a few points and then we will look at one in particular in more detail.

- Firstly and most importantly it should make us want to worship and praise God. If a passage like this reflected upon does not make us want to worship then we need to seriously look at ourselves and asks ourselves why not. If the glory of our salvation and the glory of the work God has gone in bring about that salvation keeps even the angels in heaven watching eagerly then surely it should move us.
- Secondly we should never think of Christianity as mere knowledge, as a set of statement or facts to be believed. Nor must we think of it as a mere feeling. We can be moved by things that are not true. All the great orators of the world have known how to emotionally manipulate a crowd. We need to find a balance between the two. Paul puts it like this in Ephesians:

11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. 13 This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. (Ephesians 4:11-14)

We can have knowledge of what Christ has done for us but unless it helps us to love the



Lord Jesus Christ more we will not be moved by it.

- Do you wish sometimes life was easier – you don't want to be rich but it would be really nice not to have to struggle so often? If you do then here are few encouragements from this passage.
 1. You are in fact rich just you don't have it now. We have a great inheritance in heaven awaiting us which is worth far more than a mere few thousand or even a few million dollars.
 2. Your struggles are not without their benefits. Unless they are there because of our own stupidity trials are there because God has ordained them for the testing of our faith.

Revival:

One of the lines in this passage I want to pick up on is verse 8:

You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy.

One of the questions we need to ask ourselves is this true of us? Do we rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy, or as older translations put it

Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (KJV)

Has that ever been your experience? I suspect for most of us the answer is no. Matthew Henry has this to say:

Where are true faith and love to Christ there is, or may be, joy unspeakable and full of glory. This joy is inexpressible, it cannot be described by words; the best discovery is by an experimental taste of it; it is full of glory, full of heaven. (Matthew Henry)

So what was Matthew Henry talking about? Let me read you some examples spanning nearly 2000 years:

1 This boasting will do no good, but I must go on. I will reluctantly tell about visions and revelations from the Lord. 2 It was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows. 3 Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know 4 that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell. (Paul 2 Corinthians 12:1-4)

One of the important things to note about this passage is that this was not something that happened to Paul every day or even every year. This was fourteen years ago.

Thus going on this way his thoughts began to swell and rise higher and higher like the waters of Ezekiel's vision, till at last they became an overwhelming flood. Such was the intention of his mind, such the ravishing tastes of heavenly joy, and such the full assurance of his interest therein, that he utterly lost all sight and sense of the world and all the concerns thereof, and for some hours he knew no more where he was than he had been in a deep sleep upon his bed. Arriving in great exhaustion at a certain spring he sat down and washed, earnestly desiring that if it was God's



pleasure that this might be his parting-place from the world. Death had the most amiable face in his eyes that ever he beheld, except the face of Jesus Christ which made it so, and he does not remember though he believed himself dying, that he ever thought of his dear wife and children or any other earthly concernment. On reaching his Inn the influence still continued, banishing sleep, still the joy of the Lord overflowed him and he seemed to be an inhabitant of the Other world. He many years after call that day on of the days of heaven, and professed that he understood more of the life of heaven by it than by all the books he ever read. (John Flavel)

As I rode out into the woods for health, in 1737, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been, to walk for divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view that was for me extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God, as Mediator between God and man, and His wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gently condescension. This grace that appeared so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens. The Person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thoughts and conceptions, which continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour; such as to keep me a great part of the time in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated; to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love Him with a holy and pure love; to trust in Him; to live upon Him; to serve Him and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity. (Jonathan Edwards)

I began to cry as never before, for a greater blessing from God. The hunger increased; I really felt that I did not want to live any longer. "I kept on crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit.. Well, one day in the City of New York – oh! what a day, I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it. It is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which never spoke for fourteen years. I an only say, God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand." (D.L. Moody)

These particular quotations I have chosen all happen to be from men and famous preachers at that but it is not the experience of these few. It is the experience of nearly everyone, man, woman and children during periods of revival of the church.

So I ask the question again – has that ever been your experience? And if not, is that something you would desire more than anything else? What did Jesus say:

7 "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 "You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? 10 Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! 11 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him. (Matthew 7:7-12)

These events that happened to individual people. What about when the church is revived? Here is a description of the revival that happened on the Isle of Lewis in the Hebrides, Scotland in 1949. The general state of the church as this point was one of discouragement and confusion. The younger people were leaving in droves. Then Peggy Smith, an eighty four year old who was blind had a dream that God was coming. Her sister Christine, was two years younger and almost doubled up with arthritis yet in the earlier hours of cold winters morning these two were in prayer. Then other members of the congregation (mostly elderly) started to receive assurance that God was going to move. The minister Rev MacKay felt he need to ask Duncan Campbell to come but he refused



initially as he was booked up until the following year. Two weeks later he was in the Barvas parish church. He arrived and at the first meeting nothing happened. At the end of the meeting one of the deacons suggested to the travel weary Duncan that they go and spend the night in prayer! About thirty of them retired to a nearby cottage.

Duncan Campbell described what happened. 'God was beginning to move, the heavens were opening, we were on our faces before God. Three o'clock in the morning came and GOD SWEEPED IN. About a dozen men and woman lay prostrate on the floor, speechless. Something had happened; we knew that the forces of darkness were going to be driven back, and men were going to be delivered. We left the cottage at 3 am to discover men and woman seeking God. I walked along a country lane and found three men on their faces, crying to God for mercy. There was a light in every home, no one seemed to think of sleep.

When Duncan and his friends gathered at the church later in the morning, the place was crowded. A stream of buses came from every part of the island, yet no one could discover who had told them to come. A butcher in his van brought seven men from a distance of seventeen miles: all seven were gloriously converted. Now the revival was really under way. The Spirit of God was at work.

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It was 4 am the following morning before Duncan pronounced the benediction for the second time. Even then he was still unable to go home to bed. As he was leaving the church a messenger told him. 'Mr. Campbell, people are gathered at the police station, from the other end of the parish; they are in great spiritual distress. Can anyone here come along and pray with them? Campbell went and what a sight met him. Under the still starlit sky he found men and women on the road, others by the side of the cottage, and some behind a peat stack – all crying to God for mercy. The revival had come.

That went on for five weeks with services every day from early morning to late at night. Then it started to spread even further abroad.

The work spread throughout the Hebrides and by 1952 the Stornoway Gazette was able to report, 'More are attending the prayer meetings in Lewis today than attended public worship on the Sabbath before the outbreak of this revival.' Before the revival, Stornoway had one of the highest drinking rates in Scotland and 'bothans', illegal and unlicensed drinking places, flourished. After the revival one publican moaned, 'The drink trade on the island is ruined.'

That is revival – that is God moving in power. There is nothing we can do to bring this about other than to pray and plead with God that we might see this in our lifetime. It is a sovereign work of God. He chooses where, he chooses when.

Conclusion:

In conclusion I want to ask you: Is this something we desire? If it were to happen are we prepared to deal with the uncomfortable, the scary, the unknown? Are we prepared to pray and plead with God for it knowing that our lives and the life of this church will be thrown upside down by the presence of God in power?

Joy Unspeakable – Martyn Lloyd Jones
Great Revivals – Colin Whittaker



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