

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.

In 1994 when my dad was in his final illness, his then wife warned us that if we didn't come to Tennessee we would be written out of any inheritance.

I'm trying to remember but I think the idea was as ridiculous to Jeff as it was to me. Neither of us expected to ever inherit anything. But both of us bought tickets to Tennessee for a different reason. We loved and honored our dad and desired to see him.

Tickets were bought in spite of it being really difficult economic times for both of us. But, in fact, we didn't get there in time. After Dad was gone, neither one of us ever thought twice about going to Tennessee. Our dad was gone and both of us would be virtually strangers to every single person in Tennessee except perhaps our dad's wife who we weren't fond of.

True to her word, we never heard if there was a will, or a list of liabilities. We were sorry our dad had left this world, but neither of us cared a lick about Tennessee.

Some might think that shocking to not honor our father at his graveside. But he was gone, and Tennessee was like a foreign land to us. People have all kinds of funny ideas about proprieties in death. Especially those with no real hope after this life.

This passage this morning touches on some of those issues. Inheritance. Life beyond here. Realities after this life.

Things, as we've often taught, that are beyond finding out. These truths are revelations to us, by God, through His inspired apostle, that cannot be found out by reason, or science. No amount of learning can provide

this information apart from God revealing His truth to us.

There are truths for us here that are edifying. We hold onto our inheritance by faith. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. So it is imperative for us to hear these truths, over and over. This passage will build our faith. It will give us reserves to draw on in time of need.

Indeed, that is why Peter begins right here. His hearers are in the depths of despair and grasping for any shred of faith they can get. They are being blamed for Rome burning. The entire world hates them. They are in the process of not only losing everything they've ever worked for in this world, but some of them are dieing.

So Peter begins by telling them Who they are and What they own. Not here, where things perish, but in heaven where they do not. It's the perfect message for those under duress. And for us who cannot count on our current ease and comfort to last.

We need to listen closely to Peter's council to these saints. Knowing who we are and what we possess is the basis for a faith that can endure anything this world can throw at it.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

With those words, Peter launches into a paeon of praise and adoration that only begins to make sense when coupled with his line of reasoning that he began his letter with in vss. 1 and 2. Those words set the context for the adoration that follows.

So we'll review what we spoke of last week to set us on the right path.

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 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.

We are indeed aliens in this sphere. Set apart, actually, set free from the bonds of sin that hold the dwellers in this world, and we belong to God. We are made aliens by the sanctifying work of the Spirit that calls us out of this world and into the body of Christ.

We learned that the covenant of obedience to Jesus Christ is ratified by the sprinkling of His blood. That is our position, in the heavens. Sanctioned by God, effected by His Holy Spirit, and covenanted by the blood of Jesus.

Grace and peace are ours because of our position in Christ. And it's notable that those two things are enduring gifts to us, no matter what this world throws at us. Persecution. Loss of property. Even death. That's all this world can throw at us.

The grace and peace given to us by God's Holy Spirit are unassailable. The world cannot molest these gifts given to us by the Spirit. We might add joy to that list. Peter will in vs. 6. We have a grace and peace and joy that this world both cannot know, and cannot take away from us. Secure in Him by His Holy Spirit.

Put those three items in the bank. Your soul has a storage bank, like the ballast weight in the keel of a sailboat. Store the weight of this treasure away, deep like ballast in a boat's keel so that when the winds of this world storm against the sail of your soul, the weight in the keel will hold you upright.

And with that in mind, Peter launches into praise. And covers again the same ground that he just announced in vs 1 and 2. Peter is going to unpack a whole list of things that these troubled saints need as ballast in their keels because the side load of the storm they are in is great.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Interesting to me that this same identical statement of praise is mirrored 2 more times by the apostle Paul. We find the identical beginning statement in Ephesians 1:3 and 2 Corinthians 1:3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The reason for the praise is because He has showered us with blessings and grace.

Man has no capacity or desire to shout of the blessedness of God in his fallen state. We are born dead. Spiritually dead. The only reason for shouting blessings and praises to God is because of what He caused to happen to us.

I love the story of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4. At the end, Nebuchadnezzar blesses God. But like us, it is a circuitous route that gets his mouth to that state. I can't resist comparing it with what Peter is going to say here.

28“All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. 29“Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. 30“The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’ 31“While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, 32and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ 33“Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.

*34“But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;
For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.*

*35“All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven*

*And among the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can ward off His hand
Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'*

36 "At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. 37 "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."

God caused Nebuchadnezzar who was dead to experience living out in the dew and eating the grass like the cattle for 7 years, and in the end, He restored his Kingdom to him. But at the end of God's dealings with him, Nebuchadnezzar praised the God of heaven.

Now most of us don't come to shouting praise the way Nebuchadnezzar did. But just like the babylonian king, it is God who moves us out of our deadness and gives us life. And when He does, we join with Peter and King Nebuchadnezzar in saying Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that formula is unique to the new testament. In the old testament we have *blessed be God*, over and over again but never as a father.

We have a unique position, in Jesus Christ who is the Son of God. In Him, God becomes our Father.

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

We'll stop and consider three truths in that statement. I'm not an english major, so sadly I don't have much ability to figure out subjects and nouns and verbs and the like. So bear with me.

In fact there's so much there I get a little overwhelmed. But here goes.

Peter is working his way to the point of his statement which is inheritance. We are those who will inherit something but, that idea needs groundwork.

So Peter is building up to that truth by laying all kinds of important groundwork. God the Father of OUR Lord Jesus Christ. God the creator and sovereign King, Father of OUR, we possess this, our Lord. Jesus the messiah is our sovereign Lord. He belongs to us and we belong to Him. And God the Father is His Father and thus Our Father.

So Peter draws on one of the attributes of God the Father and says; *who according to His great mercy* God is going to do something and the underlying motivation is mercy.

Some day we will do a study of all of the attributes of God. Holy. Omniscient. All knowing. Omnipresent. He is everywhere all at the same time. Omnipotent. All powerful. Holy. Holy. Holy.

Some old saint has said, "How bitter all the other attributes of God . . . without mercy." Think about it. We are hopeless bankrupt defiled sinners. All of the other attributes are terrifying except for this one. God is driven to rescue us because He is merciful.

God's motive to rescue us is mercy. Mercy focuses on our condition of bankrupt misery. We are fallen and because of that we are in a pitiable condition. desperate. wretched. defiled. dead. seperated from God by sin.

Mercy is the motivator. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy **has caused us***

Mercy is going to cause God to act toward us. Mercy is the motivation for what God is going to accomplish.

We looked last week at election. We stumble around trying to unscrew the inscrutable. We can't understand God's choice. He chose us! Why? This is the only answer we will get. Because of mercy. Not because of

anything we did in eternity past or will do in eternity future, but for one reason. God causes us to be born again because of His mercy.

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

God, the Father of the Lord Jesus, the messiah, motivated by mercy has caused something. us to be born again. New birth. Spiritual life through new birth. We were dead in our sin, He made us alive, together with Christ. God did that. God caused that. Nothing you did had anything to do with that truth. God caused it all.

Sharing with Gary Flood and he was telling me about an older lady who worked with them on their farm who whenever the term born again would be brought up would tell Gary that we christians make too much out of a phrase that only appears one time.

She was talking of course about Jesus words to Nicodemus. Ye must be born again. And I sort of understand where she's coming from. When Jimmy Carter was president the idea of born again got overworked. It was cheapened in a way. Over-used. Under valued. In a sense when that happens we lose important words. The original idea gets cheapened by over-use.

But here, Peter uses exactly that term to describe regeneration. Rebirth. The miracle of spiritual life. We who are born in Adam's race are born dead. Born in sin. Separated from God. We are body and soul, but our spirit which was designed for fellowship with God, was dead. Separated by sin.

See the little word OUR. Our Lord Jesus Christ. God has caused us to be regenerated. Born again spiritually. Made alive together with Christ. Our sin is left at the cross. We have a righteousness, not our own, it is the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us. God did that.

*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***

What's a living hope. It is our faith, our belief, not in some dead guy, but in someone who has gone through the grave and come out the other side victorious over death. Our hope is alive because it is based in someone who is alive. After death. Our hope is based in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Mohammed is in the grave. Joseph Smith is in the grave. Our hope is in a person who beat death and is alive forevermore.

God caused it. Mercy motivated it. Resurrection proved it. What is it??

*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,*

Our inheritance. The main focus of the passage is our inheritance. Peter is writing to the poorest most desperate, most distressed and pitiable people on earth and he's telling them, you are rich beyond your wildest dreams.

The best comparison might be a 2 or 3 year old child who's father is a king of a vast empire. That little guy has no clue how wealthy he really is. He has pedagogues, caretakers that see that his needs are met and that he is disciplined and trained so that some day, he'll be ready to take the reigns.

That is a picture of us. We are rich beyond our abilities even to begin to comprehend. But for now, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit who trains and chastises us, preparing us to receive our inheritance.

Now then, Peter begins to unfold some of the qualities of our inheritance. And he begins by comparing it to truths that we can all comprehend.

*4 to obtain an **inheritance** which is imperishable and undefiled and will*

not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

I laughed about these words. The best way to begin to understand the greek words that are translated imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away, is to illustrate the opposite.

Occasionally, and I'll admit purposefully this morning, you will see me driving around in a battered 1939 Ford truck. It's a good illustration. When it was new it was a gleaming strong capable tool. But time and use took their tolls.

It was parked and forgotten some time after 1958. You can tell by looking at it that even then, it was likely a ranch truck that saw hard use. I can picture cowboys, hired hands, who have inherited it for it's final battles on fields and dirt roads going from pasture to pasture taking supplies out to the cowboys and animals. No one pays any attention to it. It's nearing the end of it's life, beat it up.

Then one day a used '51 Chevy comes along and replaces it and the cowboys leave it in a field and never think of it again. Lucky for me, the last cowboy loosened the radiator hose clamps at the lowest point and let the water run out.

Then time begins to work on it. Like 55 years in the weather. The paint, what's left of it, fades. Where the paint once was, rust takes over. Little by little the elements are turning it back into the ores it was made from. It becomes corrupted. Defiled. When I got it, the remains of the tires were just rags of cloth and rotten rubber. I had to cut them off the rims. There was no original form to work with.

That's a foolish illustration of the 2nd law of thermodynamics. This world only knows corruption. Everything winds down and wears out. Everything is somewhere in the process of being corrupted and becoming rubble.

Peter says, you have an inheritance *which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away* The greek word for fade away is the word that describes what happens to flowers. Their beauty is fleeting. It doesn't

last. It fades away. First they wilt and droop. Then corruption sets in and they become brown ugly shadows of their former selves. Then they become fertilizer. Not so your inheritance. Imperishable. undefiled and undefileable. And ever-lasting.

And then Peter says, your inheritance is reserved in heaven for you.

In this world, you think you own something, and then April 15th comes and you find out, nope, you don't own it at all. Nothing is permanent. Everything has the possibility of being taken away from you.

Peter says, not your inheritance. It's reserved for you in heaven. And verse 5 says all the powers of hell can't take it away from you.

*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*

That word protected is special. The old authorized version is kept. Kept. It means your inheritance is under guard. It is unassailable. Nothing can get it and take it away from you, because your inheritance is being protected by the power of God.

Guys in my age group out at work talk all the time about their investments. Retirement. They have storehouses of money safely invested so they can quit work and coast for the remainder of their lives. It's a big topic.

We see these advertisements for gold all the time. Because everyone sort of realizes we're on an unsustainable path and those numbers they're relying on are just digits in a computer program somewhere. 1's and 0's in cyberspace. Then the electromagnetic pulse bomb comes and poof, all your 1's and 0's are gone.

So you need a safe and a hoarde of gold. Something real. Pre-war Fords. They'll still run after the north Koreans wipe out the 1's and 0's with EMP bombs. Something tangible. Then the guy with the biggest gun will come and take your gold and your Fords away. That's how this

world rolls.

Peter says we have an inheritance in an impenetrable fortress. Heaven. And the power of God is protecting my inheritance until I get there and fully realize it. My inheritance is kept by the power of God. For me.

I don't know if there's anyone present here this morning that was taught that you can lose your salvation. Whoever teaches that does not understand what Peter is saying in this passage.

Your salvation was caused by God. Because of His mercy, nothing you did. He chose you. He sent His Son to die for you. He gave you His Holy Spirit as a downpayment for the riches that you will inherit in the future. And that inheritance is kept (guarded!) by the power of God.

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

Kept by the power of God through **faith**. So you say, OK there it is, the weak link. Faith. My faith may fail. Nope, if your salvation is real, you have a faith that was given to you as a gift. Even faith originates in God. He gave you the faith to believe.

And Peter is telling us all these things to build up our most Holy Faith. The reason we spend time studying these things and we labor to teach you these truths is because it builds up your faith. That faith that was a gift is built up by studying and applying the truths of the word of God.

Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. But you're right. Faith is the weak link in the modern evangelical church. No one cares to invest any real time and effort into studying the word of God. I agree, faith is the weak link here, and it's the church's fault. Edification by depth in the word of God is serious business.

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

Your inheritance is a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

You say, wait a minute, I thought I was already saved!

You are, you are, but you only have the down payment. All you have so far is the good faith deposit of the inheritance you're going to realize on a future day.

We've been to Romans 8 many times before. It speaks of this day. A day when the Sons of God will be **revealed** with Him in glory. Listen to it again.

*19 For the anxious longing of the creation **waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.***

*20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, (2nd law thermodynamics we talked about. Everything is somewhere in the relentless path to corruption) **in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.** 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.*

Listen to what Peter's fellow slave the apostle John says about this same idea.

1Jn. 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, we are now children of God, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure....

Salvation is our inheritance. Our salvation, if we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, has only just begun. There is much more, kept for us,

protected in heaven.

Consider your parts. Body, soul, spirit. Broken out that way in 1 Thessalonians.

There's no hope for my body. The 2nd law of thermodynamics is getting me. Everything's sagging and drooping and corruption is unstoppable.

However, when I received Christ, when His Spirit came to live inside me, my spirit was quickened from the dead. Made alive together with Him.

That leaves my soul. And what we learn is that as we peer into the mirror of God, in His word, our souls are being transformed. Little by little. As we sanctify ourselves from this world and give ourselves to live like God would have us live, and as we look into His word for the power to do that, our souls do make progress.

2 Cor. 3:18 is an important verse. *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*

That's why Paul says things which sound weird to modern reformed evangelicals like *work out your salvation with fear and trembling*. PPN 2:12 *Or we are all nearer to salvation than when we believed*. RO 13:11

Our salvation is not static. Sign a card at a Billy Graham conference and it's in the can, so to speak. Your salvation is dynamic.

My hope is that you will leave this morning; changed. Edified. Built up. Strong. Solid. Lead in your keel below the water line, so that when the winds come, your little boat will be unaffected. We are the richest people in Tonopah, by far! And we happily give those riches away to anyone who will have them.