

Hope When Life is Hard...



A VERSE BY VERSE
EXPOSITION OF
THE EPISTLE OF
FIRST PETER

The Eternal Inheritance of the Saints

1 Peter 1:4 (681)

I invite you to take the outline you received today and follow the sermon. I believe it will help as we carefully plough the ground of 1 Peter 1:4. From the outline you will note that my sermon is structured around ten propositions or statements.

1 Peter 1:1-5 ... *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. 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.*

1 Peter 1:1-2 constitutes the formal introduction of Peter's letter. In verses 3-5 Peter demonstrates how our redemption, determined in the deep counsels of the

Trinity (1:2) and accomplished on the cross of Christ is applied to us in time and in our human experience. Basically in verses 3-5 Peter supplies a summary of the Christian life. In **verse 3** its beginning in the new birth; in **verse 4** its goal - our taking possession of our eternal inheritance; and in **verse 5** our earthly pilgrimage in which we are kept by the power of God.

Last week in **verse 3** we learned that God *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.* Mercy is the divine response to our desperate condition brought about by sin. As Berkhof says, "the mercy of God contemplates [man] as one who is bearing the consequences of sin, who is in a pitiable condition, and who therefore needs help" (p. 72). Indeed, it is our desperate condition that calls forth God's mercy. The Bible portrays this desperate condition as spiritual death. **Ephesians 2:1** says, *you were dead in your trespasses and sins* (see Col. 2:13). Beloved, this condition is answered by the great mercy of God in the new birth.

(#1) We are those given birth by God. We call this new birth "regeneration." Regeneration is the *sovereign* work of God that conquers spiritual death. Regeneration is the *creative* work of God in which He makes men otherwise dead in transgressions and sin alive to spiritual things. Regeneration is the *gracious* work of God by which new life is communicated freely to the soul. Regeneration is the *necessary* work of God without which it is impossible to believe the gospel.

(#2) In the new birth God has made us His children. **John 1:12**, *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who believe in His name.* **1 John 3:1**, *See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called **children of God**.* **Romans 8:16**, *The Spirit Himself bears*

witness with our spirit that we are *children of God* (2 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 3:26). We have been born into a new family. Notice the family language Peter subsequently incorporates into this letter. **1 Peter 1:14**, as *obedient children*, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance. **1 Peter 1:17**, and if you address as *Father* the One who impartially judges according to each man's work. **1 Peter 1:22**, Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of *the brethren*. **1 Peter 2:2**, like *newborn babes*, long for the pure milk of the word. **1 Peter 4:17**, for it is time for judgment to begin with the *household of God*.

This week in verse 4, Peter shifts his focus to the end of the Christian life; the goal of God's election spoken of in verse 1.

(#3) Consistent with our new status as children born of God is the expectation of an inheritance from God. Indeed, the big idea of verse 4 is this: a heavenly reward awaits the children of God. **Galatians 4:7**, *therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God*. Beloved, make no mistake, our reward is in no sense a payment for services rendered. Like the new birth itself, it is ours by God's great mercy. You and I are debtors to mercy alone.

A Family Incentive Trust is a recent device designed to create incentives for behavior that an individual would like to see achieved among his or her heirs, while restricting the ability of beneficiaries to live off of the trust fund. This is nothing new, however. Alexander the Great stipulated: "If my son, Alexander, shall conquer the world by the time he attains the age of 30, I give him my vast estate, including the castle on the lake, and my gold trimmed chariot. If he fails to conquer the world by the time he reaches the age of 30, then he shall receive nothing." Our inheritance is not based upon our performance. It is all what God

has done to us and for us in Christ Jesus. **Romans 8:17**, *and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ*. The phrase *fellow heirs with Christ* leads us to the fourth proposition.

(#4) We are inheritors through Jesus Christ. “Jesus is the Son and Heir. **Hebrews 1:1-2**, *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things*. Since Jesus is the Heir and also the One who has given Himself for us, we cannot have this inheritance except in relation to Him. **Galatians 3:29**, *and if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise*. Because Jesus has appointed us as heirs, we are not merely fellow-heirs with him but also joint heirs with each other” (see *DoNTT*, p. 301). Speaking to the husband of his wife, Peter says in **1 Peter 3:7**, *grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life*.

(#5) By the new birth we are now in Christ. Peter’s letter closes with *Peace be to you all who are in Christ (5:14)*. **2 Corinthians 5:17** says, *Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come*. Beloved, you are forever joined to Christ in both a representative and vital union. Consequently, *His destiny is your destiny. His fortunes are your fortunes*. Because He was raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father so are you, already, as it were, *made alive, raised and seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph.2:5-6)*. This is how Paul can say in **Ephesians 1:10-12**, *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory*. Paul goes on to explain in verses 13-14 that the Holy Spirit is given as a pledge of this inheritance. **In [Christ]**, *you also,*

after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. Now, we may ask, "What is our inheritance?" Some background is helpful before we answer this question.

(#6) Peter's letter is shaped by the thought and language of the Old Testament.

R. T. France explains, "The coming of Jesus is that decisive act of God to which the Old Testament looked forward, and in his coming all the hopes of the Old Testament are fulfilled ... [the New Testament presents] the status of Jesus and his followers [all who are in Christ] as now constituting the true Israel, in whom the hopes and destiny of Old Testament Israel were now being fulfilled (*Jesus and the Old Testament*, p. 161). We see this clearly, for example, in **1 Peter 2:9-10** where Peter takes titles that originally referred to Israel and applies them to the Church, the new Israel of God. He says, *but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God.* These terms come right out of **Exodus 19:5-6** and **Isaiah 43:20-21**. Peter's point is that, in Christ, Christians enjoy a new status as the elect, the chosen people of God and, as such, are buoyed up and encouraged by the prospect of a promised inheritance from God our Father. A heavenly reward awaits the children of God.

(#7) This idea of inheritance is rooted deeply in the Old Testament. "The Old Testament spoke of the promised land of Canaan as Israel's inheritance. [**Genesis 12:7**, *And the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land."* **Deuteronomy 15:4**, *"the Lord will surely bless you in the land which*

the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess.”] [The Old Testament also] frequently used inheritance to refer to the portion of Canaan belonging to each tribe or family as its share. [**Joshua 11:23**, *So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes.*] The contrast [Peter sets up] is striking: we have been born anew, not to obtain a family inheritance in the earthly land of Canaan, but to obtain an inheritance in the eternal city of God” (Grudem, pp. 56-57).

Even Abraham’s ultimate expectation was for something “better” than Canaan. **Romans 4:13**, *for the promise to Abraham or to his descendants [was] that he would be heir of the world.* **Hebrews 11:8-10**, *By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.* **Hebrews 11:16**, *But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one.* Such is the New Testament interpretation of the inheritance. “Peter had heard Jesus teach about a better treasure stored in heaven” (Clowney, p. 47). **Matthew 6:19-20**, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.”*

(#8) Israel received the earthly foreshadowing; we receive the heavenly fulfillment. Your inheritance is *imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.* Listen to how Dr. Clowney explains this: “The words that Peter uses to describe our unchangeable inheritance all relate to the land that

was the inheritance of Israel. **First**, our inheritance can *never perish*. The land of Israel was at times ravaged and destroyed by invading armies. **Secondly**, Peter says that our inheritance is [*undefiled*]. [In **Jeremiah 2:7**, God says of Israel, “*I brought you into the fruitful land, to eat its fruit and its good things. But you came and defiled My land, and My inheritance you made an abomination.*”] The land of Canaan, Israel’s inheritance, was defiled first by heathen inhabitants, then by Israel’s idolatry. **Thirdly**, our inheritance is *perennial*. It will not fade, wither or dry up. Canaan was not only destroyed by invaders and polluted by its inhabitants; it was also parched with drought in God’s judgment.” [**Fourth**, our inheritance is *reserved for us in heaven*. “It is totally secure. [It cannot shrink in the stock market. It is kept in heaven for us under divine lock and key.] “Canaan as the inheritance of Israel is contrasted with our inheritance. Our inheritance is not simply a land, a city, or even a new earth. It is all that God will give us” (Clowney, pp. 47-49). In the Bible we are told we shall inherit the kingdom of God (**1 Cor. 6:9**). We shall inherit eternal life (**Matt. 19:29**). We shall inherit salvation (**Heb. 1:14**). We shall inherit the promises (**Heb. 6:12**). We are to inherit a blessing (**1 Pet. 3:9**). In short, we shall receive everything promised to us in the gospel; everything promised to Christ and to those who are in Him. A heavenly reward awaits the children of God.

(#9) Our heavenly inheritance is unlike and better than those earthly possessions or expectations to which we are so attached. **Proverbs 23:4-5**, *Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly takes itself wings, like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.* Those who endured the Great Depression know, maybe more than the rest of us, the tenuous hold we have on possessions. From 1929 to 1932, 85,000 businesses failed. 9,000 banks failed. 9,000,000 bank accounts were wiped out.

In 1929 a stenographer made \$45 per week. In 1932 the same stenographer made \$16 per week. Mary Owlsey, a woman who lived through the Depression in Oklahoma City made this recollection: “There was thousands of people out of work in Oklahoma City. They set up soup lines and the food was clean and it was delicious. Many, many people ... lost everything they had accumulated from their young days. And these are facts. I remember several families had to leave in covered wagons. To California I guess ... I knew one family there in Oklahoma City, a man and woman and seven children lived in a hole in the ground. You’d be surprised how nice it was, how nice they kept it. They had chairs and tables and beds back in that hole. And they had the dirt all braced up there, just like a cave”

(http://www.socialstudieshelp.com/Lesson_84_Notes.htm).

1 Timothy 6:7, *For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.* He was the beneficiary of a powerful family fortune made from fur trading. He had made millions more of his own investing in real estate. He boarded the ship with his 19 year old and pregnant wife, Madeleine, a maid, a manservant, a personal nurse, and a dog. His staterooms were without equal. With working fireplaces, and adjoining quarters for servants, the suites cost \$4,000.00, an amount that equals \$50,000.00 in today’s dollars. Hours later as his wife boarded a lifeboat, he asked if he could accompany her, due to her *delicate condition*, but an officer refused. Taking the refusal in stride, he then threw his gloves to his wife and lit a cigarette. He and his dog were last seen on deck. A few days later, his body was found floating in the open sea. It was covered with soot and partially crushed, leading experts to believe he had been smashed by a falling smokestack. He had \$2,500 cash in his pocket. So ended the life of John Jacob Astor the fourth who was without a doubt the richest man aboard the

Titanic. (<http://members.aol.com/ken63728/cr6.htm>). None of it went with him into eternity.

(#10) The Spirit's design is that we be buoyed up by the assurance and anticipation of a heavenly reward. Consider the original recipients of Peter's letter. You see the prospects of a material inheritance or reward for these people were dimming rapidly. The prospect of material loss was very real. Indeed, their very lives were in jeopardy. Their temporal fortunes; their earthly prospects were not very favorable. Their reputations were taking a hit. Their relationships were taking a hit. Their resources were taking a hit. For them, identification with Jesus was a dangerous and costly business. Peter is lifting them above the dark clouds of time and circumstances to give them a glimpse of what was truly in store for them as the children of God. Clowney says, "God gave the land to Israel as an inheritance, and in the land he gave every tribe and family an inheritance, with the lasting right of ownership. While they wandered in the wilderness, they were sustained by the promise of their inheritance. Like Israel in the wilderness, we, the New Testament people of God are *aliens* and pilgrims (1:1). We make our way through a world that is becoming more hostile. Yet we are not wandering beggars, cast off from our possessions. We hold a sure title to the inheritance God has given us" (*I Peter*, p. 47). A heavenly reward awaits the children of God.

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Review verse 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.

Mercy is the divine _____ to our desperate condition brought about by sin. The Bible portrays this desperate condition as spiritual _____ (**Eph. 2:1**). This condition is answered by the great mercy of God in the _____.

(#1) We are those given birth by _____.

(#2) In the new birth God has made us His _____.
(John 1:12; 1 John 3:1; Rom. 8:16; 2 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 3:26)

This week in verse 4, Peter shifts his focus to the **end** of the Christian life; the **goal** of God's election spoken of in verse 1 (*who are chosen*).

(#3) Consistent with our new _____ as children born of God is the

expectation of an _____ from God.

Big idea of verse 4 is this: **a heavenly reward awaits the children of God.**

(#4) We are inheritors through _____.

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You are forever joined to Christ in both a representative and vital union.

Consequently, *His* _____ is your destiny; *His* _____ are your fortunes.

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new Israel of God.

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Even Abraham's ultimate expectation was for something "better" than Canaan
(Rom. 4:13; Heb. 11:8-10, 16).

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heavenly _____.**

In the Bible we are told we shall inherit the _____ of God (1 Cor.

6:9). We shall inherit _____ (Matt. 19:29). We shall inherit

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We are to inherit a _____ (1 Pet. 3:9).

In short, we shall receive everything promised to us in the _____;
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_____ or _____ to which we are so attached. (Prov. 23:4-5; 1
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