

Kept by the Power of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 April 2013

Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[0 : 00] Amen. I want you to open your Bibles up to 1 Peter.! It's toward the back of your Bible. If you're not sure exactly where it is, turn towards the back. Alright?

It's after the book of Hebrews. 1 Peter. We are in a series through 1 Peter. This is only our third week in this book, and we're moving slowly here at the beginning so that we can get our bearings, so that we can understand exactly what Peter was communicating to his original readers and to us as well.

And so this morning, we are going to look at verses 3 through 5. And so I want to ask you all to stand with me as we read these verses. Peter writes, 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 salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Father, please take Your Word by Your Spirit and apply it to us. In Christ's name we ask this. Amen. Amen. You guys take a seat. You guys ever feel like that we're sort of living in the future?

[1 : 24] You ever feel like that? You ever look at the gadgets that are around you and the things that surround you and just think, we're in the future now because this is my phone. This tiny little device is my phone.

I can remember when the first cell phones came out. You remember the bag phones? Do you remember those things? And you had to get them out. You'd really have to pull over on the side of the road to get a signal. You get out, you pull them out, you have to set the bag on top of the car, flip up the giant antenna, and then you might be able to make a phone call.

And then they had the big brick phones that you carried around. And now here we are with these tiny little phones that don't just make phone calls, but do just about everything else that you need them to do. I'll confess, I'm a bit of a geek.

I'm fascinated by technology. I'm always looking for new cool things to see what's coming out next. I'm fascinated right now by all the smart watches they keep talking about. I was looking online the other day and saw one.

It's like a Dick Tracy watch. I mean, you can talk on it. You can talk to your phone through your watch. And you can tell it what songs to play. All kinds of cool stuff. I just feel like sometimes we're sort of living in the future.

[2 : 31] We don't quite have the hover cars from the Jetsons yet. I'm still waiting on my Back to the Future hoverboard that I can ride around. But some of those things are really happening. I can not only make a video phone call, I can do it from this little tiny phone that I keep in my pocket while I'm walking around the grocery store.

It's fascinating. It's amazing that we live in this kind of time where these things that were once thought to be way off in the future are kind of here now. Well, here in 1 Peter, Peter gives us a further glimpse of the future.

He shows us not just where we'll be in 10 or 20 years. He shows us what eternity is going to be like. He gives us this incredible glimpse into the future that awaits all those who belong to Christ. You can see it very clearly. He describes it with three phrases in these verses. He says that we've been born again, here's phrase number one, to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And then he gives another description of this future. He says that we have an inheritance that is imperishable and undefiled and unfading. And then he says in verse 5 that we are guarded through

faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[3 : 40] All three of those phrases, the living hope and the inheritance and the future salvation, are future-oriented phrases. They're directing our eyes, they're directing our attention to move our focus off of the here and now and look toward this great future that God has in store for His people.

And so I want us to do something. I have very modest goals this morning for the next several minutes that we're going to spend together. All I want to really do is to ground the hope that you have in Christ and to direct your eyes to where that hope is taking us in the future.

I want you to have a greater vision of what eternity will be like. And if you don't know Christ, I want to cause you to long to know Him if the Spirit would so work in your heart.

But of course, before we can look at that future, Peter grounds it in an event that has taken place for many of us in the past. Take a look at what he says there. Verse 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And then he says, Who, according to His great mercy, has caused us to be born again. Note those phrases. According to His great mercy, and He has caused us to be born again.

[5 : 02] We talked about the new birth last week. We talked about what it means to be born again because we saw a reference to that event in another phrase in verse 2 where he says that we are elect in or by the sanctification of the Spirit.

I told you last week that that phrase, by the sanctification of the Spirit, is a way in which Peter refers to the moment in which the Holy Spirit comes and grants new life to us.

He causes hearts that are spiritually dead to come alive so that we then see and not only understand the Gospel, but that we believe the Gospel and we embrace the Gospel.

That event is the new birth. Regeneration. We are born again because the Spirit does a work in our hearts. And now we're seeing it here that God caused us to be born again.

And He does that, Peter says, according to His great mercy. Think about that. We're not born again. God does not give us spiritual life because we've done something to earn it.

[6 : 08] He doesn't give us spiritual life because we have done all the right things and jumped through all the right hoops so that now, according to the rules of the game that God has set up, God is bound somehow to give us life.

That's not how this works. Being born again happens to you only by the sovereign mercy of God. All of God's mercy is sovereignly given mercy.

We saw that last week as well. Because this work of new birth, this sanctifying, consecrating work of the Holy Spirit is done for those who are elect, according to verse 1.

We are elect by the sanctification of the Spirit. In other words, those whom God has sovereignly set His mercy upon. That's the foreknowledge of God, the love of God, the undeserved love of God that He simply grants to the elect.

He gives that love to us. He sets His mercy upon us. It is a sovereignly given mercy. And it's by that mercy that He has caused us to be born again.

[7 : 19] Paul speaks about that kind of mercy. If you want to hold your place there in 1 Peter and turn over to the book of Romans, chapter 9, Paul speaks of God's saving mercy to us and how God gives it in His sovereignty.

And he speaks about it by looking at a common objection to the idea that God would sovereignly grant mercy to some people. In verse 14 of Romans, chapter 9, he says, What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? Is it unjust for God to give mercy to some and not to others? And this is what he says. By no means, because he says to Moses, I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion.

Note this verse. So then it depends not on human will or on exertion, but on God who has mercy. It's all of mercy and grace.

It is fully by God's mercy that we have been born again. God has caused us to be born again. You can't have the future hope of which we're going to speak this morning unless you have that past foundation, that work that God began in your heart and did by his own grace and mercy.

[8 : 41] He causes us. He causes us to be born again. And now because of that, we are born into something. We are born unto something.

There is something held out for all those who have experienced God's saving mercy. And as I said before, he describes it with three descriptive phrases that help us from sort of different angles to come to understand what eternity is really all about.

Because we all have these sort of concepts that we've either inherited from maybe other preachers that we've heard or maybe we've just kind of inherited it from things that we've heard in the culture or things that we've assumed on our own.

We all have these visions of what heaven might be like or ideas of what eternity might be like. And what we need to do is lay all those preconceptions aside and see what the Bible reveals to us about eternity.

I just kind of blew an overview of what he says here. He begins by saying that we are born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[9 : 48] It's a living hope, he says. And the reason why our hope is a living hope is because it is connected, he says, to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If we have in our minds some notion about heaven that means that we will be floating in these bodiless sort of spiritual forms in the clouds strumming, I don't know, spiritual harps for all eternity, then we have an image in our head that we've inherited from Tom and Jerry and not from the Bible.

Because the Bible doesn't hold out for us the hope that we will escape our bodies. That's Greek philosophy. That's mythology. Our goal is not to escape our bodies.

There will be a temporary period of time when we die, when we are separated from our bodies. But the Scriptures tell us that God raised Christ as a first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

In other words, we will be raised as Christ was raised. Our hope is a living hope because our hope is founded upon His resurrection. Because He has been raised from the dead. Because He has been, He has received a glorified, perfected body.

We too have the hope that one day we will receive a glorified, perfected body. And we need glorified bodies. These things just aren't going to work forever. They're not going to do the trick.

[11 : 06] And even if we could somehow maintain them for a long period of time, they don't really work all that well. And for some of us, they don't really look all that well. We need something that's an improvement. We need something that's better.

I mean, I have to work out four days a week, not so that I can lose weight and look a whole lot better, but just so that I can stay this way. And this way's not all that great. Alright?

We need something better. And that something better is founded on and grounded in the resurrection of Jesus. That's the first thing that we need to know about eternity.

It's not a bodiless existence. It's not a soul freed of captivity to the body. It is a full life in a body experienced. Secondly, he tells us not only that we are born again to a living hope, but he says that we are born to an inheritance.

And then he describes that inheritance. He says that it is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. The first word and the last word are closely related to that idea of resurrection.

[12 : 16] Because imperishable is simply the meaning that it won't die anymore. The inheritance that we're going to receive is an inheritance that cannot die. It cannot lose life.

It's imperishable. And not only that, but it's unfading, which means that it also doesn't decay.

Everything that we experience in this world goes from a better estate to a worse estate.

Everything around us. It takes, for instance, it takes an incredible amount of work to maintain a bridge. Just a bridge. Just a simple, regular bridge.

It takes a massive amount of work. It's not just a matter of, you don't just build a bridge and then leave it there and it's fine for the next 50 or 100 years. Constantly, engineers and workers are having to go and replace parts and repaint things and remove rust and that's just for a bridge.

Everything that we are surrounded by decays and fades. And Peter says that our inheritance, what awaits us in the future, will not fade.

[13 : 22] It will not decay. It will remain as perfect as it is on the day we receive it. A million years later, 10 million, a billion years later, it will be as perfect as it was on the day when God gave us our inheritance.

But it's more than just lasting. It's more than that. Because this word in the middle, undefiled, it means that it's unstained by sin.

It's not beset by moral impurity. In case you haven't noticed, you are beset by moral impurity.

You are. I am beset by moral impurity. It's not just crazed bombers who kill people and injure dozens who are beset with impurity.

It's all of us. We are a depraved, sinful people. And yes, if we have been born again, the Spirit is working upon us and improving us and making us less sinful each day as He works upon our hearts.

[14:27] But we are still a sinful, sinful people. We are not pure by any means. And yet, Peter tells us that there's coming a time in the future when all the moral impurity fills us and surrounds us will be wiped away.

No more. No more temptation. No more stumbling. No more falling. No more guilt. No more need to come and beg for forgiveness.

No more confession. No more. All impurity is removed on the day when we receive this inheritance. inheritance. And, he says, this inheritance is, and this great living hope is a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

You see that in verse 5? We are guarded through faith for or unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. That's a revealing phrase because it's ready.

In other words, all that needs to be done for us to receive this inheritance and for us to receive this living hope. It's been done. It is prepared. It is ready.

[15:50] And yet, it will not be fully revealed until the last time. We typically think of salvation as something that happened to us. So we say things like, well, when were you saved?

Or, you know, I was saved when I was 16 or I was saved when I was 32 or something. We tend to think of salvation as an event that occurs in the past. And that's not necessarily wrong because the Bible often speaks of salvation in that way.

Ephesians 2, verse 8 tells us, for by grace you have been saved. That's a past event. That's something that occurred. It continues to have ongoing effects but it's something that occurred at a point in time in your life.

So the Bible speaks oftentimes of salvation as something that happens to us in the past or happened at one time to us in the past. But it also speaks of salvation as something happening to us now in the present and it holds out salvation as something awaiting us in the future.

Because salvation is more than the forgiveness of your sins. Salvation is more than being justified by faith before God. It is not less than those things but it's more than those things and Peter tells us that in the last time full, final, complete salvation will be ours.

[17:05] It will be ours to be had never taken away. It's a living hope. It's an indescribable inheritance and it is a salvation prepared and made ready to be given to us at the last time when Christ returns to claim his people.

But how do you know if it's yours? How do you know if you're going to receive the inheritance? Because an inheritance by its very nature doesn't belong to everybody, right?

An inheritance belongs to the son. It belongs to the children of the one who leaves it. So how do you know if the inheritance is yours? Well, you would say, well, it belongs to all those who've been born again.

That's the easiest answer we can find. It belongs to those who have been born again. But how do you know you've been born again? And if you have been born again, what assurance can you have that that great gift of the new birth is not going to be taken away from you?

I mean, is it possible? Could it happen that you might do something or you might make some sort of decision so that you would lose your new birth? So that you would lose the hope of resurrection?

[18:17] So that you would no longer have an inheritance? I don't think so. Notice what Peter says. This inheritance is not only undefiled, imperishable, unfading, but he says in the middle of verse 4, it is kept in heaven for you.

It is kept. It is held onto. It is reserved in heaven for you who have been born again. It is not a gift that can be given and taken away.

It is being kept, held onto for you. And if that's not enough, it's not only the inheritance that's being kept. Listen to how he describes those for whom the inheritance is held.

Verse 5, you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for that salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The inheritance is being kept, the inheritance is being guarded, and then Peter uses a synonym, a word that means something very similar to the word keep. He says that it's being guarded or we are being guarded or kept ourselves.

[19 : 23] The power of God, the omnipotent power of God, this very same power by which we have been born again, the very same power by which God has given spiritual life to us, is the same power that holds us and keeps us so that that life will never leave us.

It is the power of God that keeps us and holds us. But notice how it works. we are guarded, we are kept by God's power through faith.

Don't ever get into your mind this notion that, well, if God really is sovereign in the distribution of mercy, and if it is true, as verse 1 tells us, that there are some who are elect, if those sorts of things are indeed true, then it doesn't really matter what we do.

It doesn't really matter if you believe or don't believe because God is sovereign and He has chosen some and not others and so there you have it. Don't ever get those kinds of thoughts in your mind because the inheritance is given to those who believe and we are guarded and protected until that day through faith.

Through faith. It means that all those who have been born again have been initiated into a life of faith. faith. And if God has the power to create faith in the hearts of hearts that were once dead, in the hearts and minds of people who were once, Paul says, enemies of God, if God has the power to create that kind of faith in our hearts, He has the power to maintain that faith.

[21 : 06] And it is that maintained faith that becomes our assurance so that we know the inheritance is ours. The hope belongs to us and the salvation will be ours on that day.

So there's a very simple question to answer. Do you believe? Do you believe in Christ? Do you treasure Christ? Do you wholeheartedly long to know Him and serve Him?

That's what Peter's talking about when he says that we are guarded through faith. The power of God, the overwhelming, unimaginable, omnipotent, infinite power of God is not unable to give you a faith that endures.

Do you understand that? God is not unable to give you a faith that can last through painful days. He's not unable to give you a faith that can endure cancer.

He's not unable to give you faith that can endure broken families and broken hearts and shattered dreams. He's not unable to give you a faith that can endure those sorts of things.

[22 : 30] And so the question that we must ask ourselves is, do we have that faith? Do we have the kind of faith that endures through anything, whatever may strike us, whatever may hit us, does our faith endure it?

And if it does, we can be assured that the inheritance is ours. And if you don't have that kind of faith, if it's not yours, and you feel no sense of assurance, and you think, I'd like to have an inheritance, I'd like to have something like that, then all you need to do is come before Him and ask and receive from Him.

You see, sometimes we begin to think that if God is sovereign, He's going to do what He's going to do, and my prayers don't matter either. But if God is sovereign, and if He is a God who answers prayer, is He not a God who has ordained that you might ask Him for the very thing that He plans to give you?

Is He not a God who has planned not only the gift, but the means by which He might give you that gift? He is. Come to Him.

Pray the prayer of the man who fell before Jesus and said, I believe, but help my unbelief. I want real faith. I want enduring faith.

[24 : 08] I want to be kept by the power of God through faith. I want it. Come and ask and receive the gift of God.

Let's pray. We have held out for us an unimaginable gift in this inheritance, Father.

Unimaginable because the psalmist says, you are the strength and the portion. You are my portion. You are our inheritance.

And we cannot even begin, we cannot even begin to fathom what that means. Maybe there is someone.

Maybe there are several someones here who do not have the hope of eternal life, do not have the hope of an inheritance reserved in heaven for them because they haven't trusted in Christ.

[25 : 27] And I pray that you would do such a work in their hearts that they would trust right now, this morning. It's in Jesus' name that I ask these things.

Amen.