

Praise God For Our Future Inheritance

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[0:00] Last week we looked at Peter's opening greeting here in verses 1 and 2, which functions as a really helpful introduction to the material of the letter.

! If you remember, he does something specific there that's helpful for us to remember as we work our way through the letter. He characterizes these Christians as spiritual exiles. Not meaning that they are being punished by God as exiles for something that they have done. Not even necessarily meaning that they are physical exiles in the sense of being displaced from a particular community or a particular land.

They're spiritual exiles in the sense that they are strangers in this world. That's who we are as believers. We serve a different king.

We belong to a different kingdom. A different country. And our time here is purposeful. It's intentional. God's glory is to be displayed through us.

[1:04] But this is never to feel like home. We are exiles here. Waiting for our king to return and to take us home. And of course, such an existence is obviously full of hardships.

And Peter addresses many of those hardships throughout the letter. But still, the purpose of his writing is not just to show these Christians that they can survive the exile.

It's more than that. He's writing so that they might understand that they can actually thrive in it. That you and I, as God's people, we don't have to struggle in the sense of just hoping to make it to the end.

Even though most days feel that way. No, Peter writes to say, no, there's a way that despite the hardships and despite the temptations and despite the sufferings, you can actually thrive in this time of exile, in this time as a stranger in the world.

And that's really the purpose of the letter. By God's grace, that's what we will do. We'll thrive. Our text today in verse 3 begins the first major section of the letter which focuses on the call to salvation.

[2:21] In order to thrive in exile, we must remember who we are in Christ and live our lives in light of that new identity.

And a focus on this gospel identity that's rooted in the person and the work of Jesus Christ will show itself supremely in sincere and joyful worship.

And that's precisely where Peter begins. Look with me at verses 3 to 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. Now I want you to notice that Peter's first order of business was not to confront those who were conforming to the world in which they lived. It wasn't to instruct those on how to handle their persecutors on how to exist in that kind of environment.

[3:53] That's not the first order of business here. Instead, Peter's first objective is to call us to worship. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ he opens the primary content of the letter as a matter of first importance Peter is recalibrating our focus he's reorienting our hearts to a sincere and joyful burst of praise to God if you're new to Christianity you're just trying to sort things out there's there's something that you need to notice here in this opening praise

blessed be the god and father of our lord jesus christ he says he doesn't call us to worship some generic god in the great unknown this is this is not the god of islam this is not the god of orthodox judaism this is not a god of any other religion don't let anybody ever tell you that we're all basically serving the same god we're just all doing it in a different kind of way that's not true there's a specific thing that peter says here in this praise that makes it distinctly christian he says that we are to bless our god and father the god and father of our lord jesus christ in other words the way that we relate to god is through our lord jesus christ we know him not only in his creation but supremely because he has been revealed in the son jesus christ it is jesus who reveals the father to us it is jesus who gets us to the father through his atoning sacrifice christianity fundamentally is us coming to god through the work of the son and that's who peter calls on us to worship here now why is it so important for peter to start this way just consider the nature of the condition of these people to whom he was writing he's already characterized them as exiles that that word is loaded with significance in this letter as you read through the letter you find that some of them are really facing intense suffering not just the suffering that all of us face in a fallen world but suffering as specifically because they are followers of jesus christ that's their circumstances their condition some of them are battling through temptation at this point because they're they're getting to a point it's getting really hard to live distinctly in this world it's getting increasingly more difficult for them to represent their king in this exile they're struggling with sin some of them are struggling with doubts many of them are just struggling why is it important that peter starts this way for struggling christians for strangers for strangers in this world worship can very quickly grow cold can't it the various difficulties that we endure as believers in this life they can overwhelm our joy they can distract us from the hope that god has given us in christ jesus and yet peter reminds us right here from the very beginning we were created to worship that's our purpose through sin we fall short of that purpose and yet through christ that purpose has been redeemed god is calling out his people why in order that they might bring him glory

and peter starts right here from the very beginning and he says look i know you're struggling so why don't we just start with a worship service peter says blessed be the god and father of our lord jesus christ you know many times what we really need most is not necessarily for our problems to be fixed or for our circumstances to be changed what we need is for someone to simply remind us of the glories of the gospel and call us back to a sincere and joyful praise of god and we're to be thankful for peter in this in this instance because many of us are struggling all of us for different reasons maybe it's a season of life maybe it's a particular hardship and yet all of us who are in christ can lift this same praise that peter calls on us to lift peter helps us here he lifts our heads he lifts our hearts to the magnitude of god's great salvation now this call to worship it's it's going to run all the way through from verse 3 to verse 12 and it's focused entirely on god's grace and salvation we are to praise god in other words for the salvation that god has brought us through jesus christ there's various ways that we speak about this salvation and they're represented in these few verses that peter gives us here sometimes we speak of salvation in the past tense that we were saved or we have been saved what we mean by that is there was a time in our lives where we were converted to the gospel of jesus christ to faith in the lord jesus christ the spirit bringing us to life and we trusted in him we say say we're saved past tense sometimes we speak of our salvation in the present tense don't we we think of the fact that we are being saved that is by god's gracious work he is sanctifying his people he's purifying us he's making us holy in this life presently still there's other times we speak of salvation in the future tense one day we will be saved there is a future dynamic to our salvation an eschatological dimension to our future salvation and that's what peter has in mind here in verses 3 to 5 this future this future eschatological reality of salvation and he

speaks of it in unique terms he speaks of it here as an inheritance so believers are to praise god for their future inheritance peter says an inheritance that does not come in its fullness now an inheritance that is promised to us and is waiting for us beyond this time of exile and by doing that by being cognizant of living in light of the gospel by praising god for this future inheritance we start this journey of not surviving the exile thriving in the exile there's three dynamics of this eternal inheritance that i think should motivate our sincere and joyful worship number one notice we are to praise god for the right to this future inheritance we're to praise god for the right to this future inheritance look again at verse 3 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 and what is it that we have been born again to he tells us in verse 4 to an inheritance now the concept of inheritance it isn't foreign to us at all an inheritance simply is the passing of something from one generation to another sometimes we we speak of an inheritance as inheriting certain physical characteristics or personality traits from our parents right look around the room at the kids who are here there's really no question which kids belong to amy blevins which kids belong to jenny allen which kids belong to julie blankenship right there's certain things about them they inherit through their parents right but most of the time when we think of an inheritance we're not so much thinking of inheriting certain traits we're thinking of inheriting possessions or wealth and the thing about an inheritance is that it's not something you can just simply claim for yourself an inheritance is something that is given to you not based on something that you do not based on a means of earning or even something that you deserve it's based on the virtue of who you are a birthright it is given to sons and daughters and this is how Peter speaks of our salvation in verse three it is an inheritance to be received in full after our exile but what gives us the right to this eternal inheritance well he says it is given to us by virtue of our birth not a physical birth a spiritual birth notice what he says according to his great mercy God has caused us to be born again the new birth the spiritual birth to an inheritance we receive the internal inheritance of eternal salvation by virtue of the new birth and that new birth comes from God to receive this salvation to receive this inheritance in other words you must be born again let's just look a little closer at how Peter describes this first he tells us that the new birth is undeserved and it is undeserved because it is according to God's great mercy do you see that he says it is according to his great mercy that he has caused us to be born again now there is a lot of words Peter could have used here he could have said that this was according to God's great kindness he has caused us to be born again he could have said this is according to God's great love that he has caused us to be born again both of those things would be absolutely true but that is not what Peter says why does he use mercy I think what Peter's doing is reminding us that God doesn't actually owe us anything by nature we are not his children by nature we're his enemies fallen in rebellion dead in our trespasses and sins he doesn't owe us anything Peter says you are born again today if you're a Christian you're born again first because of God's mercy it's not because you deserve it it's because he is a merciful God remember the Bible tells us that apart from the Lord Jesus Christ there is not a person on this planet who is truly righteous that apart from God's gracious work in our lives no one even really seeks for God we talk about seekers sometimes in [16:52] Christianity right those who seem to be seeking for something more seeking for God seeking for truth certainly we want to have a category for that but Romans 3 it tells us plainly that no one in and of themselves really even wants God we're his enemies by nature what does it take in order for us to become his children mercy mercy that's what Shane read to us just a moment ago in David's prayer from Psalm 51 David says have mercy on me oh God if you're a Christian you're right to this future inheritance you need to remember it's totally of God's great mercy and you know what that should do for you it should cause you to join Peter in saying blessed to be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ because I don't deserve anything he's given me but he is a merciful God second Peter tells us that the new birth is unearned it's undeserved because it's according to God's great mercy it's unearned because he says God has caused us to be born again of course we understand here born again is it's not a spiritual status that you receive after completing a series of steps along a religious journey it's not something you can choose it's not something you can earn in any sense of that word again Ephesians tells us we are dead in our trespasses and sins meaning we are utterly incapable of

obtaining spiritual life save that God the living one intervenes and invades who we are and brings us to life again this new birth it is something that happens to you by God's gracious initiative now where exactly does Peter get this idea is he just making this up is this just something that he's brought to mind and he thinks that maybe this is his interpretation on things related to the gospel and the way that God works so he decides he's going to throw this little phrase in there to trip us up no you know he gets this from Jesus doesn't he that great conversation that we read in John chapter three of Jesus with Nicodemus Jesus plainly tells Nicodemus he says unless you're born again you can't see the kingdom of God seeing the kingdom of God in Jesus words there is the same thing that Peter is saying when he talks about an eternal inheritance Jesus speaking of the kingdom same thing he's talking about salvation he's talking about eternal life and Jesus tells Nicodemus unless you're born again you can't have salvation and do you remember what

Nicodemus response was how is it possible do I have to go back into my mother's womb how is this actually possible I don't think Nicodemus was confused about what Jesus was saying he was a rabbinical teacher I think this probably was maybe an analogy that some rabbis would have used for different spiritual truths I don't think he's that disconnected from what Jesus is saying about the new birth I think his question is actually just to say how can I be born again if a new birth is what I need to see the kingdom how do I get that I know I can't go Nicodemus as the Lord is working on his heart as the spirit is working on his heart he already seems to be putting some of the pieces together I can't do this for myself and you remember how Jesus responds to that he says you know Nicodemus that which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born that way doesn't receive the kingdom of

God but that which is you know Nicodemus the spirit is like the wind you can't control him and you can't exactly discern everything that it's doing but the spirit he comes in and he he blows in with great effect and what is that effect faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and what is it based on not something that Nicodemus could do not something that Nicodemus chose but on the saving initiative of through the work of the Holy Spirit this new birth it's it's undeserved it's according to God's great mercy it's unearned because it is God who has caused us to be born again and third we find here that the new birth is unmistakable when it happens it can't be denied why because it results in a living hope through the resurrection of

[22:17] Jesus Christ from the dead now how exactly does God accomplish this work of the new birth how do we experience it what is its effect we understand theologically there's these things that are happening but what does it actually look like how do we actually come to be born again now Peter helps us a little bit later in the chapter just set your eyes on verse 23 he uses this terminology again Peter says since you have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable that is the spiritual birth not a physical birth through the living and abiding word of God now look at verse 25 and this word is the good news that was preached to you so what is Peter saying there he's helping us to understand how this actually happens how does

God bring about the new birth that is undeserved! and unearned well he does it through the preaching of the gospel that as the gospel is proclaimed the spirit of God the wind blows God's spirit comes in and brings us to life and that results in faith in the gospel message the gospel is preached the spirit regenerates and brings to life there's new birth and that is affecting a living hope a saving faith rooted in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead now the theological progression here is important it shouldn't be overlooked it's the very thing that's actually driving Peter's call to worship God's mercy comes to us through the preaching of the gospel he causes us to be born again by the spirit and the result of that new birth is a living hope and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ so what's Peter's main point then his point is that Christians are to praise God because his great mercy he's caused us to be born again to a living hope so that we might have the right to this future inheritance not on the basis of something we've done but on the basis of who we are in Christ we are his therefore we are to praise God even in the hardest parts of our exile number two we're to praise God for the right to the future inheritance secondly we're to praise God for the quality of the future inheritance look at verse four he has caused us to be born again to an inheritance and then he describes the inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept

in heaven for you now what exactly is this inheritance that's being kept for us that's eternal life salvation what was it that

Jesus said he said I have come that they may have life and that they may have life abundant John in John chapter three writes whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life what is this future inheritance It is an eternal life that is the living hope that is found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ it's not just that this is a spiritual life it's even a physical life because he rose from the dead so will all who are in him by faith because his resurrection was a bodily resurrection so will our resurrection be a bodily resurrection that's the nature of this life but what's the quality of it it's unlike anything that we have or ever will experience here in this life I think it's beyond what we can really comprehend end which

I think is why David Helms said Peter finds it difficult to find words to do justice in capturing the greatness of this future inheritance! So in describing it he can do no better than use three words that tell us what it's not it's not that he has all of this language to tell us what it will be like!

[26:58] it's but he can certainly point to a few things to say this is what it won't be like he gives us three first he says it's imperishable that is it's not able to be destroyed Christ having died for sin will never die again and if our life is hidden in Christ Jesus then that means that in the new life we will never die again it can't be destroyed it's it means it's not corrupted it's not polluted we're thinking about our sin nature at this point and original sin and how even in exile as believers with a new identity in Christ we still wrestle with our flesh and temptation and Peter says this new life I don't know exactly all that it's going to be but I can tell you it will be undefiled it will not be corrupted by sin it will not be polluted by a sinful nature and then third he says it's unfading meaning it's it's not subject to decay it won't fade away this may just sound like three basic synonyms but I think

Peter is doing something particular here by way of contrast he's helping us to grasp the beauty and the quality of the life that is being kept for us heaven here in exile our lives can be destroyed through great suffering and persecution but in heaven we will inherit a life that cannot be destroyed that's our inheritance here in exile our lives are corrupted by sin as we battle against the flesh but in heaven we will not only be free from the power of sin we will be free from the presence of sin no longer corrupted by the nature we inherited from Adam that's our inheritance here in exile our bodies are subject to decay fading on and on as the years go by you know what this is like we can look around we're praying for for

Bob we're praying for Marty they know they know immediately exactly what the hope is that Peter is giving to Christians when he says this new life will be unfading it won't decay we'll be in a place and we'll experience a life an eternal body that will never again endure sickness and cancer and pain or decay of any kind that's our inheritance Peter says it's imperishable it's undefiled it's unfading and God is keeping it just as it is for you what an incredible encouragement this must have been to these Christians in Asia what a joy it must have brought to their hearts to think about what was waiting for them beyond their exile what a joy for us Andrew Wilson published an article with the gospel coalition this week it was so good it was basically a book review of two secular books that were recently written that were really looking back on sociologically on the nature of what we have experienced over maybe the last 15 to 20 years one of them focuses especially on the summer of 2020 which is a summer that probably all of us would love to forget about and he's bringing various events to the surface right global pandemic contentious political election the death of George Floyd so on and so forth things just are exacerbated from there it gets worse and worse and there's all of this carry over from that sociologically in the life that we're living today the other book is it's called We Were Never Woke and basically it's not a Christian book it's not even really a conservative book but it's looking back really going all the way back to 2008 and it's examining what has led us to this moment and it talks about social capital that really the wokeness that is being portrayed if that's the word you want to use it's not legitimate that if we just look at the data what's behind this is not legitimate and Andrew Wilson he writes and he says both of these books are worth reading and he says the glaring weakness in both books though is that for all of the devastation that they present for all of the triggers that they present probably for some of us mentally and emotionally they don't offer a single piece of hope no hope for the future no hope that

things will get better and everybody's looking for hope and we'll try to find it anywhere we can we'll look for it in politics we'll look for it in education we'll look for it in wealth or in our careers we'll look for it in friendships and relationships we'll look for it in family we'll look for it in all these places and all of those things are empty hopes they're not living hopes and then

Peter comes alongside those of us who have experienced this in the last few years of our life all of us together just by virtue of existing in the United States the last five years and we say you know what I don't have a hope here but I do have a certain hope ahead and it fills me with joy which should lead us to burst with praise why because the inheritance that we have is of a quality that we could never even imagine it's imperishable it's undefiled it's unfading and God is keeping it for you and it will be yours third we're to praise God for the certainty of the future inheritance so we're praising God for the right to it he has caused us to be born again we're praising God for the quality of it all of the things that Peter just mentioned in verse four and then we get to the end and we say okay we're to praise God for the certainty of it the difficulties that we experience when thinking about this inheritance as exiles here is coming to terms with the fact that it is actually indeed future it's kept in heaven

[33:50] Peter says in verse four it's a salvation ready to be revealed not today maybe not tomorrow but in the last time the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and that's hard isn't it because life hits pretty hard now this time of exile can be seriously difficult and we may begin to wonder about the certainty of what God has promised we may be plagued with doubts about whether or not we can even make it to the end still believing and it is the certainty of those that those who are born again will receive this eternal salvation that Peter takes up in this final statement and once again he rested all ultimately on the power of God at work in us look again at verse five it is 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 how can we be sure that this inheritance is ours how can we be certain that we will truly inherit this kind of life in eternity well the necessity of faith cannot be overlooked in this verse

Peter makes it clear that we are being guarded through faith faith here is a continuing trust in the Lord Jesus Jesus Tom Schreiner said Peter does not conceive of a faith of faith as a single isolated act genuine faith persists he says until the day of redemption there is no salvation apart from continuing faith and thus faith is a condition for obtaining the eschatological inheritance but look back at the verse and Schreiner is exactly right but look back at the verse notice who is guarding this faith that you are being guarded by God's power through faith which leads Schreiner to then say 1 Peter 1 5 contains a remarkable promise God's power protects us because his power is the means by which our faith is sustained our assurance then and our certainty then it rest ultimately not on who we are what we're doing it rest ultimately on the power of God to guard us to the very end we've sung about it over and over this morning in the various songs that this salvation comes from God it is given to us by God and we are kept by God for it so what's the point here what is Peter saying well you can take courage in the certainty that you will receive this inheritance because the same God who is keeping it in heaven is keeping you until the time that he sees fit to reveal it salvation is being kept for us and we are being kept for it therefore bless be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ because he has caused us to be born again to an inheritance that's imperishable and it's kept in heaven for us who by his power are being guarded through faith so that we will actually receive the inheritance that he has promised lost we sing it from time to time he'll not let my soul be lost his promises shall last bought by him at such a cost he will hold me fast I know sometimes you may feel as a Christian that all you can do is cling barely but you know where your assurance really lies it's not in your ability to hold on to him it's on his power to hold on to you therefore praise God in your exile for he is keeping you well thriving in exile it doesn't begin with fixing our problems it begins with worshiping the God of our great salvation he's provided an eternal inheritance the quality of which is unlike anything we've ever known through his mercy he's given us the right to this inheritance through the new birth so that all our hope and faith rest in the resurrection of the

Lord Jesus from the dead and while he keeps our inheritance secure in heaven he is guarding us by his power so that our faith in Christ is sustained until the very end why because our faith follows the new birth and if it's his power that brings about the new birth it's his power that will keep us to the end so for all of this and more we can join with Peter and exclaim blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ let's pray together let's■