

A Kept Inheritance for a Kept People

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Okay. Let's turn once again this evening to the first letter of Peter. First Peter and chapter one. And we can read again at verse three.

And tonight we're reading, we're looking at verses four and five. As these follow on from verse three. First Peter chapter one and verse three.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he hath 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 or being kept through faith.

For a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Now let's just remind ourselves of the important links that we saw in the passage so far.

[1 : 04] We've seen in chapter, in verse three rather of the chapter, the link that's there between being born again to a living hope. Or being begotten to a living hope.

The link between that and the resurrection of Christ. This living hope that God's people possess is anchored in, it's grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And now the second link that we find that's important is that not only have we been brought or begotten to a living hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

But that's also brought us into the possession of an inheritance. And these are important links, not only here but also in Paul's writing.

We read in Ephesians, for example, how some of these links are put together by him. And the links between being born again or rebirth and our adoption, our being adopted by God spiritually so as to be his family.

[2 : 08] And how that involves the hope, the same as Peter is speaking of here, the hope that's attached to Christ's resurrection. And also the possession of an inheritance.

Let's just remind ourselves of how that was set out in Ephesians and chapter 1. Where in verses 4 and 5, for example, he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

We saw that that was related to how Peter begins this first letter that these people are chosen people of God. Well, here is Paul saying that God has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world so that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love he predestined us for adoption. That was his purpose in this predestining of us to be adopted as children through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will.

And then he goes on to speak about having redemption through the blood of Christ and so on, making known to us the mystery of his will. In him, in verse 11, we have obtained an inheritance.

[3 : 18] Same emphasis there as inheritance in the case of Peter as well. And all the way through there in verses 11 to 14, you have the combination of hope and the inheritance.

And he finishes off in verse 14 there by saying that the Holy Spirit who comes to occupy our souls, who comes to live in God's people as his chosen people and adopted into his family, he has given us, we were sealed with that spirit, that Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.

And if you were to go to Romans, you'd find in Romans chapter 8 verses very similar to that, where it speaks about adoption, God's grace of adoption, and then how that is connected to Jesus and how in that connection we've come to have an inheritance as well.

So these things are linked in God's salvation and they're very important links. Links between the rebirth and adoption and hope and the inheritance that belongs to God's people.

And here tonight, we're looking at the link especially between the hope that's mentioned in the previous verse and this inheritance. He has caused us to be born again to a living hope and to an inheritance that is imperishable and undefiled and unfading.

[4 : 44] And we can focus our minds on the two verses by looking at the way that, first of all, the inheritance is referred to as kept or reserved to an inheritance kept in heaven for you.

And secondly, the people for whom this inheritance is being kept are being kept with a view to the inheritance. In other words, as they go through this life in this world, God is keeping them, God is guarding them, God is giving them the security that will actually, when they're finished with this world, and when Jesus again returns, as we'll see, then they come to occupy that inheritance that has been kept for them.

In other words, we're looking tonight really at a study that you could summarize by saying it's a kept inheritance for a kept people. The inheritance kept by God is made certain for them.

And as they are kept by God, so the certainty of that keeping will bring them finally and fully into that inheritance. So here's the kept inheritance, first of all, and look at, firstly, the qualities that are mentioned there.

He has caused us to be born again to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Three words that describe this inheritance.

[6 : 13] Now, isn't it interesting and significant that when we try, even in the Bible, to come to things which are unseen, which belong to eternity or to our salvation, very often you'll find them described by way of taking things that we're familiar with in this life and then thinking of their very opposite.

Here he is saying this inheritance is incorruptible, imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. And that's things that are entirely opposite what you're familiar with in this life.

First of all, imperishable means that in its substance, the substance of this inheritance, the properties of it, are imperishable. They're not subject or prone to decay.

And it doesn't matter what kind of inheritance you think of in this life, and however much that inheritance contains things which may last for a long time, they're not in our own possession if we come to have an inheritance passed on to us.

They're not in our own possession for all that long because we ultimately die as well. And maybe the thing that's passed on to us will itself be prone to decay even before we die.

[7 : 30] And it becomes of little or no use or value as time goes on. Well, it's saying this inheritance is the opposite of that. It is imperishable.

It is not subject to decay. Nothing of decay can enter into it at all. It is something that remains in its pristine condition without any possibility that this inheritance, this heaven, this salvation in Christ, that it will be in any way other than an inheritance that is imperishable.

Then he says undefiled. That means obviously not stained. It retains its 100% purity. That's why the Bible talks about the purity that God works and ultimately perfects in God's people, in his people.

That's called holiness. That holiness that comes to perfection before we are, as we come to occupy heaven, God will take us to heaven.

But the Bible tells us without holiness, no one shall see the Lord. Holiness is our being brought from what is its opposite in our sinfulness and lostness to being perfectly, in God's sight and in God's view, perfectly holy, so as to enter into that holy place that heaven itself is.

[9 : 00] Nothing will enter into it, as Revelation describes it in that way of a city. Nothing will enter into it that defiles, that has to do with untruth or a lie.

But it's the very opposite of that in its undefiledness, and it retains that, and it's also unfading. Imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

Well, everything in this life loses its beauty, doesn't it? And Peter was very much aware, of course, as we saw, of the kind of experiences these people were going through, the difficulties and the challenges and the trials that they experienced.

And all the way through life you're conscious of things which are once beautiful but fade and don't retain their luster or their beauty. You find that with not only things that we possess, but you actually find that with our own persons, where our beauty withers and fades.

And we can't hold on to even the most precious things we have in this life, and the precious things are especially people. This life is characterized and marked by perishableness.

[10 : 24] By fading. By being transient. By not lasting long. And in relation to them.

By not lasting long. And being taken from us. And ourselves subject to decay. There is, of course, as Peter well knows, the sorrow, the pains, the trials that all of that involves. In our human experience. And in our Christian experience as well. So here is what he's saying about this inheritance. Here is an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. The greatest masterpieces in this world require to be retouched, required to be redone, remastered, if you like. But this, this inheritance, this glorious inheritance that's in heaven, has these qualities. And, of course, that's something designed, really, for those that Peter was writing to in their circumstances. This is all designed to bring them assurance, to bring them more certainty, to bring them comfort, to bring them encouragement, to actually give them that strength to go on with their Christian journey.

[11 : 45] And it's important that the next thing he says is also seen in that light. It's an inheritance that's kept in heaven for you. Who does it belong to? It belongs to these people.

It belongs to these chosen people of God. It belongs to these elect exiles, as it's called here. Yes, they're badly treated in this world. They're ridiculed. They're not very well thought of.

They have much taken from them that they would have liked to have retained. They know of this world being a very, very obvious desert for them as they go through it.

But he says, you have an inheritance, and you have an inheritance that's kept for you. You're experiencing all of these rigors in this world and all of these trials that you're going through, these afflictions.

And we'll see that in the next study, actually, where he's saying that in this, though now for a little time, if necessary, you've been grieved by various trials. And what he's assuring them of, yes, this world for you has all of these trials, some of them totally unexpected, some of them really wounding you right to the very marrow of your soul.

[12 : 59] But beyond this life, and by God's provision and God's grace, you have this inheritance that's marked by these great qualities, that it is imperishable, that it is undefiled and unfading, and that it's kept for you.

Nobody can take this from you, he's saying. They can deprive you of much else. They can deprive you of your comfort, of your liberties, of your freedom. They can spoil your good name.

They can mistreat you. They can misrepresent you. But they cannot possibly touch your inheritance. They cannot deprive you of it. They can't affect it being reserved in heaven for you.

And there's a wonderful comfort for them straight away that they can think of having this inheritance secure, whatever happens to them in this life.

This is not going to change. Of course, we're very familiar with people who say to us, well, really, you know, all of these things are just fine-sounding theories or ideas that Christians have made up or that the church has formulated over many years in its teachings.

[14 : 12] But they're not real. It's not a reality. It's something that's just an invention, mostly to take your mind off the terrible things that happen in this life to people and the hurt and the sorrow that they have to go through.

And these things in the Bible are just a kind of crutch that's given so that we'll feel better, so that we'll actually have some sort of easing of the smart or the wounding that this life actually contains for us.

Well, really, if they're not certain, how can they possibly be of any help? Where do you get help and support from an idea, from something that's just an invention to make you feel better, but doesn't really exist?

Doesn't make sense, does it? But this makes sense, that God is saying to us, this inheritance for God's people, for my people, is actually reserved in heaven for you.

It has your name on it. It's set apart specifically for you, so that when this life of trial and sorrow is done, you will enter into this reality, because it is real.

[15 : 23] As Paul said to the Corinthians in his second letter, we look towards those things which are unseen, for the things which are seen are temporal, whereas the unseen things are eternal.

These are the realities. And tonight you have no hope whatsoever unless it is based on reality, on certainty, and the things that God is telling us, these are the certainties.

You don't find certainties in the teachings of humanism, or atheism, or secularism. They're not certainties. They're not certain about anything, except that they're presently living in this life.

They have no certainty as to when, where things are going to end. The only certainty they will tell you about, those of them who believe this, and most of them do, is that this life is all there is to it. Thankfully, you and I have been given the gift of a Bible by God, this Word of God, where he tells us, yes, this life is uncertain for us, although there are certainties within it.

[16 : 35] But the certainties that our life has to be based on are not certainties of this world. They're the certainties of this inheritance, of this salvation, of this Jesus Christ, and of his resurrection.

they're the realities, they're the certainties. That's what really feeds their hope. You see, there's the connection.

What is it tonight that's going to feed this living hope that's mentioned in verse 3, the living hope of God's people? What's going to feed that? What's going to really nourish that?

What's going to cause that to increase in the way that it works? Well, certainties. You don't feed your hope by something that's uncertain.

That's the worldly idea of hope. You hope for something, but you're not sure if it'll ever take place.

That's not the hope of God's people. That's not the living hope that God has created in the hearts of his people.

[17 : 35] But it's this hope, a hope that's firstly anchored in the resurrection of Christ, that great reality, and the hope that reaches forward and anticipates, and indeed at times at least eagerly anticipates, what is beyond this life, this inheritance of the Lord's people.

And this is not going to change whatever things in this life changes, whatever changes we're aware of in this life, this is not going to change. We think of an inheritance as something that comes to us having been willed to us by someone else, and it becomes a property or possession once that person dies.

The will that they've made is then enacted in a way that its contents then come to be in the possession of the person who is the recipient or the beneficiary of that will.

Now, Jesus, when he died, you can think of it as him writing out his will, his will spiritually for his people.

Just as surely as you could do that literally with a pen on a paper, Jesus spiritually, you can picture it writing his will, this is for you, he's saying, I'm laying down my life for my people, for my sheep.

[19 : 08] And the salvation that he purchased by his death, that's his will, that's what he makes over to us. That's what he's saying, I'm leaving this to you, to my people.

Now, is that going to change? Is that will of Jesus going to change? Well, wills in this life can change. People sometimes do change their will.

Sometimes you'll find somebody who's cut out of a will for whatever reason, or somebody who doesn't leave anything to their families and leave it to a dog's home or something like that. That's their choice.

But things like that change even with regard to inheritances in this life. God is saying, this inheritance is kept. And the only way that's going to change is if the impact and the achievement of Christ's death will change.

That's not going to happen, is it? So this will, this inheritance, it's all you see secured, it's reserved, it's kept in heaven for them.

[20 : 12] But then he says something else, ready to be revealed in the last time. Ready to be revealed in the last time. And that means at the coming of Jesus particularly.

But that tells you that this inheritance is already complete. this inheritance is ready. This inheritance has already been prepared by God.

You remember Jesus in John 14 saying that he was going to prepare a place for them as he spoke to the disciples. And he would come again and receive them to myself.

Well, he's done that. That inheritance is prepared. It's ready. It's finished. It's not being added to. It's not something that needs any final touches or alterations.

So why hasn't it been revealed? Why hasn't Jesus come back? Why hasn't this inheritance been unveiled? Well, Peter actually tells us that if you glance forward to his second epistle.

[21 : 22] And let me just take you to chapter 3 of Peter's second letter where he talks there about the end of the world effectively.

Some people are scoffing, he says, in verse 3 and verse 4 saying, where is the promise of his coming? Ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of

this creation.

But he says then, they deliberately overlook this fact. And it goes on to speak about verse 8, but do not overlook this one fact, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Why hasn't it been revealed? Why hasn't the end of the world come? Of course, there are other reasons that you could bring in from the Bible, but let's focus on this one.

[22 : 25] This is an important one. This is what Peter is saying. The reason it hasn't been unveiled or revealed, this inheritance still remains unrevealed. It's hidden.

It's still there in heaven, but it hasn't yet come to be unfolded so that everyone can see it. Why?

Because God is patient. It's not that God somehow is touching it up or putting the final touches to it or not ready for it yet to be revealed.

It is there. It is perfect. It's reserved. But God keeps on giving us what we call time. And why is that? Because he's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, that all should come to be saved through repentance from sin and faith in Christ, that they should all come, in other words, to have this inheritance in their possession before they die so that they don't die without the right to it, without the God-given right to it.

You've probably seen that programme from time to time on television called The Big Build, where Nick Knowles and others of his team, along with a lot of local help and volunteers, usually transform a house or usually a house or dwelling place mostly for people who have special needs and can't afford to do it themselves.

[23 : 58] So they draft in all of these workers that give of their labour freely and materials as well and the whole thing is transformed and specially made out for whatever special needs that person or people have.

And you know that at the end of the programme, after all the work is done, then people are taken in and then their eyes are unveiled. They actually open their eyes and they can then see the transformation.

Well, God's big build is ready. God's big build is complete. And at the moment, because of his patience with us, with sinners like you and I, it's not yet been revealed.

But you know when it is revealed, everybody will go, wow, I've never seen anything like that. So let me ask you, have you booked your place in this inheritance?

Have you booked your place? Have you come to repent of sin and trust in Christ? You've given your life over to him.

[25 : 14] Have you come to know what it is to have a living hope, to be an adopted child of God, to possess this inheritance, to look forward to it at the end of the world?

Do you have this inheritance in your grasp already? There is no inheritance for those who die without Jesus. Just the awful reality of hell, of being lost forever, of the wrath of God continuing upon them.

Please don't throw away this inheritance. Make it yours. Whoever has or hasn't it, don't let you for a moment longer continue without it.

It's there for the likes of us. needy sinners like you and I. And God is saying, in Jesus Christ, look what I'm offering to you.

Look what I've prepared for you. Look what's kept in heaven for my people. Will you not have it? Will you not gain possession to it?

[26 : 36] Will you not take this amazing gift of God, this big build that God has completed? It's a kept inheritance, but it's secondly a kept people for that inheritance.

Let's look at that briefly. It's being guarded, he says. The idea is being kept secure. These people for whom this inheritance is kept, who are by God's power being guarded or kept through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Now, not only are we comforted by the fact that this inheritance is kept by God, it's reserved, it's secure, but as God's people in this life, they too are kept for the inheritance.

They are guarded on the way. They are made secure so that they don't fall, so that they don't come short of possession. of their inheritance.

You remember in the Psalms, in Psalm 73, how the psalmist there as a man of God was making his confession of how he had been so envious at the wicked that he saw in the world, of how they seemed to have so few problems and difficulties and trials in their lives.

[27 : 57] He began to conclude wrongly in his own mind that perhaps he was wrong really in the life that he was living in obedience to God when he had all of these troubles and as that began to multiply in his thoughts, then he found himself, he went into the house of God, the sanctuary of God and then he said, I understood.

Then I realized how foolish I was. But you know in verse 2 of the Psalm near the beginning he says, this is where I was in my thinking. My feet had nearly slipped.

My feet had nearly slipped away. You and I face going through this life as Christians, we face the sinful heart that we have even as Christians, even as saved people, even as adopted children of God.

There is still that sin that draws us aside. There are all the temptations that are around us that seek to draw us away from obedience to Christ. There's all the assaults that the devil and the world that we know of exist around us and seek to trap us, to trip us up, to make us fall over.

And these people knew all of that that Peter was writing to and so he's saying to them, yes, you have all of these difficulties and you are being tested now, as he says in the next few verses, grieved by various trials.

[29 : 32] But not only do you have an inheritance kept for you, but you are kept for it. God is looking after you. God will not allow you to fall short of obtaining that inheritance at last.

Through all your sorrows, through all your trials, you're not kept from them. You're not kept in such a way that these sorrows and trials will not touch your life, will not come into your experience as a Christian.

But God is saying, while that is true, you're being kept through them. You're being kept from being crushed totally under them. You're being kept from falling away from the life of faith, even though there may be fluctuations in that too.

What is it that really guarantees that we will reach heaven at last? It's not our own obedience, it's not our own faithfulness, it's not just how good we've been at remaining close to Jesus.

You're kept by the power of God. Kept by the power of God. The power that brought you to life, the power that actually caused you to be born again to a living hope, that's the power that's looking after you, that ensures your security, that means you will actually come to occupy this inheritance that's marked out for you.

[30 : 59] And what a great comfort that is. Every Christian in this place tonight knows their own proneness to wandering, to failure, to following sin as it rises in their minds and in their hearts.

And if it was just our own ability and our own capacity that we were left with, we'd fall away. We wouldn't reach the end of the journey in our inheritance in heaven.

We are kept by the power of God. That's why we pray for God to keep us and to go on keeping us. That's why it's right every day to ask the Lord to keep us and to maintain us in his secure grasp. Remember Jesus in his wonderful emphasis as the good shepherd in John chapter 10?

Well he says, they shall never fall. My sheep, I know my sheep and they know me. I'm known by them. And they shall never perish. Why shall they never perish?

[32 : 04] Because they're reliable themselves? No. Because no one shall ever pluck them out of my father's hand. Or out of my hand, he puts it to.

I and the father are one. They are safe in the grasp of God. The power of God looks after them and ensures that they reach the end of their journey.

Are you looking tonight for safety in eternity and reaching that safety through something other than the power of God?

God, you will never reach it. But with God's power in your life, you're certain to reach it.

They are kept by the power of God. But then notice, they are kept by the power of God through faith. Isn't that interesting?

[32 : 58] Yes, it's God's power that's looking after them, but not detached from their own faith, from the faith that they're exercising. It's not God's power aside from their faith, nor is it their faith by itself that ensures that they continue and that they are kept.

They are kept by the power of God, but it's through faith, through their continuing to draw their strength from him, to trust in him, to go on believing in him, even when the going gets really tough.

they are still dependent on God's power to keep them. And that's how Peter encourages these people.

Tonight, you may be going through very considerable difficulty yourself. You may be having times of real struggle as a Christian.

Where do you find your comfort? comfort? What do you draw comfort from? Well, surely in this, at least, in part, that as one of God's people, you have the privilege of knowing that God has an inheritance kept for you, and that you are being kept by him for it through faith in himself.

[34 : 26] That's the order in which he puts it. That's what we have to keep in mind. that's how we are encouraged to continue to live for God and to seek God through all the difficulties and trials of this life.

In 1873, an American called Horatio Spafford wrote a hymn. And the background to that hymn is that that year, he he and his family, his wife and four daughters, decided they needed a holiday, so they were going to come across to Europe.

And he decided to come to England, because that's where a friend of his, the evangelist D.L. Moody, was at that time. And he had some business to finish himself in America, so he sent his wife and his four children, his four daughters, they were aged 11, 9, 5, and 2.

He sent them on on a voyage on a ship called the Ville de Havre. And coming across the Atlantic, that ship was hit by another ship.

and over 200 of its passengers were lost, including Stafford's, Spafford's, four daughters. His wife was saved, and when she got to England, she sent a telegram to him, and the telegram began with these two very sad words, saved alone.

[36 : 06] Saved alone. precious, precious children were lost at sea. And shortly afterwards, he made his voyage across the Atlantic, more or less going over the very place where they were lost.

And that's where he wrote these words. When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blessed assurance control that Christ has regarded my helpless estate, and hath shed his own blood for my soul.

My sin, all the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more.

praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul. But Lord, tis for thee, for thy coming we wait, the sky, not the grave, is our goal.

[37 : 20] O trumpet of the angel, O voice of the Lord, blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul. is it well with your own soul tonight?

Let's pray. Lord, we pray that you would give to us further assurance when we believe and trust in you, of all that you tell us in your word, even though we be buffeted in this life.

We pray for all your people here this evening. We pray that we might be further encouraged and comforted through all the sorrows and trials and difficulties that we encounter in this life.

We pray that you would help us to keep our mind upon the certainty of your triumphant resurrection, the certainty of that inheritance being kept for your people, and the certainty of our being kept unto it by the power of God.

We pray, Lord, for any tonight here who have not yet come to accept you, who are not yet saved, who have not yet come to close in with you, and accepted the invitation of the gospel.

[38 : 42] Lord, we pray that you would even tonight grant to draw them, join them to yourself savingly, give to them that inheritance, help them, Lord, we pray, in the desires of their heart to be fixed upon you and upon all that you have done, and assure them that they too are welcome to come to be children of God and to possess such a glorious inheritance as belong to the saints in light.

Receive our thanks and accept our worship, cleanse us from all our sin, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Let's conclude now our worship singing in Psalm 105, Psalm 105, and that's on page 138.

We're singing verses 1 to 11. Give thanks to the Lord God and call on his name, his wonderful deeds to the nations proclaim, sing praises to him and his exploits record, let all those who seek him rejoice in the Lord.

You chosen ones, look to the Lord and his might, seek ever his face and his wondrous sight, his miracles too and his judgments divine, you children of Abraham, Jacob's own line.

We'll sing verses 1 to 11 in conclusion. Give thanks to the Lord God and call on his name, his wonderful deeds to the nations proclaim, sing praises to him and his exploits record, let all those who seek him rejoice in the Lord.

[40 : 49] You chosen ones, look to the Lord and his might, seek ever his face and his wonders recite, his miracles too and his judgments divine, you children of Abraham, Jacob's own line.

The Lord is our God and he rules all the earth, remembering his covenant, the word he set forth, he vowed for the ages to come to make good, his promise to Abraham and Isaac.

Isaac, he knew, to Jacob, his sovereign, decree was made sure, with Israel, his covenant would always endure.

endure, to you I will give as your portion to stand, the country of Canaan, the beautiful land.

I'll go to this side or here this evening. may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.

[42 : 47] Amen. Amen. Thank you.