

The Inheritors – First Peter 1:3-5

I. Introduction:

- A. Tonight I was going to go to Peter's next major thought –
1. *"To an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and fading not away, reserved in heaven for you."*
 2. But I'm going to postpone that, because in order to fully understand it, we need to take a step back.
 3. Before we get to the inheritance we need to look more closely at the inheritors – the beneficiaries.
- B. To whom was Peter addressing this letter?
1. To people **"ELECT according to the foreknowledge of God."**
 2. To people **BEGOTTEN** of the Father, and to **HOPEFUL** people.
 3. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*
 4. But even before these things, Peter began to identify his readers by saying, *"To the **STRANGERS SCATTERED** throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia."*
 5. What I hope to show this evening is that only God's strangers can expect to receive God's inheritance.
 6. And in that light, we need to ask ourselves if **we** are among those people.
- C. As He does so often, the Lord providentially put something before me which I was not expecting, but which directly relates to our subject.
1. Just for my edification, I have been reading a little commentary on the **Book of Hebrews**, by William Barclay, a minister of Church of Scotland.
 2. Last Sunday I reached **Hebrews 11** in his book, and by Monday I was looking at **verses 8-16**.

II. Hebrews 11.

- A. Please turn to **Hebrews 11**, and follow along with me as I read about a man who was looking for a special inheritance from the Lord.
1. *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."*
 2. Let's skip over Abraham's wife, Sara, and begin again in **verse 13**.
 3. *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."*
- B. Notice some of the key words in this scripture:
1. **Verse 8** – *"inheritance"* – this is the same Greek word Peter uses.
 2. **Verse 9** – *"sojourned"* and *"strange country,"* taking us back to Peter's idea of *"strangers scattered."*
 - a. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in temporary tabernacles as they awaited their visas to enter the city whose building and maker is God.
 - b. Doesn't that remind you of what the Lord Jesus said: *"In my Father's house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you..."*
 3. **Hebrews 11:13** – *"strangers and pilgrims."* Abraham's family were travelers like John Bunyan's *"Pilgrim."*
 - a. They were persuaded that what God promised was true, even though the fulfillment was still future.
 - b. They could have returned to Haran or Ur, but they didn't.
 - c. They embraced the fact they were *"strangers and pilgrims."*
 4. **Verse 16** – The country & inheritance Abraham and his family were seeking were heavenly, not earthly.
 - a. And because of their faith, proven by their obedience, Jehovah was not ashamed to be called their God.

- C. What Barclay brought to my attention was the variety of synonyms used here in *Hebrews*.
1. He called them *"vivid Greek words,"* and I'll have to agree with him.
 2. In *verse 13* the Holy Spirit called Abraham & his family *"xenoï"* the plural of *"xenon"* translated *"strangers."*
 3. In the ancient world the life of the stranger was hard. Remember, people traveled very infrequently.
 - a. This was centuries even before Aquilla, Priscilla, Paul and Lydia, traveling around the Mediterranean.
 - b. And the stranger, with his strange language and customs, was regarded with suspicion, contempt, and sometimes hatred, even if he had something positive to share with his new neighbors.
 - c. For example, the pride found in the people of Sparta, made them think of the *"xenon"* as barbarians.
 - d. It was said that to live in one's own country in the poorest excuse of a house was better than to live in a mansion as a stranger in a foreign country.
 4. Abraham, our father in the faith, was a *"xenon."*
- D. In *verse 9* a different Greek word is used, speaking of a *resident alien* or perhaps a *refugee*.
1. It is used in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, to describe the Jews when they were captives in Babylon.
 2. The lives of the best of those captives was not good. They were not much more than slaves.
 3. Joseph in Egypt, and Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah in Babylon, were people like this.
- E. Then in *verse 13* the writer uses a third word which emphasized the stranger's temporary status.
1. He was someone who had a home in another place.
 2. And therefore he was not to be trusted, because he might leave at a moment's notice.
 3. What point is there in making friends with such a person? Why make partnerships with that person?
 4. He might be here today but gone tomorrow; translated at a moment's notice.
- F. In addition to the things I've already said about the readers of Peter's Epistle – elect, begotten, hopeful and strangers, there is one other thing we have to remember.
1. The Holy Spirit intended Peter's epistle *for you* and *me*. *WE* are those strangers.
 2. We are *"diaspora,"* scattered like seed grain across the plowed down wheat fields of this world.
 3. We may be living in Pontus, Galatia, Washington or Idaho, but our citizenship and inheritance is in Heaven.
 4. We may speak the language of the Inland Northwest, but I hope we often use words and subjects which belong to another kingdom.
 5. We may live in houses constructed of stick and brick, but we should look at them as mere tents – shelters in which to dwell for a little while before we move to the Promised Land and our inheritance.
 6. We may eat the same hamburger as our neighbors, but we enjoy manna from Heaven even more.
 7. Every day we should awaken with the lively hope of our translation or resurrection and of the inheritance which the omnipotent God has promised to them that love him.
 8. We are temporary residents, *"xenoï,"* resident aliens.
 9. And if this is not our attitude and perspective, then perhaps the inheritance will not be given to us.
- G. Thinking back upon *Hebrews 11*, what is the Holy Spirit's *great theme*? Isn't it *TRUST* in God?
1. *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*
 2. By faith Abel; by faith Enoch; by faith Noah; by faith Isaac; by faith the harlot Rahab; by faith Moses.
 3. *Verse 6* says – *"Without faith it is impossible to please (the Lord); for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* God is a rewarder.
 4. Wasn't Peter trying to remind his readers – *US* – to be content as scattered, suffering, persecuted strangers, because the Lord is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him?

III. What do strangers and pilgrims have to look forward to?

- A. The answer to that question rests in the kind of strangers we are.
1. The people who lived in Canaan when Abram, Sarai and Lot arrived were called *"Canaanites."*
 2. It was their land, the land of their fathers, and like most people they were probably quite possessive.

3. Abraham was nothing more than a “*xenon*,” an interloper, a trespasser.
 4. **Genesis 25** tells us, *“These are the days of the years of Abraham’s life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years (175) years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, full of years and was gathered to his people.”*
 5. He was buried in a cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, because He had no place of his own to lay his head. He died still awaiting the inheritance God had promised.
 6. *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.”*
- B. But you know, I think Ephron didn’t live any longer in Canaan than Abraham did, nor did any of his Hittite or Canaanite neighbors.
1. They were all as short-lived – as temporary and as transitory – as Abraham.
 2. But when **they** died, **they** didn’t possess the same inheritance as Jehovah’s friend.
- C. Whether or not it is always true of Isaac, Jacob and the strangers of Galatia, and Bithynia, according to the **Book of Hebrews**, Abraham never lost his vision or his hope of God’s promised inheritance.
1. Everywhere he looked, and every day he looked, the light of that sunshine shone directly into his eyes.
 2. With every step he took, in whatever direction, it was toward that city and the mansion the Lord had gone to prepare for him.
 3. Do you suppose that he ever wanted to return to Haran or Ur?
 - a. As a man of faith, I sincerely doubt it.
 - b. Abraham’s grandchildren, the people of Israel, may have longed to return to the leeks and garlics of Egypt, but not Abraham..
 4. Like Enoch, who walked with God, he got so close to his eternal home, there was no reason to go back.
- D. **Hebrews 11:13:** *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.*
1. *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*
 2. *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”*

IV. Conclusion:

- A. Was Abraham a perfect man? Was he without sin? Should we look at him as the idea human or saint?
1. Certainly not.
 2. It was by the grace of God that Abram became Abraham the man of God, and our courageous example.
 3. And in truth he was *“kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”*
- B. As I read through the rest of **1 Peter 1**, I see a reflection of Abraham.
1. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*
 2. *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*
 3. *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
 4. *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:*
 5. *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*
 6. *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”*