

A Special Salvation

We have two weeks together on the next 7 verses. I would guess that I have spent more time meditating on the 3 verses for today than any other passage in Scripture. So today, you are getting an outflow of lots of time spent considering the impact and worth of these verses. We are going to do this a little different from our norm here. I have no points to share today, but I hope you don't find this pointless. We are going through this phrase by phrase.

Last week, we looked at Peter's greeting. When one writes a letter, you usually start with Dear So and So, and end with Sincerely, your name. Often, the hardest part to come up with is the first thing you want to say after the greeting. And that is where Peter finds himself as we pick up with today's verses.

Now I imagine as he is thinking what to write, his mind goes back to his personal time with Jesus. How Jesus called him to follow him by landing a huge catch of fish when his own efforts failed. How he had collected a full basket of fish and bread leftovers after watching Jesus do so much with so little. How he had seen Jesus transfigured on the mountain top, dazzling in heavenly glory. How he got out of the boat and walked by faith towards Jesus on a stormy sea and was rescued when his doubts began to sink him into the violent water.

Then he may have gone to the last week of Jesus' life. How Jesus wanted to wash his feet and Peter said not so my Lord, and Jesus insisted. How he tried to correct Jesus when speaking about his upcoming crucifixion, and Jesus rebuked him while also adding that he would deny Jesus. And then he thought about warming his hands by the fire and having one of the women beside him say, "you too are his disciple for your accent betrays you." And he answered "no way!" Then the sound of a cockadoodle doo rung out as he fulfilled what Jesus had told him earlier.

And then perhaps he thought about racing to the tomb and holding the empty burial cloth and shortly afterwards seeing the resurrected Jesus with his own eyes. And then to a time when he was fishing and Jesus appeared again, and asked him 3 times if he loved him, and with each yes there was encouragement to share that love with others. And then perhaps he thought of when he was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in language he previously did not know. And perhaps he thought of the time when he was on his way to the synagogue and encountered a lame beggar. And he said silver and gold I do not have but took the man's hand and shared the love and power of Jesus to help this man rise and walk for the first time.

Maybe that is when he threw up his hand and Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter's salvation meant something to him because of all the history he had with Jesus. The good and the bad. The trust and the doubts. The bold times and the fearful times. It is certainly appropriate to ask God for blessing. But how much more should we bless God! Yes, there is great reason indeed to bless by God to heap praises, declare his excellencies for all he has done. And next Peter begins to spell out why blessing God is best.

According to His great mercy.

After recapping the experience Peter had with Jesus is it any wonder that he would start his description of how amazing God's salvation is by acknowledging the reality that it starts because God is merciful? It is in God's nature to withhold the penalties we deserve because of our sin. He is perfectly right in condemning us to death. It is the just result of sinful choices. And God has the power to do just that for all of humanity. But in his compassion, he offers forgiveness of sins to whosoever believes through Jesus Christ. Peter received that directly from Jesus and treasured it greatly.

He has caused us to be born again

So motivated by his own mercy, God initiates what is necessary to both make possible and lead us into salvation. If someone is the cause, it means they are the reason something else is happening. Whoever or whatever the cause is, makes it happen. In this case, God did what none of us could do and only he could by making us a new creation or born again. Remember, when Jesus said you must be born again, Nicodemus asked how is that possible. Am I able to climb back into my mother's womb and be birthed a second time? Of course no one can do that. It rests with God to take us and form something inside our nature that is new. For those on the other side of this same coin, that our faith matters, Peter agrees with you. In the 6 verses here that we will look at over the next 2 weeks, he emphasizes our faith twice. So we are getting to you. But clearly understand that God is the cause. He made salvation possible by sending his son Jesus to forgive you of your sins and he makes it possible in our own hearts to become a new creation, which we cannot do by ourselves. He both made the way and leads us into the way of salvation.

To a Living Hope

Now Peter gets into the benefits and purposes of us being born again. The first one he describes is the reward of hope. When the Bible speaks of hope it frames it not as a desire or want of something to happen in the future but instead as a certain expectation, a full confidence, of a future goodness. God is saving us into a future goodness. But Peter says it is living. This hope has life to it. What kind of life does it have? Yes this phrase portrays a future or down the road goodness guaranteed to happen to those born again. But it also hints at a goodness alive and active in the right now. As a new creation still existing on earth there is a dynamic or powerful hope happening right now related to our salvation. It is a delicious foretaste of what is to come. Cookie Dough!

Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

The word through, this is the first of two times it is used. The second time is in connection to our faith. Think of through as a channel or opening that allows us to obtain something or arrive at a certain place. Being born again, full of a powerful active hope, our very own salvation is opened to us by God raising Jesus Christ from the dead never to die again. Let us not minimize

that the impact of that factual event. The historical reality of Jesus Christ's tomb being empty should be stronger evidence than anything our doubts can produce that this salvation is real. We could not be born again without Jesus's dying in substitution for our sins in order to grant his reward to us. It is the foundation of our certain hope.

To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

This is the second benefit that Peter lists in this passage that God causing us to be born again leads to. An inheritance. An inheritance is something of value that gets handed down to a relative. Inheritances must have an inheritor. For those of us who are new creations, what God has also done at the time of that work is to adopt as a sons and daughters into his family; as real children. Getting the full privileges of his natural only begotten son. Paul says elsewhere that we are co-heirs with Christ. We share together. God has made us that inheritor.

So how would one describe this inheritance? *Cell phone description*. It seems very hard for Peter to try to describe exactly what it is. Instead, he tells us what it is not. He says it is imperishable or incorruptible. The inheritance God is giving us cannot be destroyed and it will never come to an end. It is undefiled. This inheritance won't spoil or be tainted in anyway. It will not lose value as time goes on. And it is unfading. God's inheritance for you will not lose its vitality or any strength. So using the opposites of these descriptions, let's begin to paint a picture of positive characteristics of this inheritance. It is everlasting, it is going to continue on forever. It is going to remain pure and contain the same high value at any point in time you go to analyze this inheritance. And it is going to remain strong and full of the same amount of power on day one as any other day you go to measure it. Now we can go and borrow from other places in Scripture to best define this inheritance and the gift of the presence of God himself with us, in our midst, in His fullness forever and ever. This inheritance is also described as a crown of life because we get to enjoy and live in his presences forever.

My friends, may we all come to and remain in a place of awe over the coming moment when this inheritance is revealed and given to those who are born again. Our salvation, which God secured for us on the cross is so extraordinary, so amazing, so astonishing, that the Bible most consistently communicates to us that we don't have the words or even the capacity to understand it's greatness. Paul said in 1 Cor. 2 that the heart of man does not have the imagination to be able to perceive what God has prepared for those who love him.

Kept in Heaven for you

So why does Peter so confidently promise such a bold inheritance for those who are born again. Because God is the keeper of it. To keep means one causes something to continue in a specific condition. God is protecting and preserving his own inheritance that he wants to bestow on each of us who believe. It is in heaven where God is. This suggests that there is a future time and place for the inheritance to be given. More on that in a short time. And it is for you. The totality of this greatness is for you and you and you. We don't get pieces of the whole, we each get the whole!

Who by God's power are being guarded through faith

So we have seen that God has caused us to be born again and God has a spectacular inheritance waiting for us in heaven. But what about the in between? The temptations, the fears, the sufferings we endure now in this life. How can we be assured that we will even make it to the end reward? God started this by raising his son from the dead to cause us to be born again. And he has at the end an unimaginable reward. Does he then stand back and say you're on your own from here, Good luck? He remains involved the entire way. Because we are being guarded by the power of God.

What is God guarding? Here is the second time we see the word through in this passage. The second channel Peter tells us this living hope and inheritance is made available to us is by our faith. Our faith or belief that Christ is who is he and did what he did in defeating death on our behalf. Our faith is real and it matters greatly. What is the one thing that keeps us from heaven? Our unbelief. To look at what God did through Jesus Christ and say, I don't believe it or I don't want it is what prevents us from realizing this hope and obtaining this inheritance.

Peter wants you and I to know that beyond a shadow of any doubt, God is keeping our faith fully secure. Peter is acknowledging here that there are real dangers between when we are born again and when we claim the inheritance in heaven. There is a battle still in progress. The goal of the other side is to frustrate and discourage our faith. To make us give up in believing and following after God.

And if we were left to ourselves, many of us if not all of us would not make it. We need protection and resources far beyond what we can bring in our own strength for our faith to last. It is the power of God working in cooperation with our faith to ensure that we receive this salvation. God is fully committed to keeping our inheritance. And he is equally unswerving in his commitment to guard our faith until the end.

Look at example of Peter. Luke 22:31-32

For a Salvation Ready to be revealed in the last time

The very best of this salvation is coming to us in the future. Yes there are benefits now, real hope is available now. But we only hold part of the prize. The full inheritance and the full life are coming to us at a future day, when Christ returns from heaven to earth for the second time. We are being preserved through the harm we face right now. One day is coming when we will be fully delivered from this earth and into our glorious prize.

What a rich few verses. If I had to sum these three verses up in one statement it would be God causes us to be born again into such an amazing salvation and inheritance while guarding our faith until the very end.