

1 Peter Chapter 1 v 3 - 5

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Date: 15 November 2015

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[0 : 00] How utterly amazing it is to us, O Lord our God, that you are so caring and concerned for us.

As we think of you, the Almighty and great God, we think of you, the one who looks down upon the whole of history and time, who sees all people and all lands and all nations, who sees all things and knows all things and is working at your purposes and your plans in the very schemes and politics of men.

Yet, Lord, you have time for us. It's no difficulty for us to conceive of this in the sense of your power and your knowledge. Lord, it's easy for you to be aware of every single one of the seven billion people on this planet.

It's very easy for you to be aware of all their thoughts and concerns and needs and struggles. But, Lord, that you should actually care for us, that you should actually be interested in us, that you should actually love us.

Lord, that is quite profound. And as we come this evening once more, we come as those who have found you to be our refuge. We have made you the Most High, our dwelling.

[1 : 25] We thank you that we live in you. In you we live and move and have our being. We thank you that, O Lord, through the Lord Jesus Christ, we have come into this great and marvelous union with yourself by which we are one with God and he is one with us.

And your very life, that immortal and eternal life, dwells within us, equipping, empowering, inspiring, sustaining us.

We can so easily look at ourselves and shake our heads and wring our hands and only see the sin and the failing and the faultiness and the weakness.

But, Lord, help us again to see what you have given us in Christ. All the blessings that are ours in the spiritual realms, all heavenly blessings. How you've given us of your Holy Spirit to make us new creations.

How you've filled us with your Holy Spirit that we might walk in step with him and be led by him. How you've given to us your very precious promises to lead us and to guide us, to sustain us and provide for us.

[2 : 30] How you've given us, O Lord, forgive us when we have our heads looking down, but help us to lift our eyes up to Jesus, our Savior, who sits at your right hand, who has accomplished for us all our salvation and who is now our everything, our all in all.

O Lord, help us, we pray, even this evening, even for this short time, to again lift our eyes up to Christ and to see him for who he is and for what he's done for us. Help us, O Lord, not to stick our heads in the sand, as it were, to the troubles of this world, but rather to lift our heads up high, not with fear and anxiety and worry, but, Lord, to lift our eyes up to him.

Thank you, O Lord, that when we look upon the mountains and ask, where is our help? We can say, our help is the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. And what a help you are, a very present help in time of need.

Lord, grant us your help, that our faith may be strengthened, that our zeal may be increased, that our love may be passionate, that our lives may be obedient, that our Savior may be glorified.

For we ask these things now, in and through the name of Jesus Christ, the conqueror, the triumphant one, the victor and the king.

[3 : 55] Amen. Together in God's word to 1 Peter. So, third visit to 1 Peter in the past few weeks.

And we're going to read together the first nine verses. First nine verses last, four night ago, we looked particularly at verses one and two.

And tonight we're going to look particularly at verses three to five. But we're going to put it into context together and read verses one to nine. Let's hear the word of the Lord.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to God's elect. Strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood.

[5 : 05] Grace and peace be yours in abundance. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade kept in heaven for you. Who? Through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you greatly rejoice. Though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine.

And may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him.

And are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

[6 : 33] I'd like us to come to a time of open prayer, in the sense that a few of us would please lead us in prayer, particularly in intercession. Well, let's open 1 Peter in chapter 1 on those verses 3 to 5 particularly.

And let's pray together. We thank you that we have a hope which is steadfast and certain. A hope, O Lord, which is unique to the people of God.

A hope in the midst of every storm, trouble and tribulation. We thank you that hope is Jesus Christ. We thank you, Lord, that your word tells us, encourages us, helps us in our feeble and frail faith to find in Christ all our hope.

And again, we ask that you would help us now and that you would open our eyes, our hearts, our minds, our lives, O Lord, to your word. And speak to us and cause us again to rise up with wings because of the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Speak to us, Lord, we pray. Amen. Amen. So we're in 1 Peter chapter 1.

[8 : 11] We've already been praying for and thinking about the situation in Paris. 129 people shot, killed on Friday night. But in reality, it's only the most recent of several attacks of terrorism.

just a few weeks ago, Russian passenger plane blown up, almost certainly, by a bomb crashing in the Sinai Peninsula.

Just a few weeks before that, terrible bomb in Turkey, killing 95 people. And we could go on, listing through this past 12 months how there have been again and again attacks, bombings, shootings, killings, all sorts of terrible events.

What makes it, of course, all the more real and devastating is that it's in Europe. It's on our doorstep. It's close by. It's not just in Afghanistan or Pakistan or somewhere far afield.

And what we find, of course, is that, sadly, for good or for bad reasons, a climate of fear is overshadowing our world at this time.

[9 : 32] A shadow of fear for what the future may bring. For what will happen. Will militant Islam conquer? Will it be victorious?

Will Christianity be crushed? Will our way of life be decimated? And as Christians, of course, we can be caught up in that atmosphere.

We can be carried along, in one sense, by that tide of anxiety. But the Bible says that there is no need for us to be anxious and, least of all, fearful in the face of trouble, in the face of enemy assaults, in the face of persecution.

In fact, the Bible gives us every reason not to panic but to praise God. This is how Peter opens his letter to these Christians in verse 3.

After his words of introduction, his words of blessing and description in one sense, his opening blessing of grace and peace, he immediately springs into praise, be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[10 : 52] But he is writing, as we saw just a few weeks ago, to Christians who are suffering the most awful opposition, persecution, and trouble, as he's about to say when he gets to verse 6, though you now suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

For the people to whom Peter is writing, the future is bleak. They were suffering already. They didn't just have to worry about what was coming but what had already arrived.

As Christians, they were daily being persecuted for their faith. Here in chapter 3, verse 14, but even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.

Do not fear what they fear. Do not be frightened. That's the charge to us. We are not to fear what the people of the world fear.

We are not to be frightened. Rather, we are to worship and praise God. Here in this letter, as we shall continue, but as we shall think this evening, is again help for weary, worrying saints.

[12 : 06] because there is nothing that will do us more good, there will nothing be more beneficial to us than meditating upon God's goodness to us and our salvation in him.

It's not burying our heads in the sand. It's not saying, well, nothing outside is happening, we needn't worry, it doesn't matter, but rather, it is lifting our heads up, recognizing what is priority, recognizing what is good, recognizing what is true.

The trouble with fear, of course, is that it's not happened, is it? It's not happened. We can't be sure that it will happen. Fear plays upon the imagination, it plays upon the possible, the maybe, the perhaps, but praising God rests upon the certain, the definite, the real, the true.

And so what I want us to do this evening is to draw out from these verses encouragement from God's word in response to tough times.

I want us to be stirred up in our hope. One of the descriptions that the Bible gives of the people of our generation, of every generation, the people without Christ, is they are a people without hope and without God.

[13 : 28] And we are a people who have God and have hope. And therefore, our attitude is to be very different. And as Peter brings this praise to God's people here, as Peter brings this stirring of their minds to what God has done for them, it is in the midst of not ignoring the realities of suffering, of terror, of persecution.

So what is it that we are to hope in? What is it that we are to be stirred by? Well, because, as he says, we are those who have received great mercy.

In his, that's God, the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, in his great mercy he has given us. What makes so great this mercy is of course the one who's lavished on us.

He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so we recognize that his mercy is a proven mercy. because he is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is the one who has shown us his mercy already in the giving of his Son to be our Savior, shown his mercy to sinners, shown his mercy to the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish.

And here's this unique title, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's unique in the New Testament and it's unique in the sense that it is full of vital truth about God.

[15 : 02] There is but one God and he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the reason that we can praise him is because of who he is. We can appreciate what he's done for us and if we do not know him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ then there's no reason to praise him, only to fear him.

We know that he is great in mercy because he is great himself. It's one of his wonderful attributes. The fact of the matter is that whenever we are dealing with God whatever he does reflects who he is.

So his mercy is great. In fact it's huge. It's enormous. It's infinite. It's large enough to cover all of our sins.

However many they be however big black and pleasant it's enough to provide for all of our salvation. However long we live however many attacks we receive from Satan however many times we fail and fall everything that we receive from God flows from his mercy.

Here's Peter sorry Paul as he writes to Titus in chapter 3 verse 5 he that's God saved us not because of righteous things we had done but because of his mercy.

[16 : 32] What is God's mercy? That we should rejoice in it and praise him for it? Well of course it's very much linked to his grace isn't it? Often we find the two together grace and mercy many of Paul's introductions and blessings begin with grace and mercy.

Grace is God's undeserved favour towards sinful people but mercy is his acting towards us in compassion because of our sin and the misery it has brought upon our lives.

It is active compassion. Mercy is something that you do. It's not merely a feeling of pity but it is so great that it reaches down and saves the helpless and the pitiful.

Mercy is active compassion. And what has this great mercy done for us already? If we're to hope in it and rejoice in God in it well it's done so much already we know this mercy is marvellous because it has given us new birth.

We've experienced new life new birth. This is what John records in chapter 3 of the gospel isn't it? Where Jesus speaks to Nicodemus you must be born again born of the spirit.

[17 : 47] That's what's happened to everyone who puts their faith in the God and Father our Lord Jesus Christ. In his mercy he makes us alive who were dead in our sins. And so important isn't it that we recognise in his great mercy he has given us new birth.

Just as we had no say and no contribution to our natural birth some of us might be a bit stubborn and wanted to stay in a bit longer than we should have done and we're a bit overcooked.

But in the end we had to come out. So with our rebirth it's not our choice. It's not our doing.

It's a definite act which God has accomplished once and for all as he has chosen to. He gave us new birth.

He created new life within us. In his mercy he made us his children. And because of that reality, because we have new birth and we become children of God, then the blessings that follow are also true for us.

[18 : 58] For this new birth has implanted within us a living hope. Isn't that marvellous? In his great mercy he's given us new birth into a living hope.

hope. Before we came to know Christ, before we came to know his love for us and his forgiveness, before we came to know that the God who created us is the one who purposed to choose to redeem us, we were a people without hope.

hope. We may have had some hope, nobody has no hope, but sadly the hope of many in the world and for us as well before we came to Christ was a vain hope, an empty hope.

It was just like a vapor, a mist, a cloud. It was wishful thinking. People have lots of hope, don't they? The evidence that hope by crossing their fingers and touching wood, some other superstition that they may have.

Their hope is based upon nothing, no evidence, no certainty. It's just, I hope so. But now that we have been born again and brought into the mercy of God, we have been given a living hope which is built upon something which is historical, tangible, and real.

[20 : 32] A living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is a living hope because Christ is living. It's a living hope because he ever lives and lives everlastingly.

It is a hope that is stronger than death and can face death without fear because it is a hope in the one who has conquered death. Through the victory of life over death in Christ, we are giving a living hope in who Jesus is.

Our hope is based upon a person because the resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee and the evidence that he is God. He is Paul as he writes in Romans chapter 1 verse 4, speaking of Christ, declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.

Christ's resurrection is the proof positive that he is God living amongst us. For he did what no mortal can do, could do, or will ever do. He rose again.

But it's a living hope in our present forgiveness as well. Because Christ was raised from the dead, we know our sin has been dealt with and we're forgiven. Here's Paul again in Romans 4 this time.

[21 : 51] Christ was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised for our justification. the proof that God has dealt with your sin and mine once and for all and forever, that the punishment for your sin and the guilt of your sin has been atoned for and paid for, is the resurrection of Jesus.

Because he dealt with it there and then once and for all, we can be sure that we are now forgiven and accepted by God, justified, just as if I'd never sinned.

raising him from the dead, God declares that we have the hope of forgiveness. And then we see it as a living hope of heaven. A living hope of heaven.

Since Christ lives, we are assured that we too shall live with him. Because he has been raised from the dead, we know that we too shall be raised from the dead. Here's Paul as he writes in 2 Corinthians 14.

Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.

[23 : 08] We know that we shall live with him in heaven. We're certain of it. We're just as certain of it as the fact that Christ, the Son of God, died in our place. We're just as certain of it as we know that he rose again to life and has justified us and forgiven us.

So we're just as certain and sure that we have a living hope of heaven. And Peter goes on to describe what this heavenly hope, this living hope is.

He has given us new birth into a living hope to the resurrection from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

We've received an inheritance. inheritance. All children hope that their parents might leave them something in their will, that they might have a bit of cash put aside, something they might inherit from their fathers.

Some of us, of course, inherit things from our fathers we don't particularly want, thinning hair, poor eyesight, and other things besides. but we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, as Paul in Romans 8.

[24 : 20] And we have an inheritance like nothing ever seen on earth. It is an inheritance which is heavenly, eternal and everlasting. There's a daytime TV program that's on occasion called Air Hunters, H-E-I-R.

I never know how to pronounce hair, hair, air. Anyway, you get the idea. They are probate detectives, which means they specialize in tracking down the rightful heirs of vast amounts of money and estates that were left at death by people who have no close family and no will.

If these air hunters don't find the people to whom the money deserves to go, then the treasury takes possession of it and every year an estimated 10 billion pounds goes unclaimed.

But there's no need for us to have probate detectives, for God's children are those who are known to him. The inheritance that is ours, God will give us and will make sure that we have in full.

Notice it's kept in heaven for you. It's kept secure, it's kept safe. with your name upon it, if I can put it that way. It's kept to one side, it's put apart, nothing and no one shall stop you from gaining that inheritance, that heavenly inheritance.

[25 : 52] To stress how incomparable it is, to stress how wonderful it is, Peter uses three negatives to describe it. First of all he says it shall never perish, or rather it can never perish.

perish. It can never perish. There's nothing in the nature of this inheritance which is ours which can corrupt it. That can ever make it decay.

I often smile when I see bumper stickers on cars, particularly the one that I don't see so often now but says something like this, I was told that I would inherit the estate and this is it.

we used to have an estate of Mark 1 escort and put it this way, it rested, it perished. Whatever we may inherit of earthly wealth from our parents or grandparents or long lost aunties or uncles is flawed.

It's intrinsically about to decay because it's of this world. If it's a car it must rust, if it's a building it must need maintenance and upkeep or it will fall down. If it's anything in this world it's already corrupted because it's part of this fallen world.

[27 : 05] But our inheritance in heaven is free from all of those things, free from sin's destructive influence. It can never perish. No one can take it from us.

No one can rob us of it. And so Peter says not only can it never perish, it can never spoil or be spoiled. It's free from all external attacks as well.

Perish is something which is intrinsically going to break apart. Spoil is something which can be spoiled by outward influences. Even things like gold and jewelry which may not so quickly rust or decay can lose their value or can be stolen or can be lost.

And ultimately of course in death we shall lose every possession that we own. For we would have to say with Job of old, into this world I came naked and I'll leave it just the same.

But our inheritance is eternal. It's not subject to outside influences, not affected by time, not affected by thieves. That's why Jesus commands us and encourages us in Matthew 6, store up for yourselves treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy, where thieves do not break in and steal.

[28 : 23] That inheritance cannot be spoiled, but it can never fade. And to me this is the most wonderful thing about it. It means that it will forever be fresh.

It will forever be a delight. Peter uses a Greek word here which gives us the name of the plant Amaranthus. Any gardeners out there?

No? Amaranthus? Have you heard of Amaranthus? No? I haven't because I'm not a very good gardener. Clearly none of you are as well. But if you are then you'll know that Amaranthus is a species of flower which is valued for its lasting bloom.

It maintains its flower for a very, very long time. In other words, this inheritance which is ours which will not fade, we're never going to get bored of it. We're never going to get tired of it.

This inheritance is going to thrill us with its delightful fragrance and its sight for all eternity. I can only imagine that being a millionaire, having great big yachts, jets to fly around the world, must get boring after a while.

[29 : 36] I think so. I think so. I know we all dream of thinking, oh, wouldn't I love to retire, sail around the world in a yacht, be waited on, Hannah, you'll be bored.

You've got nothing to do. Yes, it's sunny all the time. Well, we need a bit of rain, don't we? Not too much, but we need, we get bored, but the riches of heaven will never lose their sparkle.

They'll never stop being exciting, because of course we know that they will be God himself. And because this inheritance is nothing that we can earn or have earned, it's nothing that we can work for, it's given because we are God's children, it's given because of his great mercy alone.

it's kept safer than the bank of England in the vaults of heaven, ready for us to enjoy when God's timing comes in the last time when we are taken up to be with our Saviour in glory and in heaven.

Now, this is important, dear friends, because when we think about all that is going on in our world, we think about what inhuman men are doing to one another and women, ultimately our concern is over the here and now.

[30 : 59] Our concern is for the present. But Jesus said to his disciples, do not be afraid of the one who can kill the body. Don't be afraid of him because when he's done that he can do nothing else to you, can't touch you, can't take away this inheritance from you, can't rob you of these things that are to come.

And the reality is, of course, that we know that we must die. Whether at the hands of a terrorist or whether at the hands of cancer or whether at the hands of some other illness or old age or dementia, we must die.

But as Christians we have reason to rejoice because we have this inheritance. But then we may say, well, this inheritance is wonderful and God has given it to us and it's marvelous, us, but we do fear for ourselves.

What if we were to lose our salvation? What if we were to lose our faith? What if we were to be overrun in some way and we were to be put up against the wall and we were said, look, are you going to deny Christ or not?

And our faith was so weak that we would. How can we be sure that we shall even reach heaven and collect our inheritance? We know so sadly of those who started the race and fallen, those who confessed Christ and then turned away.

[32 : 19] And we know our own hearts and our own souls. We know that we are weak people and foolish people. We know that we're sinful people and how the things this world distract us and lead us here, there, and everywhere.

Well, for that reason, Peter continues. Our future inheritance rests upon the keeping power of God, but so do we. Our salvation and ourselves rests upon the keeping power of God.

Kept in heaven for you who, verse 5, through faith are shielded by God's power. We are shielded by the very power of God and Peter is using quite literally a military phrase.

We are garrisoned by God's power. It's speaking of a protection, a roundabout, a fortress. We are fortified by God's power. We are like those who God has hidden away in the castle of his power, surrounded by his might, set above the reach of those who seek our harm.

The thought that God is our fortress often comes to the mind of the psalmist, doesn't it? We read that psalm, Psalm 91. Here's verses 2 to 4.

[33 : 39] I will say to the Lord, he's my refuge, my fortress, my God in whom I trust. Surely he will save me from the foulest snare and from the deadly pestilence, from those things in one sense that would seek to attack and rob me.

He keeps me safe. And so we may look at ourselves and we should examine ourselves and we should, maybe we examine ourselves and said, I feel so very weak spiritually.

But that's okay because you're not kept by your strength but by the power of God. He's the one that keeps you safe. And you say, well, I feel so afflicted by Satan, the attacks, spiritual attacks that the devil brings against me, those flaming arrows, they hurt, they bring me low.

I feel myself so constantly under assault. But they are no match for the ramparts of God's castle, his mighty strength who surrounds you.

They are nothing in comparison. Who would fear arrows being shot at them if they were behind a solid ten foot granite wall? No arrow. Just bounce off.

[34 : 55] And sometimes perhaps we feel as if we're falling. We look down and look out upon the world around about us and we see the things that bring us so much sorrow and trial and we feel as if we're falling, as if we cannot stand.

Well, perhaps it may be that we're just leaning too far over the walls to look out and down upon the world around about us, those high walls of our salvation. One day Christ will come.

One day he will come and bring to us the fullness of the inheritance that is ours. That salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time.

Until then, there's nothing in heaven or earth or hell that can rob us of one single penny of the inheritance that Christ has bought for us.

If we are pinning all our future hopes on Jesus, then we shall not be disappointed. He is a sure thing. He will never default on his promises.

[35 : 59] He will never waver upon his goodness. Are you a child of the Lord? Are you one who's been given new birth?

Are you one who's come to him as a sinner and found that through the resurrection of Jesus all your sins have been taken? Are you one who has a living hope in the midst of a world of death?

Then, dear friends, we have reason to rejoice in our God in every situation. Whenever we turn on the news, we have reason to praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we have reason to hope in him where the world has no hope. We are shielded. We are kept. We are preserved. We are loved.

And we shall reach the end. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[37 : 18] Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Amen.