

1 Peter 1

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[0 : 00] Many of the letters in the New Testament are letters that were sent to individual congregations or even to individual people like the letters to Timothy and to Titus.

But there are some letters in the New Testament that are perhaps more in the nature of a circular letter. And these are what we call the general letters.

And the letters of Peter are very much like that. Indeed, in 1 Peter, Peter says, I'm sending this to the strangers scattered abroad.

And he names the different places where they are. Most of them had been scattered because of persecution. There was tremendous persecution that arose in Jerusalem.

And a lot of these Christian people went throughout the whole known world. Many of them left homes, families, jobs.

[1 : 10] Many of them had to start again in a new place, in some places with a new language. Although Greek was the universal language, nevertheless, some of these local areas had their own languages.

And so these people were, in many senses, starting afresh. And Peter writes them a letter. And he writes to them to encourage them.

He writes to them to enable them to have the right perspective on the things that had happened to them.

And in the first chapter, a large part of this first chapter, Peter outlines for the believers the glories that would come to them, and the glories that have come to them through the Lord Jesus Christ. Now remember that he's writing to people, many of whom had lost everything. Many of them, in the past, no doubt, had had hopes of what was going to happen in the future.

[2 : 27] Now all that had changed. Now they were in different places. Now they had, in some cases certainly, lost the hope that they had for their earthly future.

Now we all like to plan for the future, don't we? We all like to think that, well, when this part of my life finishes, then this will happen, and then this will happen, and then this will happen.

Well, it doesn't always work out that way. It doesn't always happen the way we imagine that it will happen. I never imagined for one moment that I would be a minister of the gospel.

I never imagined for one moment that I would be teaching in a school in South America. But these things happen.

And these people had very often lost their, if we may put it in these terms, they had sort of lost their future.

[3 : 38] And so Peter now wants to direct their attention to something that is more lasting, something that's more important, something that is more precious, and something that is more certain than what they had lost.

Peter reminds the believers that they had abundant cause to rejoice and praise God.

It's a very strange thing that he says here. Look what he says in the first chapter. He talks about them being praising God, and having this overwhelming joy.

He says you are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. He says in this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

And Peter says there is a joy that comes to you no matter what your circumstances. And obviously, an awareness of the standing and the future glory that the child of God possesses should cause him to be joyful, should cause him to rejoice, no matter what his present circumstances are.

[5 : 03] And of course, the ultimate glory that awaits the child of God is given for us in verse 4. He says, reading from verse 3, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his great mercy, he has given us a 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.

Now, verse 4 tells us about the inheritance. It can never perish, spoil or fade. But in verse 3, it lays the foundation and the grounds of hope for this inheritance.

And that's what we're going to look at this morning. And the first thing that we notice here is the title to this inheritance. The title to this inheritance. Now, anyone who claims to have the right to an inheritance must be able to prove it.

Isn't that right? We can claim to be heirs of someone. I can claim to be Bill Gates' long-lost brother. [6 : 24] And that when he dies, that all his fortune will come to me. Now, I can claim that. I can say that. But you would have every right to say to me, prove it.

Prove it. Show me. And we can claim to have an inheritance, but we have to be able to demonstrate it.

Now, Peter says to the believers, you have an inheritance. You have an inheritance that no one can take away. You have an inheritance that will never spoil, perish or fade.

You have a glorious inheritance. Now, somebody could say to these believers, well, what evidence do we have? What document do we have to prove that we have this?

The title in question here is the new birth. Look at what he says. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope.

[7 : 39] Now, most earthly inheritances come as a consequence of natural birth. someone is rich, they have a son, and when that person dies, then the riches pass to his son, simply because he has been born, simply because he has, he is the son of that particular person.

But this inheritance comes as a result of spiritual birth. Look at verse 18. For you know that it was not with perishable things, such as silver and gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

So the inheritance that we have, the inheritance that a Christian has, is not based upon any earthly means.

It doesn't come through any worldly means. It's not attainable through anything physical or natural.

Now, think about it this way. There are people who, because their parents are Christians, they seem to think that they too will share in the inheritance, the spiritual inheritance, of their parents.

There are many people in the free church who can trace their ancestry in the free church back for many generations. Christians. My father was an elder.

[9 : 25] My grandfather was an elder. We have that kind of spiritual heritage. But our spiritual inheritance does not come through any physical line.

It doesn't come to us because our parents are Christians, because our grandparents are Christians, because our brother or our sister are Christians. It is not worldly.

It is not physical. It's not obtained, says Peter, through any worldly or earthly means. And he talks about what is indispensable.

He says, he has given us the new birth. Sometimes, people talk about born-again Christians.

And I have to say that that is a phrase that annoys me intensely. Born-again Christian? Well, there isn't any other kind. There isn't any other kind of Christian other than a born-again Christian.

[10 : 43] because you become a Christian when you are born again. Just because you've been born in a Christian country doesn't mean that you're a Christian.

Any more than being born in a garage would make you a car. Christians are born again. It is the indispensable requirement.

Do you remember when Nicodemus, this Pharisee, this very religious man, went to Jesus? And he went to Jesus by night.

He was kind of scared of what his friends would say if he went during the day. So he went at night. And Jesus looked at this man, a religious man, a man who knew his Bible, a man who could have debated theology with anyone.

And Jesus looked at him and he said, you know, Nicodemus, you must be born again. Now, he wasn't giving him a command, he wasn't saying to him, Nicodemus, you must be born again.

[12 : 10] As though it was something that Nicodemus could do for himself. No, he was simply stating a fact. Nicodemus, if you are going to see the kingdom of heaven, you have to be born

again.

There's no other way. Unless you are born again, you will not see. Much less enter the kingdom of heaven.

And so the title to this inheritance, the new birth, is absolutely indispensable. I suppose if we went out into Aberdeen and spoke to people and said, what do you think will happen to you when you die?

Now, I would imagine that a lot of people would say, well, when I'm dead, I'm dead, and that's it. But if you really press people, they expect to go to some sort of heaven.

It's interesting, isn't it, when someone famous dies. Now, these people probably have not been in church since they were baptized.

[13:35] baptized. They often live a lifestyle that is quite contrary to what the word of God says. And yet, when you listen to what's said about them when they die, they talk about them looking down on us.

They talk about them somehow enjoying some kind of life, some kind of eternal life, and they're happy and they're free from pain and whatever.

Most people have that hope that one day when they die that there is something else and there is something better than what they have here even.

But you see, Peter talks about that inheritance, but he says, look, you will not have that inheritance, that inheritance incorruptible and undefiled unless you are born again.

that is the indispensable title. And then Peter goes on and he said, unlike the hope for an earthly inheritance that may rest upon a piece of paper, some document in a solicitor's office, the hope of this inheritance is already a living reality.

[15:08] The believer already has the down payment. What in the old version of the scripture is called the earnest by the operation of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Let me put it this way, he is born again. Not he will be, not he might be, not he could be, but he is. He is born again. He is a new creature in Christ. His attitudes, his behavior are different from what they used to be.

And doesn't that give us an idea as to whether or not we have this inheritance or we have this title to this inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, that does not fade away.

It never perishes. Nobody can take it away from us. If you examine yourself and you ask yourself, do you see evidence in your life that you have this title?

[16:32] Suppose somebody had left you some enormous piece of property and somebody doubted it and said, I don't believe you.

Don't believe that that's going to be yours one day. You could go to a solicitor's office and you could say, look, will you show me the title? Will you show me the deeds?

Will you show me this? And you have it written there. when you talk about heaven and somebody says to you, where's your evidence?

Where's the title? And you see, more important than this earthly title, it ought to be evident to everyone who sees you.

that you have this title. Because you have been born again. Because you have a new way of thinking, a new way of living, a new way of talking, because the whole of the direction of your life has been changed.

[17:46] Once, once, you were not a Christian, even though you were brought up in a Christian home. even though you were moral and upright, once you were not a Christian, but now you are.

And there should be evidence of that life within you. There should be evidence of that new way of thinking, that new way of talking, that new way of being.

Christian. I suppose we could put it quite simply like this. When people meet you, when people know you, at home, at work, at university, wherever you might be, do people know that you are a Christian.

Not because you tell them, but because you show them. Because you show them that you are a new creature in Christ.

And see, that's what Peter is saying to them here. He's saying, you have a title to this inheritance. But the second thing we want to look at here is the guarantee of this inheritance.

[19:09] inheritance. How is it possible for us to know that the inheritance of which the Bible speaks is sure and certain?

How can we be sure that we have this inheritance? Of course, this inheritance is based upon the sure word of the scripture.

It's based on the testimony and on the character of the God who's spoken in his word. But there is a specific guarantee given in these verses.

Look at what he says. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

that's our guarantee. That's our guarantee that what the Bible promises when the Bible says if you are born again you have a title and inheritance that is incorruptible undefiled and does not fade away.

[20 : 27] And the guarantee the assurance that you have is because Jesus Christ rose from the dead. You see, when Jesus came, when Jesus came into this world, he came to die.

When Jesus died, it wasn't as a result of some horrendous misunderstanding. It wasn't because people simply didn't recognize him as God's son and didn't recognize him as the Messiah.

And so out of envy or hatred or whatever, they took him and crucified him. No, Jesus came to die. You know, when we have the nativity scenes at Christmas time, and you have this little baby lying in a manger, what we should really imagine, what we should really think about, is that this baby is lying on a cross.

God's God's love because that's why he came. He came to die. And if Jesus had only died, then everything that he came to do, all the plan and purpose of God from eternity, would have failed.

[22 : 17] the guarantee of our inheritance is not that Jesus died, but that Jesus rose again from the dead.

It meant that his work was complete. It meant that when he took the sins of his people on the cross, it meant that God said, I accept this.

I accept this sacrifice. I accept what you have done on the behalf of your people. Because when God punished the Lord Jesus Christ, he didn't punish him for his own sins, but for ours.

He punished the Lord Jesus Christ because I'm a sinner. He punished the Lord Jesus Christ so that I would not have to suffer for my sins.

And if you're a Christian, you can say the same thing, that Jesus took your sins. He suffered the punishment that you deserve.

[23 : 38] And what do we deserve? The scripture makes it quite clear. we deserve an eternity of punishment. But Jesus, as the eternal Son of God, was able to bear that punishment in a moment of time, when he cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

When the one who lived in the presence of his father, the one who could say, I and my father are one, when at that moment he took upon himself an eternity of punishment for his people.

And the evidence that God accepted that is that he raised him from the dead. He raised him from the dead.

And it's as though God was saying, yes, I accept the sacrifice that you have made, therefore, the ones for whom you died are now free.

The ones for whom you died now do not have to suffer that punishment. God saved him and so our guarantee of the inheritance is the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ completed the work that he came to do and that God accepted the work when he raised him from the dead.

[25 : 23] And then Jesus said, didn't he, he said to his disciples and he says to us, because I live, you shall live also.

Because I live, you shall live also. Did Jesus die? Yes, of course he did. Was he raised from the dead?

Yes. Does he live now? Yes. And Jesus says, because I live, you shall live also.

And that is the guarantee of our inheritance. Because Jesus lives, we shall live. And no one, not the devil, nor all his angels, can ever take it away from us.

Satan can persecute God's people. He can take away their goods. He can take away their families.

[26 : 34] He can take away their health. But he can never take away their inheritance. You see, that has been secured by the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because I live, you shall live also. There's one final thing, the source of the inheritance.

Although the inheritance is made certain by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the true source of it lies much further back in the purpose of the eternal God. Look at what he says.

In his great mercy he has given us new birth. And the bestowal of this inheritance has nothing to do with man.

It has nothing to do with our merit. It has nothing to do with the fact that we can earn it, that we can deserve it in any sense whatsoever. It is according to his mercy.

[27 : 41] The new birth, therefore, and the inheritance that comes with it cannot be dependent upon foreseen faith, good works, merit, or anything else.

It is according to nothing other than the mercy of God. Isn't that amazing? You know, sometimes people can doubt their salvation.

people can doubt that they really are born again. They think they see evidences in themselves, but then they look at themselves.

They see their sin. They see how easily they fall to temptation. And incidentally, temptation is no sin. We are all tempted.

But we fall into sin. We give in to temptation so easily. And it's possible for us to doubt our salvation.

[28 : 52] And it's easy to say, I'm not worthy. There has been traditionally in the free church for many, many years a practice of people not coming to the Lord's table because they're not worthy.

And holding back from membership in the congregation because they're not worthy. None of this is worthy.

No one is worthy. But you see, that's what Peter says. He says, it's in his mercy. God looks upon us in our sin. He looks upon us in our depravity.

He looks upon us as we are. And he gives us the new birth. He gives it to us. Not because we deserve it.

Not because we can merit it. Not because we can earn it. but because he chooses to do so. In his mercy.

[30 : 12] And the mercy of God is described here as great mercy. Or abundant mercy. Of course it is.

You see, the wickedness of man demands it. by nature we're rebels against God. By nature we shake our fist at God and say, I want nothing to do with you.

By nature we break his commandments. By nature we kick his goodness back in his teeth. But God in his great mercy gives us the new birth.

God demands great mercy. But the holiness of God demands great mercy too. God's a holy God.

And God cannot simply bypass sin. He would have been quite within his rights to leave all of us and say okay if that's what you want go on your own way to hell.

[31 : 37] But he didn't. He didn't. because he couldn't simply overlook sin in his abundant mercy he said to his only son son will you go down to that wicked earth?

Will you take the nature of sinful men? will you walk amongst them?

Be abused by them? Be cursed by them? Be spat upon by them? Will you be prepared to go and take their sin?

Will you be prepared for me to turn my back on you so that you bear their sins? Are you willing for that?

What mercy! What abundant mercy that God would do that for us. That God would do that for people like you and me.

[32 : 59] Isn't that amazing? And what a wonderful inheritance he gives us. We could spend time looking at that at what he says.

An inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Kept in heaven for you. If you have been born again, there's a place in heaven for you.

You know when you go to a wedding and you go to the wedding reception and there's either long tables or tables sitting there and you walk around and you find your name and there's a little card there that says this is where you ought to sit.

I think sometimes we think of heaven as being some kind of huge banqueting place where there's all sorts of places set and you just go and find one.

No. There is a place reserved in heaven for you. The chair is there, the table is set, your name card is there, it's yours, and no one else can take your place.

[34 : 33] It is reserved in heaven for you. Isn't that wonderful? If you're born again, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in his great mercy, in his abundant 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, nor fade, kept in heaven for you.

Do you have this inheritance? do you know that you have it because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead?

And do you know that you have it because you have the Spirit of God within you, because you have become a new creature in Christ Jesus?

Let's join together in prayer. Eternal and ever blessed God, we do give thanks for your word.

We thank you for that inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade, that inheritance that is reserved in heaven for those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

[36 : 22] Our gracious God, we thank you. We thank you that you planned the salvation for sinners in eternity. We thank you that you sent your own beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to live upon this earth, to take upon himself our nature, to suffer at the hands of cruel and wicked men.

We thank you that you accepted the work that he did, and we thank you, Lord, that you brought him back from the dead, triumphant over the grave, to guarantee that inheritance, to guarantee for those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, everlasting life, eternity in your presence.

Oh, Lord God, we pray that you would write your word upon our heart. Gracious God, we pray that if there are those who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that you would work in their hearts, that you would convict them of their sin, and that you would bring them to that place where they acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Master.

We do thank you, Lord God, for your gracious word. We thank you for what you have revealed to us, and we pray that you would write your word upon our hearts.

Receive us graciously in part in sin, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We bring our worship to a close, singing from Psalm 119.

[38 : 25] Psalm 119, on page 157, singing from the second part of that Psalm, verses 9 to 16.

How can the young keep their life pure? By doing what your word demands. I seek you with my heart and soul, let me not stray from your commands.

Your word I have hidden in my heart to keep me from offending you. Praise be to you, O Lord my God. Teach me your statutes, firm and true.

We sing verses 9 to 16 of Psalm 119. In the second part, the tune is Malcolm. Let's join together in praise to God. And now may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest upon each one, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen.