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Scripture, 1 Peter 1:3-9

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Introduction

Peter will plunge right in to his topic of suffering. Many other ideas will be mentioned in his epistle but the persecution and trials of the church takes center stage.

Verse 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...*

Verses 3-5 is a doxology of praise to God and the amazing salvation he has extended to sinners according to His mercy in Christ.

Peter begins with God which is the only proper beginning when considering suffering and persecution. We must not forget the depth of His love and the great gift he has bestowed upon us in Christ.

Specifically, He has caused us to be born again to a hope that is alive as it is a spring of living water flowing from God Himself. Our hope is not based upon circumstances in our environment that may ebb and flow with each passing event.

Also, we should note that it is God who has caused us to be reborn and this is not a work of our own effort or merit.

The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of this hope. We know that he has overcome death and reigns above this temporary and perishing world.

Verse 4. *...to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...*

Our inheritance from God is not subject to the laws of decay that rule over the creation. Our inheritance is imperishable—it cannot fade, wither, or in any way lose its luster. It is undefiled and uncontaminated with sin or corruption. It is unfading as its source of power and magnificence is God. It is kept in heaven which reminds us that no earthly power can diminish its value, worth, or reality.

Verse 5. *...who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Our great inheritance is granted and guarded by God, and His protecting power is for those who believe. The inheritance, and we who receive it, are both protected. The inheritance is meaningful only as long as we are kept to possess it. Imagine a will that bequeaths a fortune to someone on their death bed. In a real sense this would be a meaningless inheritance. But imagine a bequest that has the power to also grant a protected life that might enjoy the grant.

The wonderful salvation believers possess has a past, present, and future dimension. Its full sense is not lived out in one moment of time.

True believers have been justified by God at some point in their past life. Believers who are alive are in a present process of sanctification. But, there is also a future glorification that we trust will put an end to suffering and our unfulfilled salvation that we now experience as a foretaste of its completion.

Verse 6. *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials...*

Even the passing thought of our great salvation causes Christians to rejoice. Jesus explains this great joy in some of His parables. The woman searches her home until a lost coin is found and rejoices at the discovery. A father celebrates the return of his prodigal son. One of the sheep has wandered, but is found and the shepherd is filled with joy.

Peter sets this beautiful salvation against a backdrop of various trials. Our salvation is not of the world and it can never be fully appreciated by those who do not possess it. The salvation of God stands against the ways of the world and during our pilgrimage we can expect hardship and even persecution.

...if necessary... Most of us do not welcome trials and hardships, but God deems them necessary to accomplish His purposes in the world and in our souls. It is important to not be too glib about real pain and suffering for the reasons may not be discernable. Often we must trust God and remember our eternal reward yet to be revealed in all of its wonder and glory.

But we can suggest some possibilities for suffering. Our faith is proved genuine if we persevere. We can grow in ways not afforded in a softer life. Suffering proves the world is not our home and drives us to God. We are able to reach out to others who suffer because we know their sorrow. God is perfecting us in ways we may not choose or understand, but many of us can look back upon past trials and know we

are better for the growth and sanctification we received through it.

Verse 7. *... so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Peter gives us an explicit reason for trouble. It begins with the “purpose clause” *so that*. Trials test our faith and demonstrate its genuine nature. Real faith that is rooted in God does not blow over when confronted with the winds of evil. God can use the “fire” of persecution to make us more pure and this purity demonstrates the reality of what God has done—all to His praise.

Verse 8. *Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory...*

An indication of the Spirit’s work in our lives is our strong hope, even though we have not seen Jesus in the flesh as had Peter. Peter spent three years with Jesus and still, at a crucial moment, denied Him. This seems to be on Peter’s mind as he marvels at the true faith of his readers. This faith is demonstrated by our love for Christ, our inexpressible joy, and the glory that fills our lives. All of this is to say our salvation is divine and not of human origin.

Verse 9. *...obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

Peter is referring to the present tense sense of receiving our salvation and not the future hope he mentioned previously. When we endure hardship and persecution and it results in a joy beyond our understanding, we know we are experiencing the fruit of the Spirit and the outcome of our salvation.

