

**THE STUDY OF 1 PETER & 2 PETER**  
**LESSON 3**  
**1 PETER 1:3-9 NOTES**

The apostle Peter follows the introduction of his first letter with a doxology regarding the wonder of salvation. The passage is a hymn of worship designed to encourage Christians living in a hostile world to look past their temporal troubles and rejoice in their eternal inheritance.

He begins his doxology with “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The intention is so implicit in this verse, that the Greek text omits the word “be” which the translators added. In the original, the sentence literally begins, “Blessed the God” which conveys Peter’s expectation that his audience “bless God” as the source of all spiritual inheritance. It is intended to sweep their hearts upward in exalted praise and worship to the Lord, in the joy of adoration and the joy of anticipation of the inheritance that is waiting for them.

“His great mercy” was the motive behind God’s granting believer’s eternal life—sharing the very life of the Father, Son and Spirit.

Mercy focuses on the sinner’s miserable, pitiful condition. The gospel is prompted by God’s compassion toward those who were dead in their trespasses and sins. All believers were once in that wretched, helpless condition, compounded by a deceitful heart. Therefore, they needed God, in mercy, to show compassion toward their desperate, lost condition and remedy it.

Mercy is not the same as grace. Mercy concerns an individual’s miserable condition, whereas grace concerns his guilt, which caused that condition. Divine mercy takes the sinner from misery to glory (a change of condition), and divine grace takes him from guilt to acquittal (a change in position).

Peter goes on to tell us that being born again results in the believer receiving “a living hope.” The unbelieving world knows only dying hopes, but believers have a living, undying hope that will come to a complete, final, and glorious fulfillment.

It is a hope that Peter later described when he wrote, “according to His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13). This hope is what prompted Paul to tell the Philippians, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). At death believers’ hope becomes reality as they enter the glorious presence of God and the full, unhindered, joyous fellowship with the Trinity, the angels and other saints.

The means of Christians’ appropriating this living hope and eternal inheritance is spiritual birth, and the power for that appropriation was demonstrated by “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

The key word of this entire passage is “inheritance,” which is wealth passed down, or a legacy one receives as a member of a family. The concept had roots in the Old Testament, which the Jewish Christians in Peter’s audience would have easily identified with. In fact, the same Greek root- *kleronomia*, rendered inheritance here, is used in the Septuagint to speak of the portions of Canaan allotted by God to each tribe in Israel except Levi (Num. 18: 20-24, 26:54.56).

The Old Testament repeatedly affirms that under the old covenant the people of God, the nation of Israel, received an inheritance. Peter told his readers that just as Israel received an earthly inheritance, the land of Canaan, so the church receives a spiritual inheritance in heaven. The apostle reminded them that in the midst of their persecution they ought to praise God and patiently wait for His promised eternal inheritance. Peter wanted to increase their knowledge, and that of all believers of the eternal blessing that is already theirs, by promise in Christ. Until then, God is in the process of maturing His children and conforming their behavior so that it is increasingly consistent with their spiritual inheritance. Peter’s words remind us of Paul’s words to the Colossians where he tells them to focus on that inheritance. “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Col. 3:1-2).

Our inheritance is a “salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Our inheritance is that full final salvation from the curse of the law, from the power of sin, from the presence of sin, from all decay, from every stain of iniquity, from all temptation, all grief, pain, death, punishment, wrath.

Eternal full salvation!

The New Testament implicitly reveals a threefold chronology for salvation. The past aspect of salvation is justification; it comes when one believes in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10,14-17) and is delivered from the penalty of sin.

The present aspect of salvation is sanctification. Believers are continually being delivered from the power of sin (1 John 1:9). Ephesians 2:8 says: "For by grace you have been saved." The Greek literally says, "you are having been saved." Salvation is therefore a past occurrence with continuing results in the present.

Salvation also has a future aspect, glorification. When a believer dies, God completely and finally delivers him from the presence of sin and instantly brings him into his eternal inheritance in His heavenly presence.

The future aspect of salvation is complete and already awaiting the believer's arrival. But future salvation is also connected to the end of human history. Peter says it is to be revealed in the last time. God will not make believers' inheritance fully complete until the last episode of redemptive history... the return of Jesus Christ.

Then the King will say to those on his right,  
'Come, you who are blessed by my Father;  
take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you  
since the creation of the world.'" Matt. 25:34

Peter adds three descriptive terms to further define the kind of inheritance believers obtain: it "is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away."

Imperishable refers to what is not corruptible, not liable to death, or not subject to destruction. Unlike the Israelites' earthy inheritance that came and went because of their sins, believers' spiritual inheritance will never be subject to destruction.

Undefiled describes things that are unstained or unpolluted. Everything in the fallen creation is stained and polluted by sin (Rom. 8:20-22), and therefore it is all flawed. That's what the apostle Paul referred to when he wrote, "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now."

All earthly inheritance is defiled, but not the undefiled inheritance believers have in Jesus Christ. It is flawless and perfect.

And finally, the believer's inheritance will not fade away. That phrase translates the word *amaranton*, which was used in secular Greek to describe a flower that did not wither or die. The term in this context suggests that believers have an inheritance that will never lose its magnificence. None of the decaying elements of the world can affect the kingdom of heaven. None of the ravages of time or the evils of sin can touch the believer's inheritance because it is in a timeless, sinless realm.

Peter adds to his readers' security by declaring that the believer's inheritance is "reserved in heaven." Its nature is fixed and unalterable and so is its place. "Reserved" means guarded or watched over. This passive participle conveys the idea of the already existing inheritance being carefully guarded "in heaven" for all those who trust in Christ. Not only will that inheritance not change, but no one will plunder it.

Not only is the inheritance divinely guarded, those who possess it are also "protected by the power of God" from doing anything to forfeit it or be severed from it. God's power is His sovereign omnipotence that continuously protects His elect.

"Proof" was used to describe the assaying of metal. The assaying process discovers a metal's purity and determines its true content and worth after all impurities have been smelted away. By analogy, God tests the believer's faith to reveal its genuineness. He does this not because He needs to discover who is a true believer, but so that believers will gain joy and confidence in their proven faith. The phrase "proof of your faith," more accurately understood as "the tested residue of your faith," captures the essence of the spiritual assaying process.

Peter used "gold" in his analogy because it was the most precious and highly prized of all metals. In ancient times it was the basis for most monetary transactions. Just as "fire" separates gold from useless dross, so God uses suffering and trials to separate true faith from superficial profession. But even

though gold can be purified when “tested by fire,” it is “perishable.” However, proven faith is eternal, making it “more precious than gold.”

### Born into Hope: Sermon by Timothy Keller

“The new birth drastically and utterly changes the relationship between joy and sorrow in your life. Apart from living hope, joy and sorrow eat each other up. You’re either in joy or you’re in sorrow. If your circumstances are terrible you’re not in joy, if your circumstances are fine you’re not in sorrow.

But look carefully; the sorrow here actually increases the joy.

“These trials have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold which perishes even though refined by fire may be proved genuine and result in praise glory and honor.”

When you put gold into the fire, what happens? It gets brighter, it gets refined. What’s the fire? It’s the suffering.

A living hope, since it’s not based in circumstances, means this; when your circumstances get terrible, when they are stripped away from you, if you are born again and have that living hope, that is not based on circumstances, then the sorrow actually drives you into your joy. It drives you into Christ. It roots you deeper, it gets brighter, it gets stronger.

In other words, sorrow actually kicks on the joy, just like when it gets colder outside it kicks on the furnace and the furnace heats up so it meets the cold. In the Christian life when the sorrow comes it doesn’t throw away the joy, because the joy isn’t circumstantial. It kicks it on. Deepens it. Strengthens it.

You get a joy that actually lets you just sorrow. Instead of the sorrow hardening you and destroying you, making you bitter and a more cynical person, the sorrow actually makes you wiser. Because what you have is a life in which you don’t run from sorrow. It gives you compassion, it softens you, deepens you. You have a joy that only gets brighter with the sorrow. Just as the stars get brighter when the night gets darker.”

Love and trust are the two crucial ingredients in any meaningful relationship. In verse 8, Peter exalts those two aspects as essential to believers' relationship with Christ and vital to the joy that results. The word *love* is the love of the will, the noblest form of love. The present tense indicates that Peter's audience constantly loved their Lord, which *love* defines the essence of being a Christian.

Peter next commends his readers' faith and trust in Christ. Obviously to "believe in Him" goes hand in hand with loving Him. The soul that loves Christ cannot help but believe in Him and the soul that believes cannot help but love. Though Christians "do not see Him now," still they "believe in Him."

There is really no reason for believers to lose their joy when they can tap into all the present and future spiritual realities mentioned in this passage—present proven faith, fellowship with Christ, and deliverance; and a protected future inheritance and promised honor. As Jesus assured the apostles, "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:11).

"Those old gnarling's on the root of the oak tree and those strange twisting's of the branches all tell of the many storms that have swept over it, and they are also indicators of the depth to which the roots have forced their way. So the Christian is made strong, and firmly rooted by all the trials and storms of life." -Charles Spurgeon

References:  
Timothy Keller  
John MarArthur  
John Piper