

DO YOU HAVE A PLACE IN HEAVEN? 1 PETER 1: 3-9

Introduction:

The inheritance of the Christian is a heavenly inheritance. Just as each family in the tribes of Israel had a plot of land in the Promised Land, each true Christian has an inheritance in heaven. Those who belong to the Lord will enter into their inheritance at the Coming of the Lord, and when the New Heaven and New Earth appear.

Jesus reminded that knowing our names are written in heaven is one of the supreme privileges of life, and a just cause for joy every day.

About this inheritance, Marshall wrote:

In the rest of the sentence Peter expands in two ways what he has said about the hope of the Christian:

1. He defines it as an *inheritance*. This word has a different emphasis in the New Testament from what it has in ordinary usage. Now we tend to use the word for the property that a son or other legal heir receives on the death of his father. This legal right may well have been expressed in a will. But the New Testament uses the word to express more the legal claim which the heir already has on the property even while the father is still alive. The younger son in the parable of Jesus asked his father, who was very much alive, to

give him the part of the estate that already “belonged” to him. To have something as an inheritance, then, indicates that we are already named in the will as those who are appointed to inherit it and that, in a sense, our name is already on it. Peter is under lining the fact that the content of the living hope is already destined for us.

A second nuance in the word *inheritance* is important. When the people of Israel were marching through the desert from Egypt to the land of Canaan, Moses spoke to them about *the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance* (Deut 15:4). They were not yet in the land, but God had promised it to them. They could think of it as being already theirs. When the same term is used in the New Testament, it conveys the idea of a promised land which is prepared for God’s people: the heavenly territory that God has destined for them. Three adjectives are used to describe the promised inheritance: imperishable (see 1:23; 3:4), pure and unfading (see 5:4). These words all express its eternal character in contrast to earthly possessions and thus indicate its infinite worth. Finally, Peter says that this inheritance is kept safely by God in heaven for his people. It is like a treasure laid up in heaven, a thought that possibly echoes the teaching of Jesus in Luke 12:22–40. (Intervarsity Com.)

The contrast between the two is presented by Peter in contrast with each other. The Old Testament inheritance was earthly, but the inheritance for the Christian is “reserved in heaven.” The Old Testament inheritance was characterized by corruption, but the inheritance of the Christian is “incorruptible.” There will be no sin in their inheritance. The Old Testament inheritance was always defiled, the inheritance of the Christian is “undefiled.” There will be no idols or other gods in the heavenly inheritance. The Old Testament inheritance was fading away, it grew old with the passing of time, but the inheritance for the Christian “does not fade away.” Nothing in the heavenly inheritance will ever grow old, including the people.

But the question that this text raises in my mind is can I be sure that I have a part in this heavenly inheritance? Am I one of those being kept by the power of God until that day?

Peter sets forth some pretty clear signs that mark those who have a place in heaven. As we begin this series of studies on heaven, I want us to make sure that we have a place there. Based on this passage, let me ask you some qualifying questions. As I ask you, I search my own heart.

I. HAVE YOU BEEN BORN AGAIN?

" Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," (1 Peter 1:3, NKJV)

1. The New Birth is a merciful work of God in the heart of the sinner.

Becoming a Christian is like being born into the world, only this time a new spiritual life commences in the person who has already experienced physical birth. The concept emphasizes that the source of life is outside ourselves and lies wholly with God whose Word engenders life (1:23). The metaphor is not pushed beyond the thought of the engendering of life, the action of the Father alone being envisaged with no thought being given to any metaphorical equivalent of a mother.¹

²Marshall, I. H. (1991). *1 Peter*. The IVP New Testament commentary series (1 Pe 1:6). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

2. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead makes such a New Birth possible.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the ground or foundation of a Christian's hope. The resurrection of Christ is the act of the Father as a Judge, of the Son as a conqueror. His resurrection demonstrates that the Father accepts his death in full discharge for our ransom, that he is victorious over death, the grave, and all our spiritual enemies; and it is also an assurance of our own resurrection. There being an inseparable union between Christ and his flock, they rise by virtue of his resurrection as a head, rather than by virtue of his power as a Judge. We have risen with Christ, Col. 3:1³

⁴Henry, M. (1996, c1991). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (1 Pe 1:3). Peabody: Hendrickson.

3. The New Birth changes everything in the life.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV)

II. ARE YOU AWARE OF GOD'S SAVING WORK IN YOUR LIFE?

"who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5, NKJV)

1. The New Birth begins the preserving work of God in the life of His people.

“The angel of the Lord encampeth around them that fear him;” they are guarded by, or rather, according to the exact rendering, *in the power of God*. His power is all around them; it is the sphere in which they live and move; no harm can reach them in that all-embracing shelter.

Pulpit Commentary

The present participle indicates something *in progress, a continuous process of protection*. Hence, lit., *who are being guarded*. “The inheritance is *kept*; the heirs are *guarded*” (Bengel).

2. The New Birth begins the sanctifying work of God in His people.

III. HAS YOUR FAITH BEEN STRENGTHED BY THE HARDSHIPS AND DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE?

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may

lit. Literally.

be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ," (1 Peter 1:6-7, NKJV)

1. The trials of life are permitted by God to test our faith.
2. The trials of life will purify our faith in God.
3. The surviving the test honors the God in whom we believe.

IV. DO YOU LOVE JESUS THOUGH YOU HAVE NOT SEEN HIM?

"whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory," (1 Peter 1:8, NKJV)

One must know the person in order to love him. It was the clear-cut conception of the Lord Jesus which the Holy Spirit had given these saints through the Word, that caused them to love Him. The distinctive Greek word for "love" here, *agape* (ἀγαπε), refers to a love that is called out of one's heart by the preciousness of the person loved. But even the preciousness of the Lord Jesus would not have made these individuals love Him if God in salvation had not produced in them that divine love which He Himself is, with which to love Him (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22, 23). One must have the nature

of an artist to really appreciate and love art. One must have the nature of God (II Peter 1:4) to appreciate and love the Lord Jesus.⁵

(Wuest)

V. DOES YOUR FAITH IN JESUS FILL YOUR HEART WITH
JOY AND ANTICIPATION?

"whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:8-9, NKJV)

“Joy in the Lord is a foretaste of the joy of heaven, and is irradiated by glimpses of the glory that shall be revealed.”⁶

(Pulpit)

⁵Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (1 Pe 1:8). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

⁶*The Pulpit Commentary: 1 Peter*. 2004 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.) (6). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.