

## **A Gift of a Lifetime**

1 Peter 1:3-12

(preached Pine Grove 7/28/19 Sun PM)

### **Introduction**

In the aftermath of the American Civil War in the early 1870s, Eduardo Laboulalye thought it would be a good idea to encourage the American people.

His own country of France had been under the difficult king Napoleon 3 from 1852 and 1870, and Laboulaye longed for the democratic government that he saw in America.

So he began thinking of how to inspire his own country to pursue the freedom that Americans enjoyed.

In his discussions of encouraging freedom in his own nation, he happened to speak with a French sculptor named Frederick Barhtoldi.

Bartholdi was a an artist because also someone with a strong desire to see his country break free from its monarchical system of government.

Though he was busy on other artistic projects, he began to consider what to do.

Eventually, he and Laboulaye had the idea of building a large lighthouse in New York Harbor that symbolized the freedom and liberty offered in America.

That lighthouse became known as the Statue of Liberty, and the interesting note is that Laboulaye and Bartholdi and the French government offered it as gift to America.

So Bartholdi began construction of it in France.

He completed it.

It was disassembled and ship to America and reassembled and sits in New York Harbor as testimony to democracy and freedom..

But the statue is also a reminder of generosity and kindness as it cost the French people millions of dollars in materials and shipping costs.

Needless to say, it was one of the most incredible gifts in world history.

How are gifts supposed to make us feel?

Thankful, special, loved.

Well, in 1 Peter tonight, we are going to look at the greatest gift that anyone can receive.

We are going to consider the magnificent gift of salvation.

What does it mean to be saved?

How does it change our lives when we are saved?

And what is so incredible about the nature of salvation in terms in the plan of God?

So, let's begin in verse 3 of 1 Peter 1 with the realities of salvation...

## **I. The Realities of Salvation (3-5)**

Though we should all be very prepared for verse 3 considering the time we spent on verses 1 and 2, let me remind you of what is happening.

Peter the apostle is writing this letter in 64 AD to persecuted Christians within the Roman Empire.

Their persecution stems from the fact that Nero has blamed them for a fire that destroyed Rome in July of 64 AD.

It was a fire that Nero set but he was desperate to avoid blame for since many lives and much of the city were destroyed by the flames..

So, the Christians in the Empire became an easy target for blame.

As a result, they begin to feel the heat of persecution.

Some are rounded up and killed as a penalty for supposedly setting fire to Rome.

Others are tortured in hopes of making them recant their faith in Christ.

Needless to say, times are difficult for those who claim to follow Christ, so God inspires Peter to write a letter to the church.

It is not addressed to a specific church like Thessalonians or Corinthians.

Rather, it goes out to a number of churches in the Roman Empire with the purpose of encouraging them to endure the affliction and hold fast to their faith.

So how do you begin a letter to suffering Christians?

Simple, you start with who they are in Christ.

You start with the glorious truth of salvation.

And we looked at that the past two weeks.

Christians are people who have been chosen by God for salvation.

Christians are people who are recipients of God's grace and peace despite their sin.

Christians are those who live by a different standard because they were saved to obey Christ..

But now Peter moves from a definition of believers to a definition of salvation..

And this very helpful to our hearts tonight as well.

WE don't feel affection and suffering anywhere close to those first readers of Peter's letter, but we do know what it is to suffer in other ways.

WE know what it is like to be sick.

WE know what it is like to see our friends and family sick.

WE know what it is like to have relationship struggles..

WE know what is it like to have financial troubles.

We know what it is like to simply experience the pain of living in a fallen world..

Whatever the source of suffering, there is comfort is remembering who you are as a Christian.

But there is also comfort when remembering the benefits of salvation...

So what are the realities of being saved?

What are the benefits of knowing Christ in a saving way?

Let's begin in verse 3..

***3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,***

The first reality of salvation is a saved person is born again.

In other words, the reality of salvation is that the old man dies and a new man comes to life.

If this sounds familiar, it is because Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again in order to inherit the Kingdom of God.

Being born again and being saved are synonyms.

They go hand in hand.

To be born again is to be saved and to be saved is to be born again.

Now notice what this says..

God has caused us to be born again..

That's the New American Standard translation.

That's also what the English Standard Version says..

Yours may say that God gave us new birth.

Or that God has begotten us.

The point is simple.

Being born again is not the result of what man can do.

It is the result of what God has done, which fits perfectly with the idea of God's choosing and election of believers.

God chose us in eternity past and He brings us to life at His appointed time.

Just like none of us were responsible for our spiritual birth, none of us are responsible for our spiritual birth.

God brought us to life.

God caused us to be born again..

And the reality is that what God makes new is truly made new.



For those reading this letter, this was an important reality.

They were being threatened and harassed but they could endure it.

They were not the same people as they were before they were saved.

In their past life, they would have answered evil with evil but now they were able to answer evil with good.

Now as those who had been born again, they were not slaves to their sin.

They could endure the affliction.

They could turn the other cheek.

They had been brought forth in the power of God.

Their lives and desires and attitudes and actions could be different than before..

And the same is true of us.

If you are saved today, you are changed not because you are powerful but because had caused you to be born again.

Which leads to the reality that true believers always demonstrate a change of life, resulting for the new birth.

Be grateful tonight that God has caused you to be born again.

What an outstanding reality of salvation.

Another reality of salvation is also seen in verse 3..

We have hope.

I was reading an article online this week about birth strikers.

Birth strikers are women who have decided not to have kids due to the supposed environmental crises.

In their minds, having kids only adds to the problem of using more natural resources, but more importantly having kids means exposing them to a world headed for destruction..

In the article, one birth striker was quoted as saying,..

“We cried when our daughter was born. We cried because our selfishness had caused us to bring a child into a world that is doomed to environmental failure.”

There is a lot I could say at this point, but let me simply say this..

That is someone with no hope.

That is someone who sees nothing but doom and gloom.

Now, here's something that is odd.

I agree with this lady.

The world is on a collision course with destruction, but it won't be the result of human environmental destruction.

It will be the result of God's environmental destruction in the 7 year tribulation period.

But even though I know what is coming, I have hope and I have even had kids.

But why?

Well, the Bible is clear.

We are commanded to be fruitful and multiply.

Despite coming destruction, God has commanded people to have children.

And why do we obey?

Because we have hope.

We know that God is good and faithful to those who obey Him and love Him.

This is a reality of salvation.

WE are people of hope.

Now, this is becoming more and more difficult considering the culture around us.

There are plenty of reasons to be filled with despair if you look around today, but the reality is that we have hope as God's people.

And why do we have hope?

Simple.

Look at the end of verse 3..

We have hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

In other words, the darkest day in history....-

The day that Christ was crucified.

That dark day was followed by the brightest day in history.

The day that Christ rose from the dead.

Just when all hope seemed to be lost on Friday afternoon, Sunday morning became a source of hope for all who would repent and believe in Christ.

And the resurrection is a reason for hope.

Though we can't relate, this was a real reason to press on as believers in Peter's day.

Even if the Romans persecuted believers to the ultimate end.

Even in affliction led to death, the believer had the hope of resurrection.

For Christians, even death is a pathway to life.

To die in this world is go and be with Christ.

Though we avoid death in this world in stay and share our faith, death is not the worst thing to happen to a Christian.

This is why 1000s of Christians have fearlessly walked to the stake to be burned for their faith.

Why others have calmly climbed the steps to be hung while holding on to their confession of faith in Christ.

Hope of resurrection is why we consider our earthly lives nothing for the sake of Christ.

For those reading this letter in 64 AD, Peter was not calling for Christians to take up arms and fight until their death.

But he was reminded his readers and us that the hope seen in the resurrection of Jesus makes us persevere despite the threat of death.

And if the world should kill us, notice the next reality of salvation in verse 4..

***4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away,..***

The great reality of salvation is that it is much more than just present forgiveness of sin.

Now that would have been enough.

If God had just saved us and wiped away our sin to avoid eternal punishment, we all would have grateful.

Yet salvation does not just a present reality.

There is a future reality too.

We receive an inheritance.

So what is that inheritance?

Is it gold or silver?

Oh no, it is much more than that.

Simply put, our inheritance is an eternity free from the consequences of sin.

You see, sin corrupts everything we know.

From birth, we feel the pain of sin.

Even when we experience the good things in life, the pain is that the goodness is still temporary.

When you see a perfect sunset, the pain is that you can't stay there forever.

The pain is that the sun will sink, and you will have to leave.

And that is simply a product of living under the curse.

Only Adam and Eve have known what it is like to live in an environment free from the curse of sin, and that wasn't long.

But our eternal inheritance is life free the corruption of sin but also life in the presence of God.

Believers go the place where God is but sin isn't.

Believers inherit a place where holiness exists but corruption doesn't.

And it will be the grandest place ever.

There will be worship there but it won't be corruption by our exhaustion or the distraction of our minds.

There will be fellowship there but it won't be broken by schedules and sleep and the need to get home before dark.

There will be work and service there but it won't make us tired or leave us frustrated.



The inheritance of heaven is the inheritance of perfect bodies in a perfect environment under the authority of a perfect God.

This is exactly what Peter is describing here.

Salvation gives us a present new birth.

Salvation gives us a present hope.

But salvation also gives us a future inheritance.

And note what Peter says.

That inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, and won't fade away.

Not only will that inheritance bring freedom from the corruption of sin, there will never be any threat of change.

Our eternal inheritance will not fade away.

What a great thought.

As we grow older as parents, we find ourselves trying to hang on to our kids.

It is a glorious reality to see God maturing them and changing them into young adults who will follow Him into the world.

But is also sad to see those sweet days of being little kids fade away.

Let me tell you something church, you won't have to try and hang on to things in heaven.

Time doesn't march on there.

Things don't fade away there.

The first day and the millionth day in heaven will be exactly the same.

What an inheritance that awaits us.

It is protected by God now, and it will be protected by God for all eternity.

Notice how Peter tells us this at the end of verse 4..

***4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you***

What a joy to know that God is protecting our inheritance..

Every Christmas, we would gather at my grandmothers house.

It was a tiny little mill house in Whitmire, but on Christmas Eve night, 15 of us would gather there to open presents.

Well, it was chaos as we all tore into our presents at the same time..

So I would open a present, and make a pile right beside me.

At the end of the night, I would have a neatly stacked pile of gifts right beside me.

I would not take them out to play.

They were going with me in the box.

What a sad picture of my own greediness and selfishness..

But that was my system.

I opened the presents.

I stacked the presents.

I guarded the presents.

This was my way of guarding my inheritance.

Look, God is guarding our inheritance in heaven.

Our inheritance is in safe hands tonight, and it will be given to us when God wills..

And for Peter's readers, this was encouraging.

They were in a hostile world.

And they were feeling the pain of a fallen world.

Yet, their inheritance was safe and free from the sin that was all around them.

And eventually, they would be free from the sin that was all around them.

God was going to deliver them from a defiled world into world that was undefiled and would remain that way forever.

Their lives were uncertain, but their inheritance was very certain.

And it would be kept that way until they arrive to receive it..

Now this leads to verse 5, which will be where we stop tonight..

***5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.***

Simply put, if you a believer, your inheritance is in good hands, but so are you.

The word for protected here means shielded in the Greek.

In other words, you are in God's hand but you are also shielded by God's hand as well.

This is the eternal security of the believer.

Believers are safe because God preserves them

He holds them.

He keeps them.

Romans 8:31

***31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect?....***

***35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ?  
Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or  
famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?***

***38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,  
nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present,  
nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor  
depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to  
separate us from the love of God, which is in  
Christ Jesus our Lord.***

It is strange to me that folks who resist the idea of God's election of believers love the idea of God's protection of believers.

But I want to understand that election and protection go hand in hand.

If a person is saved because he chooses to be saved, then he can "unchoose" to be saved and walk away.

But if God chooses, then that person can't "unchoose" and is therefore protected forever.

If man elects Himself to salvation, he can lose that salvation

If God elects him to salvation, it cannot be lost.

Look, this is idea is quite important to those in 64 AD.

I am sure that many were wondering how they would reposed if confronted by Roman authorities.

I am sure that they were concerned about what they would say and do.

Could they fail?

Could they falter?

Could they walk away from their salvation?

Well, verse 5 say that salvation is not in our hands.

Believers are in the hand of God will will keep them until it is time for their salvation to be experienced..

And I can tell you.

There is nowhere I would rather be..

We will pick up there next week..

## **Conclusion**

Let's go home with a few thoughts in our heart..

### ***#1 - Believers are changed people.***

If you have been born again, you have a new look and a new life and new desires and new outlook on life.

It is impossible to be born again and not bear some resemblance to your heavenly Father.

If you don't see a change of life as a result of being saved, you should be concerned.

### ***#2 - Believers are filled with hope.***

This world is incredibly disappointing and heartbreaking.

But that is no reasons to lose hope.

Christians are glass half full people.

We see hope in everything.

WE have the past hope of the resurrection.

The present hope heaven.



And the future hope of the rapture followed by the Second Coming.

How can we ever despair with so much hope?

***#3 - Believers are awaiting an inheritance.***

Upon Oprah Winfrey's death, each of her 5 dogs will inherit 6 million dollars apiece.

This inheritance is one the largest sections of her will.

That is craziness, but so many earthly inheritances are.

Carlotta Liebenstein left 80 million to her German Shepherd, who in turn bought a Florida mansion with it.

This is the silliness of earthly inheritance

Let me assure you, the inheritance that God has for His people is far greater than anything that has ever been inherited on earth.

Earthly inheritance is spent and wasted and gobbled up by greed often.

The worse part is that earthly inheritance is stained by the corruption of sin.

Heavenly inheritance never fades, never decreases, and will never run out.

***#4 - Believers are safe and sound.***

I cannot over stress the comfort of eternal security.

To know that you are kept by the power of God unto the realization of your salvation is a powerful truth in the life of a believer.

Unlike what some think, it is not a license to sin and put God to the test.

Rather, it is a license to live for the glory of Christ in the face of those who oppose you.

It is permission to take wise risks and know that God is faithful.

It is assurance to know that no matter how down you are, you will not fall through the fingers of God's hand..

To know the security of God's protection is to find peace in a world of unrest.

I pray you know that peace tonight, or else you need to put your trust in the prince of peace. LETS PRAY.

## II. The Results of Salvation (6-9)

## III. The Renown of Salvation (10-12)