

An Inheritance for Us Reserved in Heaven

1 Peter 1:3-4, Exodus 25:17, Habakkuk 3:2, Matthew 5:7, 2 Chronicles 36:16-17, Acts 20:32, Acts 26:18, Ephesians 1:11, Ephesians 1:14, Ephesians 1:18, Colossians 3:24, 1 Corinthians 13:7

Slide 1

One common feature of human beings is the use of the word “wish,” i.e. *“I wish I could do this or I wish I could do that.”* Allied with this are expectations that accompany daily living.

If we had no expectations, then we’d just be boring people living dull lives. Those with expectations look forward to a holiday at some new place; the realization of one’s first home, and so on.

All these hopes are legitimate but many of them are like being on a roller coaster, they peak, then decline. This because they’re earthly hopes.

Think about it. Sometimes, after months of hopeful expectation, the realization ends with hopes dashed and failure. That’s the nature of earthly hopes.

I feel sorry for the people who plan their future by setting themselves up in a business, hoping to become established and make a living from their efforts and hopes, then tragedy strikes.

It could be new Government restrictions, ill health, fraud, a weather disaster, or a number of other reasons.

The hopes that were built up over time are crushed and swept away, leaving broken, and sometimes, embittered people.

If our hope is only in earthly things, we set ourselves up to be devastated, but there’s a hope that transcends any earthly experience.

Peter referred to it as a *“living hope.”* Therefore, we must conclude that, by comparison, all earthly hopes are dead hopes.

In today’s passage, Peter talked about this different type of hope. It is a spiritual hope, a heavenly hope, an eternal hope.

1 Peter 1:3-4, *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great 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 or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you.”*

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There are four points in these two verses that I want to focus on today. The first is mercy. It’s interesting that Peter selects this word *“mercy”* as the key to all God’s goodness.

If it was Paul, I think he’d have chosen grace, as it was grace that captivated Paul, since God was so gracious to the one who persecuted the church. John, of course, would’ve chosen love.

Now, mercy is related to kindness. It’s like a soldier captured during battle who pleads, *“Mercy! Mercy!”* not wanting to be killed. He wanted kindness to be shown not wrath.

When you do a word study of mercy, you’ll find that its first mentioned in the Bible in the book of Exodus.

Exodus 25:17, *“Make an atonement cover [mercy seat] of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide.”*

The Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat was where God’s glory and presence resided.

Exodus 25:22, *“There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.”*

Because of such holiness, the Ark was kept in the Holy of Holies, a separate room behind a curtain that only the High Priest could enter once a year.

Now, the Ark itself was constructed of acacia wood and completely overlaid with gold inside and out.

Exodus 25:10-11, *“Have them make an ark of acacia wood—two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it.”*

Exodus 25:17 tells us that the Mercy seat was made of solid gold. So, why was it okay to build the ark out of wood and overlay it with gold, and the lid had to be made of solid gold?

When you study the Bible, you learn that the “types” in the Bible are very important. Gold stands for divinity as it is an untarnishable metal, eternal, pure, and precious, while wood stands for what’s of earth.

Every single article in the Tabernacle spoke of Jesus. The Ark spoke of Jesus while He was here on earth. The wood represented His humanity, and the gold overlay, His divinity.

As the wood was completely overlaid, inside and out, with gold, so Jesus was completely the divine One, but with His full humanity enclosed in His Person. Thus, Jesus was the God-Man, fully God and fully Man.

Now, the Mercy Seat wasn’t constructed of wood but of solid gold because no One but God Himself can atone for sin.

The blood from the sacrifice was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat and that spoke of an atoning sacrifice. The greatest sacrifice was that of the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world.

God extended His merciful kindness to us, who should have been dispatched as evil sinners.

However, His mercy prevailed over sin, typified in the Mercy Seat and it's that mercy that had special significance for Peter.

While grace was of significance for Paul, and love had special significance for John, both of these attributes of God are precious for those of us who are saved. But for sinners, God is a God of wrath and judgement.

This is why it's no surprise that mercy was so important to Peter. When he denied Jesus three times, he fled into the darkness and hid out of shame.

He probably thought Jesus had abandoned him and was ashamed of him, but no!

After the resurrection, Jesus sought him out, restoring and forgiving him. Peter never forgot that, so it's little wonder that mercy is at the top of his list.

Just to end this consideration of mercy, we see the last mention of "mercy" in the Old Testament is found in the book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk 3:2, *"Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy."*

The first mention of mercy in the Old Testament was the Mercy Seat, where the wrath of God was appeased by the sprinkling of blood, and it closes with Habakkuk asking God to remember of mercy in His wrath.

An illustration of what Habakkuk was talking about can be seen when God used Nebuchadnezzar to punish His people for their sins.

2 Chronicles 36:16-17, "But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar."

God appointed Nebuchadnezzar as His servant to punish Judah for its sin, but the problem with Nebuchadnezzar was his lack of mercy.

Nebuchadnezzar needed to have shown mercy in wrath but instead, he ruthlessly violated the people, and as a result, God showed no mercy to Babylon over-throwing them.

In the New Testament, the first mention of mercy is found Matthew 5, in the Beatitudes. Matthew 5:7, *"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."* This is drawn from God's example as seen in Old Testament scriptures.

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In fact, it's interesting to note that in our focal passage, 1 Peter 1:3-4, where Peter lists four important points, his first point was the mercy of God described as His *"great mercy."*

In the New Testament, God's motivation towards us is characterized by three powerful words: love, grace, and mercy.

Of these, one is very prominent in scripture by the phrase, “God IS love.” That phrase is never used of the other two, though God is merciful, and God is gracious.

Thus, we have grace and mercy flowing from the love of God. In other words, love is the source of everything else relating to us. But it’s the mercy of God that causes us to be born again.

God’s mercy towards us devised salvation through the death of His Son on the cross, so that through the operation of the Holy Spirit, who convicts of sin, we might be born again through faith.

It’s through this mercy of God that we have been transformed from dead bondage into a living hope – a hope that is alive. We sang about this just a few minutes ago.

*Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,
Jesus, I come! Jesus, I come!
Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee!
Out of my sickness into Thy health,
Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into Thyself,
Jesus, I come to Thee!*

A living hope encompasses many joyful aspects. One is salvation itself (redemption, justification, reconciliation), but there are others just as powerfully motivating.

Our hope includes an eternal inheritance in heaven in Jesus’s presence. Our hope includes expectation, as the early church had an expectation of the Lord’s coming for His people – the Rapture.

Hope isn't a nebulous feeling but a settled confidence, a full assurance. A living hope includes all those aspects but continues to multiply and grow stronger.

If a Christian is not growing, then we can conclude that he doesn't have a living hope, but a stagnant hope or worse still, a dead hope, where there was never one there in the first place.

If you're someone who honestly knows that your hope isn't a thriving, living hope, then it's most likely you've neglected God's Word, the Bible, or have neglected spending time with Him.

If you've never given your life wholly to Jesus Christ, then you must spend more time with God so you can enter into His hope. But there's a difference between a living hope and living in hope.

The Christian must know their future. A Christian knows where they're going because they live in hope.

Hope for the Lord's return when He comes in the air and catches His people up. It's coming fast so we must be prepared.

But all Christian hope would be futile without the resurrection. That's basic because all our faith would be futile if Christ's bones still lay in some obscure Palestine tomb.

The new birth, that spawned this living hope, finds its authority and value only through the resurrection.

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Then Peter mentions this living hope is "*an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.*"

Who usually receives an inheritance? Well on the death of a parent it's usually a son or daughter who inherits according to the parent's wishes. That's our gift to our offspring.

This type of inheritance is earthly. However, Peter tells us that there's a heavenly inheritance that awaits us, one not too many of us think much about. It comes from Jesus and is reserved for His children in the faith.

Billions of people will share in that inheritance because we have such a kind and gracious Father who has gifts abundant and wishes to share with His own.

But don't start thinking in a greedy sense of what material blessings you can get. It has nothing to do with lust and greed. This sort of attitude comes from the prosperity doctrine.

Our inheritance, of which Peter mentioned, is pure and from a divine Father. It has nothing to do with mansions in heaven and what you can get. Our inheritance is spiritual and eternal.

Acts 20:32, "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

The phrase, "*among all those who are sanctified,*" means those who have been declared holy. They'll share the joy and privilege of heaven together, the holy members of the Bride.

Ephesians 1:11, "In him we were also chosen [HAVE OBTAINED AN INHERITANCE], having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will."

We'll all share in this inheritance granted by the Lord. The Lord predestined that, and predestination always means a blessing. Our inheritance is a blessing.

Colossians 3:24, *“Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”*

Our heavenly inheritance is a reward. We'll be rewarded, but for what? God's gracious to do that to the ones who are no longer sinners but saved by grace. This is the kindness or mercy of God.

Peter amplifies our inheritance with four words: imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and reserved. We can be certain that there will be no heights then decline, no anti-climax; or any decline in its true value.

As for me, the inheritance I want is communion with Jesus, to see Him as He is, and to be like Him when I see Him in heaven. That's a reward far in excess of what I truly deserve.

Slide 5

Conclusion

Peter said, *“This inheritance is kept in heaven for you.”* Think about it. We have an inheritance reserved (stored up) for us in heaven. It has to be reserved since we couldn't possibly bear it here in this sinful world. It'd be too much for us.

Only when we're removed forever from the presence of sin, can we know and appreciate God's reserved inheritance.

In 1 Corinthians 13:8, Paul said that love does not fail or disappoint. God's mercy, which flows from God's love, will not disappoint. This living hope can't disappoint because its roots lie with a merciful God.

Therefore, because hope flows from the mercy of God, and mercy stems from the love of God, then the aspects of love should be the aspects of hope.

Thus, hope will bear up under opposition. Keep believing when faith is under attack for it must endure through the most adverse circumstances.

1 Corinthians 13:7, *“It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”*

What’s so wonderful about entering heaven? Well, think about all the times when you’ve looked forward to a certain promised event with great expectation, and how disappointed you were when you found out, at the last moment, a cancellation or change of plans had occurred?

This life contains many disappointments, and stresses, and injustices, but be assured that our confidence lies in this living hope that God has given to us through His great mercy.