

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Merciful and Powerful Begetting

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5, KJV 1900)

Although the closing of Verse Two indicates the end of Peter's introduction, he continues his thought without interruption. God remains the active cause, and His elect the merciful beneficiaries of grace. Throughout the three verses in this week's study, God is the consistent and sole active Cause of the actions identified. Normally the word "Blessed" refers to a superior passing benefit to one who is lesser. However, Scripture frequently describes God's redeemed people as "Blessing" Him. Clearly, He is superior, and no one knows that fact better than a worshipping redeemed child of grace. What then is the point? The Greek word translated "Blessed" in this passage is the root for our English word "Eulogy," meaning to speak well of. Although we typically use the word with reference to a funeral message, the actual word is far broader and brighter. Our worship should always anchor its activities in "Speaking well" of God. In that sense, the lesser can and does "Bless" the greater.

Occasionally Bible students misunderstand the Father-Son corollary in Scripture. Particularly, people who hold that Jesus is inferior in some way or degree to God, will appeal to these Father-Son passages. However, the verses do not at all support their view. John 5:17-18 provides a Biblical perspective of Jesus' Sonship, as does John 10:32-33. The correct Biblical view of God as Father and Jesus as Son directs us to equality, not superiority or inferiority. In considering the human parallel within a family, the children share the parent's genes. As essential beings, both parent and child are equal members of the human race. Clearly the Jewish idiom followed this construct. The Jews in both of the passages cited were furious at Jesus because, in their minds, by referring to God as His Father, Jesus was claiming full equality with God. They were correct. He did.

The premise of God's operation that makes us His children indeed involves His dealing with our sin problem from His own strict legal perspective, but the essential operative principle that accomplishes our eternal salvation goes beyond justice or legality. God anchors His gracious dealings with us in His mercy. Out of a love so profound that we cannot possibly grasp its dimensions (Ephesians 3:14-19), God deals with us according to mercy, abundant mercy, as Peter describes it in our study passage.

Paul affirms this truth in Titus 3:5 and context. It is God's mercy that drives His causing our new birth, not our attitude of faith or our works of righteousness.

...unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. One of several bogus arguments for abortion attempts to rationalize the act with "No child who is not wanted and loved should be born." This moral slippery slope argument rationalizes a grievous act based solely on the emotional state of the parent, so presumably the parent's pleasure claims a higher moral ground than the unborn child's life. How short is the distance from this way of thinking to "No senior citizen should be allowed to continue living if he/she no longer contributes to his/her family"? How far down this moral chasm do we slide before we abandon human-centric amoral rationalization and return to God-centric moral soundness?

God's bringing His children into His family does not originate based on a questionable future for the child. Every child of God is brought into God's family with the divine commitment of a joyful future based on Jesus' personal resurrection from the dead. As He arose, victorious over death, so all of His beloved children shall arise in victory. This "...lively hope..." is not a reflection of our emotional reaction to God's merciful grace, but a certain statement of the future that God has prepared for His family.

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.... What we shall enjoy in heaven is ours, not by merit or by reward, but by the will of God. It is an inheritance that God has "Bequeathed" to His family in and through the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:15-22 uses the analogy of a human last will and testament to depict this same truth. Jesus is the "Testator," the executor of God's will. Until Jesus died for our sins, the will was a very nice "Document," but, upon His death, that "Document" became God's active vehicle to distribute His spiritual treasures, to His family.

Peter assigns four qualities to this inheritance.

1. ***It is incorruptible.*** It not only is not corrupt; it cannot be corrupted. Sadly often in the execution of human wills after the death of

the parents, the children, the heirs, become more focused on getting what they want than on the love of their parents that provided the inheritance for them. Effectively, their selfish bickering and battling over the estate tarnishes their parents' love and goodwill. They corrupt their inheritance even before they fully possess it. Think about the prodigal son. (Luke 15:11-32) Effectively the departing son says to his father, "I wish you were dead so I could collect my inheritance." Could a child more grievously corrupt his inheritance than with this attitude toward the living, loving parent? God's inheritance for His beloved children cannot be so tainted by the selfish rantings of His children. He preserves it incorruptible.

2. **It is undefiled.** God didn't gain His "Estate" by questionable means. It is a pure and glorious inheritance. It matches God's love for His family perfectly.
3. **It "...fadeth not away."** How often we observed human families wholly disintegrate as they distributed their parents' estate. They didn't work to earn the estate. It became theirs by reason of their place in the family. Thus, they eagerly take it and immediately begin to spend it in frivolous waste. I recently observed three children who received their inheritance. Two of them recalled their parents' love and tried to put their inheritance to respectful use, honoring their parents by their use of the estate. The third child had most of the money spent before he even received it on sinful indulgences that would have deeply grieved his parents. No earthly estate lasts forever. Regardless of the amount of money, sooner or later it is spent. It fades away. God's inheritance that He has reserved for His children cannot—and shall not—fade away. It is permanent and sure.
4. **Finally, this inheritance is "...reserved in heaven for you...."** We enjoy measured foretastes of our inheritance now as we serve God by serving our brothers and sisters in His family, as well as when we worship Him in spirit and in truth. But nothing that we receive now in any way depletes the value of what awaits us when we, like our Savior, arise from the grave and enter into our inheritance with Him.

Further, Peter tells us that God not only protects our inheritance from any and all threats of loss, but that God also keeps us from losing it.

Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

We do not keep ourselves. We could not do so if we tried. He keeps us by his power.

As we observed in our study of the first two verses, the whole process of election, of effectively removing our sins, and of keeping us safe from final loss and ruin is God-centered. God did the electing, God sent His Son to obey, to submit to His righteous law, and to give His life for our benefit. The same point applies to the verses before us in this study. God is the exclusive active, operative agent who accomplishes His objective by His power and purpose. Thus, when we come to the words "...through faith..." in this lesson, there is no contextual basis to shift the focus away from God onto us, as if our faith in some way secures or even contributes to our eternal security.

The idea of God having faith seems strange to some. Yet Scripture states that point on several occasions. No, God's "Faith" is not the same as ours any more than His righteousness is the same as ours. We experience both faith and righteousness in a finite measure; He in perfection.

How can it be said that God has faith? Once in a discussion on this topic, a man cited "(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)," (2 Corinthians 5:7 KJVP) and ridiculed the idea that God has faith. This verse describes our experience of faith, not the perfect faith of God, so to use this verse as a definition of God's faith is as ludicrous as it would be to cite a passage that deals with our righteousness and claim that God's righteousness is the same as ours.

What do we mean by God's faith? Every legal contract that I've ever seen contains a statement that the parties who sign the contract, by signing, agree to. They agree that they enter into this contract "...in good faith...." They do not sign the contract with ulterior motives or with dishonorable intentions of not living up to their obligations in the contract. When God reveals His eternal purpose, mercy, and grace to us in Scripture, He often does so in "Anthropomorphic" terms. That is, He uses analogies of human experience to help us understand His loving purpose. Consider. When God made His promise to Abraham, He did so in the form of an ancient Chaldean legal contract. (Genesis 15¹) When the Holy Spirit directed Peter to write the words of our study passage, He framed these words to remind us in the strongest possible way that He takes His work as loving Father and Savior seriously, and He shall fulfill every promise that He made to us and on our behalf perfectly. God gave us His promises of grace "...in good faith...." And He shall surely bring those promises to pass just as He states them in Scripture.

¹ The parties to an ancient Chaldean contract would kill an animal, cut it in half, join hands, and walk back and forth between the two halves of the slain "contract" animal. Effectively, they stated, "May the gods do to me as I have done to this animal, should I fail to honor my obligations under this contract."

Effectively, when we say that God has faith, we are saying that He is faithful. He cannot lie, and He promised eternal life to His chosen people before He created His material universe. (Titus 1:2)

...unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. The final outcome of God's "Good faith" commitment to His covenant with and for His beloved family, His "Last will and testament," shall surely bring every one whom He named in that will to the full realization of their inheritance, final, certain, and eternal salvation. (Hebrews 5:9) However much you or I may stumble in doubt at times, wondering if that glorious future really belongs to us, God has no doubt about it. He is fully ready and prepared to reveal in that last time that He accomplished everything that He promised in His "Last will and testament." The final distribution of His estate shall include everyone whom He loved in the beginning and chose in the Person and through the work of His beloved Son, and His chosen "Testator" of His will.

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

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Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
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