

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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A Reserved Inheritance

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)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. What does this language mean, to "Bless God"? If we think in the ordinary sense of the word "To bless," there is no logical or Biblical way in which we can add anything to God that makes His position or state better. However, if we think of the word as "To speak well of" or to honor someone who is worthy of the honor that we speak, the language makes perfect sense. Peter is praising God for what God has done "...according to his abundant mercy." Whatever follows in Peter's description of God's praiseworthy work gives us reason to join him in "Blessing" God.

...which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In many Christian circles of our day, much is taught about "Agency," the allegation that God uses certain things, most often some act of man, to accomplish His work in the new birth. Supposedly, according to this teaching, God personally and effectually brings about the new birth, but He does so through the individual's hearing and believing the gospel, specifically, believing in Jesus. I would never diminish the Biblical value of believing in Jesus, but I would insist that our believing be viewed as Scripture teaches it, not as it is taken out of Biblical context and used to teach a subtle "Back door" method of salvation by works.

This passage identifies the means or agency by which Peter teaches that God brings about the new birth. Notice the simple word "by." What follows this word? Does Peter refer to our faith or belief in Jesus, important as this act is for the child of grace? No. He focuses exclusively on the resurrection of Jesus, not on anything that we might do, mental or physical.

Many passages contradict the idea that our belief either causes or is instrumental in

producing the new birth. Two of the most clear passages are John 5:24 and 1 John 5:1.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, -- He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)

Notice the precise language. The hearing believer already "hath everlasting life." He already "...is passed from death unto life." This is not the language of transition or of an ongoing and incomplete action. John makes the same point with equal clarity.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. (1 John 5:1)

"...is born of God" is emphatic in its clarity. The believer is born of God. John does not write that the believer shall be born of God. He has already been so born. A. T. Robertson was a highly respected New Testament Greek scholar. His writings are still used in conservative Christian colleges and seminaries to this day. Despite his Southern Baptist allegiance, Robertson faithfully respects the clarity of the underlying Greek language in this verse, as well as the English. (*Robertson's Word Pictures*) "The Divine Begetting is the antecedent, not the consequent of the believing." The new birth occurs before, not after believing. If the new birth occurred prior to our belief in Jesus, there is no case to be made that our belief played any role, causative or "instrumental," in producing our new birth. God had completed the new birth prior to our belief.

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.... This

new birth entitles every child of grace to "an inheritance." While a wealthy human may include someone in his will for any variety of reasons, Scripture associates God's will and His inheritance with only one relationship. God's inheritance is reserved for those who have been born into His family by His work in them and by His personal "Agency," the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What Jesus accomplished in His resurrection, is wholly competent to secure and to hold the inheritance relationship with everyone included in God's will for His eternal glory. Notice all the descriptions that Peter associates with this heavenly inheritance.

1. ***It is a lively or living hope.*** It is not an empty hope or wishful thinking with no substance or expectation. It is living and vibrant because it is a truth of God's faithful promise to His chosen people.
2. ***It is incorruptible.*** It cannot be corrupted. Peter didn't write simply that the inheritance presently is not corrupt, but that it is incorruptible. If we could gain it today and lose it tomorrow, rest assured that it would be corruptible. This inheritance cannot be lost or squandered.
3. ***It is undefiled.*** As it is incorruptible, it is also undefiled. It is not mixed with human partial belief or partial obedience, the best of either state that any mortal in this world can attain. Being all of God, it is pure and beyond being defiled.
4. ***It fades not away.*** Again, if we could gain it and lose it, it would surely fade away. When David spoke his last words, though he spoke of himself, he also described God's everlasting covenant with everyone of His beloved children. (2 Samuel 23:1-5, especially Verse 5) As this covenant doesn't grow, it also doesn't diminish.
5. ***It is reserved in heaven for "you," for a specific people.*** When Jesus described that final day in "Redemptive history," He affirmed this same truth.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)

Notice Jesus' words, "...prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This is not an "Open door" kingdom. It was

prepared for a specific people, "you," from before creation, before time by God alone.

6. ***Not only is this kingdom prepared for a specific people, "you," but those for whom it is prepared are also kept by the power of God till that day arrives.*** Robert Gundry's Commentary on the New Testament addresses the question of "through faith" in this passage.

"Through faith' is usually understood in terms of Christians' faith. But "faith" can mean faithfulness as well as belief, Peter is stressing divine protection, and 4:19 will speak of suffering Christians' "commit[ting] their souls [= entrusting themselves] to a faithful Creator." So it's better to understand Peter to be writing that God guards Christians not only powerfully but also faithfully."

Gundry is correct in his observation that the context of this lesson deals with God's faithful keeping and not with the believer's faithfulness. The keeping "through faith" refers to God's faithfulness, not the believer's. A believer may not remain faithful. Scripture deals with this sad point. If all believers were always faithful, Scripture would never mention the Lord's chastening His children for their unfaithfulness. (Hebrews 12:6-11)

7. ***And finally, this inheritance divinely kept for a people also divinely kept is not a work in progress.*** It is not in the "Under construction" state. It is fully prepared and "...ready to be revealed at the last day." In His sheep-goat analogy, Jesus affirms this truth in Matthew 25:34 (Above). Notice His emphasis, "...**prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**"

We often refer to the "Finished work" of Christ. This lesson gives us an example of this truth. Nothing has been left undone or incomplete. That final place is fully prepared and ready, and He faithfully keeps those whom He has chosen until that day. "Come quickly!"

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor