

## 1 Peter 1. 3-12.

Our reading consists of the main opening section of the First Epistle of Peter, which comprises chapter 1 verses 3 to 12.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for you, who are being guarded by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In which you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, that the proving of your faith – much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is proved by fire – may be found to praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Whom, not having seen, you love, and, though now you do not see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy inexpressible and filled with glory, receiving the end ('the outcome') of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning which salvation, prophets, who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, sought and searched diligently; inquiring what, or what manner of, time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when He predicted the sufferings of Christ<sup>1</sup> and the glories after these.

To whom it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to you they ministered those things, which have now been announced to you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

I hardly need to say that this is a very full passage, which, believe it or not, forms *one long, unbroken sentence in the Greek text*.

This sentence, and therefore our passage, could be said to focus, in order, on each of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity:

- (a) God the Father can be seen as the central figure in verses 3 to 5;
- (b) the Lord Jesus can be seen as the central figure in verses 6 to 9; and
- (c) the Holy Spirit can be seen as the central figure in verses 10 to 12.

I will focus especially on verses 3 to 9, breaking this section down into three short parts: (i) verse 3, (ii) verses 4 and 5, and (iii) verses 6 to 9 ... each under a simple heading. These headings are:

- (i) 'Hope for the hopeless', verse 3.
- (ii) 'Home for the homeless', verse 4 and 5.
- (iii) 'Joy for the joyless', verse 6-9.

I will comment briefly on verses 10 to 12 at the close.

### 1. 'Hope for the hopeless', v. 3.

In verses 3 to 5, we discover that the Father (a) has not only bestowed new life on us in the past ('who, according to His great mercy, has begotten us again'), and that He (b) not only extends His great power to us in the present (to us 'who are being guarded by the power of God'), but that He (c) holds out a bright hope to us for the future (for He 'has begotten us again to a living hope ... to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading').

In his epistle, James associates our new birth with God's sovereign will: 'Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth' (James 1. 18). The apostle John in his first epistle associates our new birth with God's extraordinary love: 'Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God' (1 John 3. 1). Whereas here Peter traces our new birth to God's 'great mercy': 'According to His great mercy, (He) has begotten us again' (1 Pet. 1. 3).

God's 'great mercy' speaks of God's great feelings of pity for us in our wretched plight and miserable condition. The thought, though not the phraseology, is identical to that expressed by Paul in chapter 2 of his epistle to the Ephesians (Ephesus being one of the key churches in the province of Asia, to which in part, Peter addressed this letter): 'God, being rich in mercy ... even when we were dead in our trespasses, quickened us ('made us alive') together with Christ'.<sup>2</sup>

And it is to God's 'great mercy' (His 'much' mercy, literally) that we owe, not only our new birth, but our living hope.

The three apostles Paul, Peter and John are sometimes spoken of in a general way as: (a) Paul, the apostle of faith, (b) Peter, the apostle of hope, and (c) John, the apostle of love.

But, although there is *some* truth in designating Peter as 'the apostle of hope',<sup>3</sup> the apostle Paul also speaks often of the hope of the Christian, describing it as both a '*good hope*'<sup>4</sup> and a '*blessed hope*'.<sup>5</sup> Yet to Peter the assured bright prospect set before the believer is rather a '*living hope*'.

And this is hardly surprising, for it is clear from the opening chapters of this letter (and elsewhere) that Peter was very fond of that word 'living', speaking as he does (i) of God as 'the living God',<sup>6</sup> (ii) of the word of the Lord, not only as the 'abiding', but as 'the living ... word of God',<sup>7</sup> (iii) of our Lord Jesus as a 'living stone',<sup>8</sup> and (iv) of believers as being built up 'as living stones'.<sup>9</sup>

Peter's words ('a living hope') stand in marked contrast to the despair and hopelessness which prevailed throughout much of the ancient world.<sup>10</sup> And we remember that, in his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul characterised the Gentile world of his day as 'having *no hope*'.<sup>11</sup>

Let me take just one example from the pagan world of near New Testament days. In many ways, this must rank as one of the saddest papyrus letters that has come down to us from the following century. The letter was written by a woman named Irene, offering her sympathy to bereaved friends. The letter runs:<sup>12</sup>

Irene to Taonnophris and Philo, good comfort. I am as sorry and weep over the departed one as I wept for Didymas [a member of her own immediate family]. And all things whatsoever were fitting, I have done, and all mine, Epaphroditus and Thermouthion and Philion and Apollonius and Plantas. But, nevertheless, against such things one can do nothing. Therefore comfort one another. Fare well.  
28 October.

As the scholar who translated the letter points out, Irene, a well-to-do lady, clearly 'experiences the difficulty of those whose business it is to console and *who have no consolation to offer* ... Who could help feeling', he asks, 'for the helplessness of this woman ...?'<sup>13</sup>

Poor Irene! 'Helpless' because 'hopeless'!

And such hopelessness was by no means restricted to the ancient world. There is a fairly well-known quote, attributed to Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), the Scottish author and historian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which reads, '... he who has hope, has everything'.<sup>14</sup>

Just think, that the man who in all likelihood said those words, when later writing to a friend,<sup>15</sup> should pen these words, 'You will think me far gone, and much bankrupt in hope and heart - and indeed I am; *as good as without hope* and without fear; a gloomily serious, silent and sad old man; gazing into the final chasm of things, in mute dialogue with Death, Judgment and Eternity'.<sup>16</sup>

Grim words! And which of us can fail to associate Mr Carlyle's expression 'without hope' with that which I quoted just now from the apostle Paul, when characterising the Gentile world of his day, 'having no hope'.

But over against the hopelessness of a 2<sup>nd</sup> century Irene and a 19<sup>th</sup> century Thomas Carlyle, in splendid contrast, the apostle Peter can write, through Silvanus,<sup>17</sup> of 'a living hope'.

And this because, as has been well said, '*Where there is Christ there is hope*'.<sup>18</sup>

How blessed we are to have such a hope! And not only for ourselves, but for all our loved ones who are believers. So that, when a fellow Christian is taken to be with Christ, although we rightly grieve over *our loss* (bringing with it, as it does, the inevitable pain of separation),<sup>19</sup> *we do not grieve over any loss sustained by the one who is 'asleep in Jesus'*<sup>20</sup> ... far from it!<sup>21</sup> Yes, we sorrow and grieve, but *not* as 'the rest who have no hope'.<sup>22</sup>

And, as Peter observes, our 'living hope' is extremely well-grounded. For the foundation of the Christian's hope lies in 'the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead', to the reality of which Peter himself was a personal witness<sup>23</sup> ... as he constantly affirmed in his preaching.<sup>24</sup>

And our Lord's resurrection served not only:

- (a) as God's *vindication of our Lord's divine Sonship*;<sup>25</sup>
- (b) as God's *endorsement of all our Lord's claims and actions*;<sup>26</sup> and
- (c) as God's *confirmation of our Lord's role as the appointed universal judge of all mankind*;<sup>27</sup> but also
- (d) as God's *pledge that all who belong to the Lord Jesus will also be raised to share His glory*.<sup>28</sup>

'The king of terrors' (as Job's friend Bildad once personified death<sup>29</sup>) has been well and truly deposed and dethroned by the Risen Lord!<sup>30</sup> And through Him, the Living Lord, God 'gives us the victory',<sup>31</sup> a 'living hope' indeed. 'Thanks be to God'!<sup>32</sup>

Moving on from verse 3 to verses 4 and 5, we further discover, not 'Hope for the hopeless', but 'Home for the homeless'.

**(ii) 'Home for the homeless', verse 4 and 5.**

And *what* a home this is!

**Verse 4.**

'An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading'.

Now that really is something! For, not only in God's great mercy are we begotten again, but, on account of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, *our new birth brings with it a gigantic legacy!*

That very thing which God once said that He had wanted to do for Israel in the days of Jeremiah, 'I would put you among the children, and give you a beautiful inheritance',<sup>33</sup> He has done *for us*. As the apostle Paul expressed it in Romans 8, 'we are children of God, and if children, then heirs'.<sup>34</sup>

But my suggested heading for verses 4 and 5 speaks of a 'Home for the homeless'. So let's think for a moment or two about that closing word, '*homeless*'.

For that word sums up very accurately the condition in which many, if not all, of Peter's readers found themselves. In his opening verse, he had addressed them as 'the elect ('the choice') sojourners ('exiles', 'refugees' if you like) of the dispersion scattered throughout the five Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia'.

The intended recipients of his letter were *now* temporary residents only. And this was true in more senses than one. For it is, he says, 'as strangers and sojourners', that he exhorts then in the next chapter 'to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul'.<sup>35</sup> In effect, the apostle was reminding them that, in the words of a popular spiritual song of the last century, '*This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through*'.<sup>36</sup>

Yes, in the spiritual sense as well as in the physical sense, they were 'sojourners'.

An early example of Christian apologetics,<sup>37</sup> the so-called 'Epistle to Diognetus' (written sometime in the second century), captured well the spirit of Peter's words. Concerning Christians, it says:

'They dwell in their own countries, but only as *sojourners*. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if *foreigners*. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign ... Their existence is on earth, but *their citizenship is in heaven*'.<sup>38</sup>

How very true!

Yes, the readers of Peter's letter were, as I said, sojourners 'in more senses than one'. For these believers were, (literally) displaced people ... they were sojourners, and they were scattered.

Ah, but, Peter assures them, God has provided a 'Home for the homeless', a 'home which consists of 'an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading'.

I have found that, *proportionately*, there are more Old Testament quotations and allusions in 1 Peter than in any other book of the New Testament.

And this word 'inheritance' was very rich in associations for anyone as familiar with the Old Testament as Peter's readers undoubtedly were.<sup>39</sup>

For, throughout the Old Testament, the 'inheritance' given to God's people was almost exclusively said to be '*the land*' (the so-called 'Promised Land') ... the land which, in part at least, had once belonged to the nations of Canaan.

Moses referred no less than seven times in the Book of Deuteronomy alone to 'the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance'.<sup>40</sup> And much later, King Solomon prayed to God concerning 'your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance'.<sup>41</sup>

There can be no doubt that the very mention of an 'inheritance' would have directed the minds of Peter's readers to the 'inheritance' once *given to* (and long *enjoyed by*) the nation of Israel.

But, as Peter makes clear, the inheritance now enjoyed by Christians (whether of Jewish or Gentile descent) was *very* different, not least because their 'inheritance' is 'reserved ('laid up in safe custody', as the word implies) in heaven', far beyond (a) the reach of increasing pressure from the Roman

state, (b) the reach of imprisonment, (c) the reach of wild beasts in the arena, or, indeed, (d) the reach of any earthly trial or suffering.<sup>42</sup>

There was no danger that their 'adversary the devil'<sup>43</sup> could ever rob them of this *heavenly* paradise,<sup>44</sup> as once he had robbed the first man and woman of their *earthly* paradise.<sup>45</sup> Thank God, the heavenly 'inheritance' of the Christian is far outside his reach and range!

In his second epistle, Peter writes both of people and of things which are 'reserved'. *There*, in each case, these are 'reserved' for God's judgement, whether :

- (a) the angels who sinned,<sup>46</sup>
- (b) unrighteous men,<sup>47</sup>
- (c) ungodly false teachers,<sup>48</sup> or
- (d) the existing heavens and earth.<sup>49</sup>

But *here* he speaks of 'an inheritance ... reserved', and 'reserved', he says, 'in heaven' for his readers.

But this inheritance is distinguished from that once enjoyed by the nation of Israel, not only (i) in that it, unlike Israel's, is heavenly in its character, but (ii) because, unlike Israel's, it is 'incorruptible and undefiled and unfading'.

And every word Peter uses is loaded. For Israel's inheritance (the 'Promised Land') soon proved itself to be none of those things.

Israel's earthly inheritance was certainly not '*incorruptible*'. One of the meanings of the word translated 'corrupt' in the Greek Old Testament is that of 'laying waste', of 'ravaging', a land. This is the word (a) used, for instance, of David's army-commander Joab when it is said that he 'led out the army and ravaged the country of the Ammonites',<sup>50</sup> and (b) used, in Isaiah 24, of the inhabited world being 'laid waste', being 'devastated', by God's judgement.<sup>51</sup>

In secular Greek also the word was used to describe an area which had been ravaged by an invading army. And many times Israel's land-inheritance had experienced just this form of 'corruption', being trampled, successively, by the invading armies of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, and, more recently, the Romans.

But, if Israel's 'Promised Land' had not proved 'incorruptible', neither had it long remained '*undefiled*'.

Before ever Israel conquered and possessed the land, the Lord had told them that the land had already been defiled by the immorality and idolatry of the Canaanites. And the last three books of Moses sounded loud warnings to the nation against *their* 'defiling' that which, ultimately, was God's land.<sup>52</sup>

And yet, in spite of the Lord's repeated warnings, Israel did defile the land by their idolatry, bloodshed, and sexual vices. The Lord had to reproach them, for example, through the prophet Jeremiah, 'I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you *defiled my land*',<sup>53</sup> adding later, 'they have *defiled my land* with their dead detestable idols'.<sup>54</sup>

But the land of Canaan was not only ravaged ('corrupted') by foreign invaders, and polluted ('defiled') by its own inhabitants. Many times the beauty of the land '*faded* away',<sup>55</sup> (a) blasted, blighted and defaced by warfare and pestilence, and (b) parched by drought, each usually as the expression of divine chastisement on account of Israel's own sins.<sup>56</sup>

*We* may well thank God that the 'inheritance ... reserved in heaven' for *us* is '*incorruptible and undefiled and unfading*'.<sup>57</sup> Our inheritance stands secure: (i) *untouched by death*, (ii) *unstained by sin*, and (iii) *unaffected by time*. Our inheritance cannot (i) be *devastated*, (ii) be *contaminated*, or (iii) be *terminated*.

#### **Verse 5.**

And Peter would have us know that, not only is *the inheritance kept for us*, but *we are kept for the inheritance* ... securely 'guarded by the power of God'. And what a tremendous encouragement that is!

For it would be small comfort indeed to know that nothing would ever corrupt, defile or mar our heavenly inheritance if we also knew that we could lose it at last.

As is often pointed out, the word translated 'guarded' is mainly (although not always) employed in a military context. It is used, for example, by the apostle Paul at the close of 2 Corinthians 11, when he

recalled how 'in Damascus the governor under Aretas the king *guarded* the city'<sup>58</sup> (guarded it with a garrison, that is).

We are probably able to say, therefore, that as a garrison stands guard around a city to protect it, so the almighty power of God stands guard to protect the believer ... with 'faith' being the instrument by means of which we grasp and avail ourselves of that power.

Nor is God's preserving power available for only a limited time. It will continue until the believer enjoys the full and final instalment of his or her salvation, that concluding instalment bringing deliverance from the very presence and possibility of sin.<sup>59</sup> And, as far as that future aspect of our salvation is concerned, we can confidently assert with the apostle Paul, 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed'.<sup>60</sup>

And this full enjoyment of our salvation (our 'glorification', if you like), Peter insists, is 'ready to be revealed in the last time'. In other words, every preparation for the final unveiling of our salvation is already complete; the past events of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension have secured it for us. What a consoling thought to those having to endure sufferings (whether in Peter's day or ours), that 'it won't be for much longer ... the road ahead may be rough, but it isn't long!'

Which brings me to the section from verse 6 to verse 9, and to our third heading ... not (i) 'hope for the hopeless', or (ii) 'home for the homeless', but (iii) what I have called, 'joy for the joyless'.

### **(iii) 'Joy for the joyless', verse 6-9.**

You should have no problem identifying where that word 'joy' comes from. For, in this short section, the word 'rejoice' occurs twice,<sup>61</sup> with the actual word 'joy' occurring once.<sup>62</sup>

As to the word 'joyless' in the heading, I confess this rests on less firm ground – on Peter's reference to 'being grieved' in verse 6; 'if necessary, you have been grieved ('have been put to grief') by various trials'.

The word translated 'grief' there points, not to any form of *physical* pain, but to *mental* distress and anguish ... to that which affects the spirit rather than the body, and which in truth is often far more difficult to bear.

Clearly, the source of the mental anguish suffered by his readers lay in the different forms of persecution which they were then having to endure. And, to me, Peter's acknowledgment that their trials were not only 'fiery',<sup>63</sup> but 'various'<sup>64</sup> (were 'manifold', were 'of many kinds' – the word sometimes carrying the meaning 'many-coloured') goes no small way to justifying my claim that, given the severity of their ordeal, if left to their own resources, these early Christians would have had every reason to be 'joyless'.

### **Verses 6 and 7.**

And so, verse 6: 'In which you *rejoice, though now ... you have been grieved by various trials*'. As I say, 'Joy for the joyless'.

I take the 'in which' (wherein', King James version) to refer back, not only to the future final instalment of salvation mentioned at the close of verse 5,<sup>65</sup> but to the whole range of spiritual blessings set out in verses 3 to 5.

Peter uses here one of several words translated 'rejoice' in the New Testament, this word carrying the underlying thought 'to rejoice greatly', 'to rejoice with exultation'.

Certainly Peter's hearers had no reason to rejoice greatly in their *earthly circumstances*, either in the present or in the foreseeable future. But they did have every reason to rejoice greatly in their present and future *spiritual blessings* which Peter has summarised in the past few verses.

'In which you rejoice, though now ... you have been grieved by various trials'. It is at least possible that Peter had in mind the occasion in the Upper Room, when the Lord Jesus, speaking in the context of His imminent departure, (i) forewarned His disciples, 'you will weep and lament ... you will be grieved' (the word which Peter uses here), but then (ii) went on to promise them, 'your grief will be turned to joy',<sup>66</sup> which it certainly was later for Peter and the others when they saw the Risen Lord for themselves.<sup>67</sup>

This is, I note, the first time that Peter has mentioned the 'trials' of his readers. He is careful, that is, to hold back any reference to the believer's trials and troubles until he has *first* spoken of the believer's hope and eternal inheritance. For only then can the hardships and troubles of life be seen

in proper proportion, a point firmly registered by Paul in Romans 8, where he says: 'the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us'.<sup>68</sup>

Verses 6 and 7 are largely concerned with trials which the scattered believers then faced. And to me, Peter's comments in these two verses about their trials can be summed up under four words:

- (i) Variety;
- (ii) Brevity;
- (iii) Necessity; and
- (iv) Utility.

(i) Variety.

'You have been grieved', the apostle says, 'by *various* trials'.

It is clear from several passages in this letter that hostility and suspicion were mounting against Christians, not only in Rome itself, but throughout the empire. Already they were not only being reviled and abused for their faith and their distinctive lifestyle, but some of them at least were suffering physically.<sup>69</sup>

And what is more, Peter (and they) could see the storm clouds gathering, that it was, as he said in chapter 4, 'time for judgement to begin at the house (or 'household') of God'.<sup>70</sup> Oh yes, the trials facing his readers came in all shapes and sizes!

And I note that the word translated 'various' (or 'manifold') here occurs again in chapter 4, verse 10, where Peter speaks of the 'varied (or 'manifold') grace of God'. Although it is certainly not a point being made by Peter, I think it fair to say, in the light of these two texts, that God is well able to match their 'multi-coloured' trials with His 'multi-coloured' grace.

In Annie Johnson Flint's justly well-known words ...

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength when the labours increase;  
To added affliction He addeth His mercy;  
*To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.*

Although, with my eye on the apostle's expression in chapter 4 verse 10, I suspect Peter would probably have preferred that last line to read, 'To multiplied trials, His multiplied *grace*'!

(ii) Brevity.

Having acknowledged the *variety* of his readers' trials, Peter points them to the *brevity* of those trials.

'Though now *for a little while* ... you have been grieved by various trials'. The word rendered, 'for a little while' ('for a season', King James version) stresses that, *viewed against the backdrop of an unfading inheritance*, the hardships of this present life do not last long.

It has been well said that, 'As difficult as some pages of our life may be, nothing that occurs to us on earth falls into the category of "the final chapter",<sup>71</sup> a chapter, I add, which goes on for ever and ever, and where every page will be better than the one before.'<sup>72</sup>

And again, one Bible scholar observed long ago, 'Everybody is not passing smoothly through this life, though some may be more so than others. ... But, after all, it is only "for a season" and if "need be". Do not make yourself uneasy: the one who holds the reins of the need-be is God. He does not take pleasure in afflicting. If there is the need for it we go through the trial, but it is *only for a moment*'.<sup>73</sup>

For, as the apostle Paul expressed it, 'our light affliction, which is but *for a moment*, works for us an *eternal* weight of glory beyond all comparison'.<sup>74</sup>

(iii) Necessity.

Yes indeed, as quoted above, '*the one who holds the reins of the need-be is God*', and we can hardly miss that, thirdly, Peter assures his readers that their trials are not only relatively short-lived, but they are '*necessary*'.

'Though now for a little while, *if necessary* ('if need be', as the King James Version renders the expression), you have been grieved by various trials' ... by trials, that is, which are judged necessary, of course, by God. And it is, I suggest, a witness to our Father's great love for us that, when our trials cannot be avoided, because He perceives them to be 'necessary' for our good ('for our profit', as the

writer to the Hebrews would say<sup>75</sup>), He (our Father) is willing Himself to bear the pain of inflicting them.

(iv) Utility.

And then, having acknowledged the variety of his readers' trials, and having directed his readers to both the brevity and the necessity of those trials, Peter explains to them the utility (the usefulness) of their trials. He assures them that, far from their trials being meaningless, they serve a most beneficial purpose:

'that the proving of your faith (referring probably to 'a proven faith', to the genuine element of your faith, to that which has been tried and tested)', being 'much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is proved by fire, may be found to praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ'.

True faith, Peter implies, is tested and proved by trials, much as gold is tested and proved by fire.

As we know, Job passed through many very painful and varied trials. And we do well to recall his great statement of faith, '*When He (God) has tried me, I shall come out as gold*'.<sup>76</sup>

I guess that Job would have gladly subscribed to the sentiments expressed in the fourth verse of the great 18<sup>th</sup> century hymn, 'How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord':

When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,  
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;  
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design  
*Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.*<sup>77</sup>

I have long enjoyed Warren Wiersbe's comment that 'When God puts His children into the furnace, He keeps His hand on the thermostat and His eye on the thermometer'.<sup>78</sup> But how slow we are to learn that God knows *how long* and He knows *how much*.

And a faith which is tried and tested is, Peter insists, of infinitely greater value than any amount of gold<sup>79</sup> – even after that gold has been purified in the refiner's fire.<sup>80</sup> Small wonder then that the apostle was not at all perturbed when he needed to inform the lame beggar at the Beautiful Gate of Jerusalem, 'silver *and gold* have I none'.<sup>81</sup>

And such proven faith, Peter says, will 'be found to praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ, obtaining then perhaps (i) a word of praise,<sup>82</sup> (ii) a crown of glory,<sup>83</sup> and (iii) a place of honour.<sup>84</sup>

### **Verses 8-9.**

In verses 8 and 9, the apostle turns our attention from the proving of our faith in verse 7 to:

- (a) the object of our faith (namely, to the person of our Lord Jesus<sup>85</sup>) in verse 8, and
- (b) the end ('the outcome') of our faith (namely, to the blessing of our salvation) in verse 9.

#### (a) The object of our faith (v. 8).

'Whom': 'Jesus Christ', whose 'revelation' (whose 'unveiling') we await (v. 7).

'Not having seen, you love': words written by a man who, himself *having seen* Him, loved Him (John 21. 17).

'You believe in Him and rejoice with joy inexpressible and filled with glory': possibly meaning 'rejoice with a glorified joy beyond words'.<sup>86</sup>

#### (b) The end of our faith (v. 9).

'Receiving ('obtaining') the end ('the end-product', 'the final result') of your faith, the salvation of your souls'.

### **Verses 10-12.**

To enable his readers to appreciate something of the wonder of the 'salvation' which their faith had obtained for them, the apostle makes it clear that this 'salvation' really is something worth writing home about.

For, in these verses, Peter stresses the magnificence and grandeur of our salvation by assuring us that it is the subject:

- (i) of prophetic enquiry;
- (ii) of evangelical testimony; and
- (iii) of angelic curiosity.

(i) When prophets scanned the horizon to learn more about their Spirit-inspired messages, they learned that the benefits and the fulfilment of those messages were reserved for a future age, an age extending to this very moment!<sup>87</sup>

(ii) And in the power of the same Spirit, now having been 'sent from heaven' (on the Day of Pentecost, as Peter had personally witnessed<sup>88</sup>), the preachers of the gospel had proclaimed that same salvation.

(iii) But higher intelligences than either prophets or evangelists are, Peter reveals, intently interested in our salvation.

And so, if (i) *prophets scratched their heads* to establish its timing, and if (ii) *evangelists preached their hearts out* to make it known, (iii) *angels craned their necks* to peer<sup>89</sup> into its details, while ever remaining, of course, no more than curious and fascinated spectators.<sup>90</sup>

Truly, you and I are more privileged than we can know. What a truly 'great salvation'<sup>91</sup> we enjoy! '*Hope for the hopeless*', '*Home for the homeless*' and '*Joy for the joyless*' ... and so much more.

Small wonder then that the apostle began his long and brim-full sentence with the great outburst of praise of verse 3:

**'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ...'.**



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The prophets of Old Testament days were ignorant of the very same things in respect of our Lord's first advent as we are ignorant of in respect of His *future coming*; namely, the exact circumstances and the time.

Separately note the following comments. Peter's original readers needed 'to know that the foreseen suffering of the Messiah necessarily preceded the expected glory of the Messiah. Peter extends this concept to develop the idea that as followers of Christ, his readers should therefore not be surprised when they, too, suffer (1 Pet. 4. 12)'. Karen J. Ropes, '*1 Peter*' (*Baker Exegetical Commentary*), page 135.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 2. 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. 1. 3, 13, 21; 3. 15.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Thess. 2. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Tit. 2. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 16. 16.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Pet. 1. 23.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Pet. 2. 4.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Pet. 2. 5.

<sup>10</sup> 'It is in contrast with hope that is dead because it is based on futile things ... Christian hope is ever-living because Christ, the ground of that hope, is ever-living. The present reality of the Christian's life is defined and determined by the reality of the past—the resurrection of Jesus Christ—and is guaranteed into the future because Christ lives forevermore', Karen J. Ropes, *op. cit.*, page 113.

<sup>11</sup> Eph. 2. 12.

<sup>12</sup> '*Papyrus number P.CtYBR inv. 32*' (Also known as P.Oxy [Oxyrhynchus]. 115) in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Papyrus Collection, Yale University. Translation: Adolf Diessmann, '*Light from the Ancient East*', page 176.

<sup>13</sup> Adolf Diessmann, '*Light from the Ancient East*', page 177.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/t/thomascarl118220.html>

<sup>15</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson; the letter was written on 27 January 1867.

<sup>16</sup> '*The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1834-1872*', published 1883, page 301. Accessed at <https://archive.org/details/correspondencet00nortgoog/page/n325/mode/2up>.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Pet. 5. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Warren Wiersbe, '*Be Hopeful*', page 7.

<sup>19</sup> Phil. 2. 27; cf. John 11. 33-35.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Thess. 4. 13-15.

<sup>21</sup> 'Far better', Phil. 1. 23.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Thess. 4. 13.

<sup>23</sup> Luke 24. 34; 1 Cor. 15. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Acts 2. 32; 3. 15; 5. 32; 10. 41; cf. Acts 4. 33.

<sup>25</sup> Rom. 1. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Matt. 12. 38-40; John 2. 18-19.

<sup>27</sup> Acts 17. 31.

<sup>28</sup> Rom. 8. 11; 2 Cor. 4. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Job 18. 14.

<sup>30</sup> Rom. 6. 9.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 54.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 57.

<sup>33</sup> Jer. 3. 19.

<sup>34</sup> Rom. 8. 16-17

<sup>35</sup> 1 Pet. 2. 11.

<sup>36</sup>

This world is not my home;  
I'm just a passing through.  
My treasures are laid up  
Somewhere beyond the blue.

By Albert Edward Brumley (1905-1977). See: <https://www.brumleymusic.com/product/the-best-of-albert-e-brumley/>, [http://www.hymntime.com/tch/bio/b/r/u/m/brumley\\_ae.htm](http://www.hymntime.com/tch/bio/b/r/u/m/brumley_ae.htm), and [https://hymnary.org/text/this\\_world\\_is\\_not\\_my\\_home\\_im\\_just\\_a](https://hymnary.org/text/this_world_is_not_my_home_im_just_a), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert\\_E.\\_Brumley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_E._Brumley).

<sup>37</sup> 'It gives a brief but spirited and effective summary of the grounds on which the Christians had abandoned Paganism and Judaism: this is followed by a description of the leading features in the character and personal conduct of the Christians of that period; and then all that is peculiar in their character and conduct is traced to the influence of the doctrines which they had been led upon God's authority to believe', accessed at ... <http://www.ecclesia.org/truth/diognetus.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Compare the use of the word 'sojourns' by the early Christians in (i) 'The church of God that sojourns at Rome to the church of God which sojourns at Corinth', *The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, and (ii) 'Polycarp and the elders with him to the church of God which sojourns at Philippi', *The Epistle of Polycarp*.

<sup>39</sup> And this whether his readers were predominantly Jewish or not.

<sup>40</sup> Deut. 4. 21; 15. 4; 19. 10; 21. 23; 24. 4; 25. 19; 26. 1; cf. Num. 34. 2; Deut. 4. 38. See God's threat to 'disinherit' the nation, headed off by Moses's intercession, Num. 14. 12.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Kings 8. 36.

<sup>42</sup> See Luke 12. 4. 'An enthusiastic believer in Christ, Dan Richardson, lost his battle with cancer. But his life demonstrated that even though the physical body may be destroyed by disease, the spirit can remain triumphant. This poem was distributed at his memorial service:

Cancer is so limited ...  
It cannot cripple love, *it cannot shatter hope*,  
It cannot corrode faith, it cannot eat away peace,  
It cannot destroy confidence, it cannot kill friendship,  
It cannot shut out memories, it cannot silence courage,  
It cannot invade the soul, it cannot reduce eternal life,  
It cannot quench the Spirit,  
*It cannot lessen the power of the resurrection*'.

Source: Our Daily Bread, '*Hope and Strength for Times of Illness*', day 17.  
And the same is equally true of COVID-19.

<sup>43</sup> 1 Pet. 5. 8.

<sup>44</sup> Rev. 2. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Gen. 2. 8-10; 3. 23-24 (where the Septuagint uses the word 'paradise' for 'garden'). Contrast Rev. 22. 4.

<sup>46</sup> 2 Pet. 2. 4.

<sup>47</sup> 2 Pet. 2. 9.

<sup>48</sup> 2 Pet. 2. 17; cf. v. 1.

<sup>49</sup> 2 Pet. 3. 7.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Chron. 20. 1.

<sup>51</sup> 'The earth shall be completely laid waste, and the earth shall be utterly spoiled ... the earth mourns, and the inhabited world is laid waste', Isa. 24. 3-4 Greek Old Testament.

<sup>52</sup> Lev. 18. 26-28; Num. 35. 33-34; Deut. 21. 23.

<sup>53</sup> Jer. 2. 7. Compare: (i) 'They poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was *defiled* with blood', Psa. 106. 38; (ii) 'You have defiled the land with your vile prostitution'. Jer. 3. 2; (iii) 'Because she took her prostitution lightly, she *defiled* the land, committing adultery with stone and tree', Jer. 3. 9; (iv) 'Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they *defiled* it by their ways and their deeds ... so I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had *defiled* it', Ezek. 36. 17-18.

<sup>54</sup> Jer. 16. 18.

<sup>55</sup> The verb form of the word that Peter uses (without its prefix) is found in the Greek translation of Job 15. 30 and 24. 24 to describe the withering of flowers and herbs. Compare James 1. 11, where the verb form is used of the rich man, in parallel to the fading grass and its flower.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, (i) 'Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness, so that no one passes through? ... Because they have forsaken my law', Jer. 9. 12; (ii) 'How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field wither? For the evil of those who dwell in it', Jer. 12. 4; (iii) 'The land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land mourns, and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up', Jer. 23. 10.

<sup>57</sup> There is no risk of us being 'disinherited'! Contrast God's threat to 'disinherit' the nation of Israel, which was successfully headed off by Moses's intercession, Num. 14. 12.

<sup>58</sup> 2 Cor. 11. 32.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Heb. 9. 28. 1 Thess. 5. 8.

<sup>60</sup> Rom. 13. 11.

<sup>61</sup> 1 Pet. 1. 6, 8. Technically speaking, the two occurrences of the word 'rejoice' form an '*inclusio*'.

<sup>62</sup> 1 Pet. 1. 8.

<sup>63</sup> 1 Pet. 4. 12.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. James 1. 2.

<sup>65</sup> It cannot refer to 'salvation', which is feminine, whereas 'in which' ('wherein') is either masculine or neuter.

<sup>66</sup> John 16. 20.

<sup>67</sup> 'He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord', John 20. 20.

<sup>68</sup> Rom. 8. 18.

<sup>69</sup> 1 Pet. 2. 19-20; 3. 14, 17; 4. 15, 19; 5. 9.

<sup>70</sup> 1 Pet. 4. 17.

<sup>71</sup> Chuck Swindoll, '*Hope Again*', page 14.

<sup>72</sup> I have in mind the moving words which C. S. Lewis put into the mouth of Aslan in chapter 16 of *'The Last Battle'* (the final book in the Narnia Chronicles series):

"There was a real railway accident," said Aslan softly. "Your father and mother and all of you are -- as you used to call it in the Shadow-Lands -- dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning". And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: *which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before'*.

<sup>73</sup> J. N. Darby, *'The Path and Character of the Christian'*, Collected Writings: Practical Volume 1, page 187.

<sup>74</sup> 2 Cor. 4. 17.

<sup>75</sup> Heb. 12. 10.

<sup>76</sup> Job 23. 10.

<sup>77</sup> 'Historians remain uncertain of the writer of these lines, but usually the credit goes to an 18th-century Baptist layman in London, Robert Keen, writing in the late 1700s', <https://memoryfloss.blogspot.com/2012/11/thy-dross-to-consume-and-thy-gold-to.html>.

<sup>78</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *'Be Encouraged'*, page 16.

<sup>79</sup> The most precious material then known.

<sup>80</sup> Compare, 'Fire tests gold, affliction tests strong men', Seneca (4 BC-AD 65), *'On Providence'* (dated AD 64), Section V, Part IX ... accessed at <http://www.crtpesaro.it/Materiali/Latino/On%20Providence.php>. Also compare, 'the furnace is for gold, but the Lord tries the hearts', Prov. 17. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Acts 3. 6.

<sup>82</sup> 1 Cor. 4. 5.

<sup>83</sup> 1 Pet. 5. 4.

<sup>84</sup> John 12. 26.

<sup>85</sup> Compare, "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2. 4, 5). It is around the person of a living Christ then, that God's assembly is gathered. It is not round a doctrine, however true; nor round an ordinance, however important; but round a living, divine Person. This is a great cardinal and vital point which must be distinctly seized, tenaciously held, and faithfully and constantly avowed and carried out. "To whom coming". It is not said "To which coming". We do not come to a thing, but to a Person', C. H. Mackintosh, *'The Assembly of God'*, Miscellaneous Writings, volume 3.

<sup>86</sup> Ponder the following five 'surpassing' things: surpassing gift, 2 Cor. 9.15; surpassing words, 2 Cor. 12.4; surpassing joy, 1 Pet. 1.8; surpassing peace; Phil. 4. 7; and surpassing love, Eph. 3. 19.

<sup>87</sup> 'Compared with the prophets, the generation that saw Jesus had a privileged status that was announced by Jesus Himself (Luke 10. 23-24 // Matt. 13. 16-17): "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it"', Karen J. Ropes, *op. cit.*, page 135.

<sup>88</sup> Acts 2. 1, 14, 33.

<sup>89</sup> Compare the use of the word here translated 'to look' (*'parakypsa'* – 'to peer into from without') in John 20. 11; and see also its use in James 1. 25.

<sup>90</sup> 'If the angels, who have no immediate and personal interest in the blessings of redemption, examine with such prying scrutiny the mysteries of the Gospel, with how much livelier an interest ought we, for whom that redemption has been provided, to ponder its character and results', Henry Craik, *'Angelic Interest in the Disclosures of the Gospel'*, a sermon preached on the Evening of Christmas Day, 1859.

<sup>91</sup> Heb. 2. 3.