

A Celebration of Salvation – Part 1

1 Peter 1:1-5

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I'm only going to read one verse to start this off. Verse 1 of chapter 1. I want you to look at it with me. It starts with the writer's name. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia."

Someone has described Paul, the apostle, as the "apostle of faith"; John, as the "apostle of love"; but Peter, as the "apostle of hope." All the way through this epistle, you're going to find the repeated word, in different ways in the English, but in the Greek, the same word "hope." It's found in verse 3 of chapter 1: That we have been born again unto a "living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." So 1 Peter's all about hope, it's all about standing in the grace of God against persecution, against suffering and against opposition.

Now there are three things I want to say as I introduce this epistle. The first is Peter, in verse 1. He is the human author. When I say "human author," I believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. That means that it is literally "God breathed, God breathed out," that God took the human authors and superintended their writings so that the words that they wrote were the very words of God. So when we actually read the Bible, we are actually hearing God speak through what He has originally spoken.

Now Peter really needs no introduction, and he's one of the most famous apostles named. And I apologize; I lost the number. Before I came this morning, and all my notes and business of getting here to church. But I know that he is mentioned more than any other apostle in the New Testament. His name appears more than any other name in the New Testament. More than Paul, more than John. No other apostle or name is mentioned as many times as Peter.

Now Peter was the disciple whose name always appears first on the list of apostles. Whenever you read the names of the apostles, Peter's name is on top. He seems to be kind of the leader of the group. Now his name was originally Simon. And then Jesus changed his name to Peter, which means "rock." So this is the epistle from Rocky. The first epistle of "Rocky," you might call that, or "Rock." And he's also known as "Cephas." Now Cephas is the Aramaic of the Greek "Peter." And then "Simon," his Hebrew name, means "listen" or "to listen." So you'll sometimes see him called "Simon Peter." Or you'll hear the reference to "Cephas." They're all the same individual.

But there are two outstanding episodes in the life of Peter that I believe tie in to the writing of this epistle. The first one was when Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Peter, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you like wheat." Now can you imagine Jesus turning to you and saying, "Hey, the Devil called me last night." "Yeah, what did he say?" "He said he wants you." Like, whoa! Freak-out time! "What'd you tell him? You didn't tell him he can have me; right, Lord? He can't have me." And Jesus says that "You will fall, but when you are converted..."—listen to what Jesus said to Peter—"...strengthen your brethren." "Strengthen your brethren."

That is exactly what 1 and 2 Peter is all about. Peter is doing this out of obedience to the Lord; he's writing to strengthen the brethren.

Now there is another episode, after the Resurrection, Jesus meeting with Peter, and He said, "Peter, do you love Me?" And Peter said, "Yes, Lord; I love You." "Peter, do you love Me?" "Yes, Lord; I love You." "Peter, do you love Me?" "Yes, Lord; I love you." And then finally, Jesus said to Peter, "Then I want you to do something. I want you to feed My sheep. Peter, if you love Me, then I want you to feed my sheep."

Now Peter had denied the Lord and fallen, and Jesus restored him back in the fellowship. But when Jesus told Peter to "feed My sheep," He was commissioning him, as a shepherd—and, by the way, the word "pastor" is a Latin word which means "shepherd," and it conveys the idea of "feeding," primarily feeding. Leading and feeding and protecting. But the primary responsibility of a pastor is to feed. What good would it be for a shepherd to lead or protect sheep that he never fed; right? If they're dead, you can't lead them or protect them. So the primary responsibility as a pastor, my job, is to feed the sheep, which is a reference to God's people. That's my job. So Peter is writing to strengthen God's people, and he's writing to feed God's sheep. And that's what he's doing in this marvelous epistle.

Now who is he writing to? He was writing to "the strangers that were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." Now notice the description of the recipients of this letter. They were "strangers," which means "resident aliens," and they were "scattered."

Now the debate goes kind of heavy on whether Peter is writing primarily to Jews or to Gentiles. I don't think that we can be sure as to one over the other. And I believe that both are true. It would seem from the study of this first epistle that he is thinking primarily of Gentiles. But there's other references—and we'll develop them as we go through the text—that seem to be clearly a reference to Jewish believers. You know, the first Christians were all Jews, and then went out to Gentiles. So the very first Christians were Jewish believers in Jesus, Yeshua. And then Gentiles began to get saved. And Paul was called primarily to the Gentiles, and Peter was called primarily to the Jews.

So they were strangers. Now this "strangers" has both a physical application and a spiritual—or literal and a spiritual. They were dispersed, which is what the word "scattered" means. So they were scattered like seed. The word "scattered" is "dispersa." We get our word "seed" from that. So they were scattered. And because their God scattered people, not God "sheltered" people, they were persecuted. So it could be that they were Jews pushed out of the land of promise, or it could be that they were Gentiles living in a strange land. The areas described that he is writing to—Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia—is modern Turkey. This is known in the Bible days as Asia Minor and primarily the churches that were founded by Paul on his missionary journeys. So Peter is now actually working alongside Paul writing letters to encourage and strengthen, I believe, a mixture of both Jewish believers and Gentile believers.

But a third question I want to ask before we move into verses 2 to 5 is "Why was Peter writing to

them?" I don't want to tarry long on this, but if you want to understand your Bible, you need to ask those three questions: Who wrote it? Who did he write it to? And why did he write it? The purpose of the letter will open up its meaning and understanding.

He was writing for basically one purpose. Christians in this area of Asia Minor were being persecuted, which was kind of part and parcel of the Christian life. We live in the western world, where Christianity has been accepted, but the tide is changing. The tide is changing. The tide has changed. We're not Christians or going to begin to more openly and aggressively be persecuted. [What?] We're being mocked and laughed at on the media, in movies, in television, by politics, and the world is actually—and the culture in America has shifted to where Christians are being persecuted. And it's only going to get worse. If you take a stand for what is true or right, you're going to be ostracized, you're going to be put down, you're going to be mocked and laughed at because you believe in Jesus, and you believe the Bible to be the Word of God. You're going to be persecuted, even in the United States. But he's writing to persecuted Christians.

Now let me show you just a couple of quick references to what I'm talking about. Turn with me to chapter 4, verse 12. We'll get there in many, many weeks. And he says in chapter 4, verse 12, "Beloved, think it not strange..."—or foreign—"...concerning the..."—here it is—"... fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." Now don't think it strange, but verse 13, he says, but rather "rejoice." Now I can't wait to get to this passage. I'm going to have to kinda calm down and wait quite a few weeks. This is one of my favorite passages in the Bible that tell us how to respond to suffering and persecution.

Now Peter was writing, he says, "from Babylon," and my guess is that it's a code reference to Rome, the ancient city of Rome. And he's writing to these suffering believers just before Nero began to persecute the church. When Christianity very first started out, it was viewed by the Roman government as a sect of Judaism. But as Christianity spread to Gentiles, and its influence became wider, then Rome became threatened and they began to persecute Christians. It was about 64 AD when Nero burned Rome, blamed it on the Christians and started persecuting Christians. He put them on tiki torches in his garden, and roast them, he'd throw them alive to the lions and he started his Neroian persecution of the believers. Now that has been pretty much the basis for Christianity in its origin. We're living kind of in an unreal world here in America where Christians are not persecuted. And as I said, the tide is shifting.

So I believe that 1 Peter has special application to us, because I believe if you take a stand for Jesus in our culture today and for Biblical truth, you're going to be ostracized. You're going to be laughed at, you're going to be mocked, you're going to be put down, you're going to be called "narrow minded," "bigoted" and a bunch of other names. And so I believe that Peter is going to encourage us to stand.

Now turn with me to chapter 5 of 1 Peter, and I'll show you where I got the title for the series. Chapter 5, verse 12. I believe that Peter wrote through his secretary. His name was Silvanus, or Silas, traveling companion to Paul. He was a "faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have

written briefly...” Now why did Peter write “briefly” 1 Peter? Notice verse 12. “...exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein you...”—what?—“... stand.” So Peter is telling us how to stand in the true grace of God. And I want you to be able to stand in the true grace of God.

Now go back with me to chapter 1 and let me make this clear. The main themes are threefold in 1 Peter: Stand in Salvation, chapters 1 to 2:10; Stand in Submission, chapter 2:11 to 3:12; and Stand in Suffering, chapter 3:13 to the end of the book. So we are going to stand in our salvation, we’re going to stand in submission and we’re going to stand in suffering as we are persecuted as believers.

Now it all begins with salvation, chapter 1:1 to 2:10. If we know Jesus Christ as our Savior, we have hope, even in our suffering. And Peter wants us to celebrate two facets of our salvation. First is in verses 2 and 3, a celebration of our birth. Notice it with me. He says that you are “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...” and then he wishes them “... Grace unto you, and peace...”—“keros,” which is grace, and “shalom” or peace—“...be multiplied.”

Now technically, the opening salutation is in verses 1 and 2. But I see in the content of verse 2, this opening, so much doctrine packed in there that I just simply couldn’t pass it up. Now you’re going to have to buckle your seat belts, because Peter starts his epistle, like Paul does, with doctrine. And this is a fundamental kind of method in the New Testament and makes sense. First you have to know who you are in Christ before you can live the Christian life. First there is doctrine, then there is duty. First there are principles, then they are followed by practice.

There’s a shift going on in the evangelical church today. And in a lot of the preaching, it’s practical, practical, practical, practical, practical, practical; how to be a better husband, how to be a better wife, how to, you know, raise your kids, how to make more money, how to be a good person, how to succeed in life. And it’s positive, and wow, people like that. You know, it’s kind of like the happy-clappy church. I’m all for happy clappy. I’m not like Mr. Negative. Doom and gloom. But what are you happy clappy about? How do you live the Christian life if you don’t know what it is? When you build a house, what’s the most important part of the house? Foundation. When you buy a tract home, you can kind of have optional color for the cabinets and the carpets and what to do here. You know what’s never optional? Foundation. Right. Going to buy a new home. “Would you like it on a foundation?” “I think that would be nice.” Jesus said a wise builder built “on solid rock, and when the storms came and the wind blew, the house stood”; right? Amen? I want my house to stand. I want your house to stand. I want our lives to stand in the storms of life.

And in order to do that, we must lay a solid foundation. And that’s on doctrine. Don’t be afraid of that word “doctrine,” by the way. The word literally means “teaching.” And when the New Testament uses the word “sound,” before the word “doctrine,” it means “healthy, life-giving teaching.” It’s a medical word “sound.” It means that you’re healthy in doctrine. So write

doctrine, true doctrine. So every Christian should study the Bible, learn the Christian life.

And there's some important concepts about our salvation that we need to address in these verses, basically five things to celebrate in our birth. Number 1, that you have been elected by God "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Now look at that in verse 2. What does he say right off the bat to these suffering, persecuted believers? He wanted them to know that God the Father chose them. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Now this is a big, vast, deep doctrinal, theological subject. I've spent far too much time on it first service. So much that my voice is already going out, and I got another service to do. So if you want more information, listen to first service message online. Go to the tape room, say, "Give me first service. I want the whole deal."

Okay, here's what I'm going to say about "election." It's taught in the Bible. It's Biblical. Don't be afraid of it, don't run from it, don't freak out over it, don't neglect it, don't deny it, don't water it down, don't soften it. It is taught in the Bible. God elected or chose you. Jesus said it like this: "You've not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and I've ordained that you should go forth and that your life should bring forth fruit." That was my mother's life verse. I remember her sharing that verse with me as a young boy growing up. "You've not chosen Me, but I've chosen you."

Now, there are a lot of people that like to deny this doctrine. They like to say, "Well, you know, I don't believe that" or "I reject that" or "I don't accept that." And they go to the other side of the pendulum, and they completely deny God's elective choice, God's sovereign, I will say, elective choice. And they swing over here, and they basically say that it's all my responsibility; I must believe, I must repent, I must receive, I can accept salvation, I can reject salvation, I can have it, I can give it back, I can leave it.

And there are two extremes. And I'm starting dangerously to go too deep into this again. The two extremes are—and they are extremes, and I believe there is truth in both of these teachings—one's called Calvinism. Sometimes more popular today known as Reformed Theology. And Calvinism, which focuses on the election—the doctrine of election and the sovereign purposes of God. They camp over here, on election. The other extreme is known as Armenianism. Calvinism, because they follow John Calvin, the theologian, and Armenianism, because they followed Armenians, the theologian. So in Armenianism, they focus on this other responsibility, that you must believe, you have free will, you need to repent, and that man has a part and a responsibility and that we can resist God's grace. Now the problem is as people go over here or over here, they go to one extreme or the other extreme.

And I'm not here to go into all the details of Calvinism or Reform Theology or all the details of Armenianism. I'm here to tell you that I believe there are elements of both that are taught in the Bible, and that we need to have a balance of both and accept them both as Biblical truths. Now you say, "Well, which is it? I don't understand. How is it that God could choose us, but we must choose Him?" The Calvinists might resist the idea of man having free will, that he has a responsibility to believe, that he can resist God's grace. The Armenian might say that it's not

just the sovereignty of God, that we have a responsibility, and they camp on the two extremes. Here's what I believe. I believe that both are true—elements of both. Not everything of both are true, but elements of both are true. And I'm not a Calvinist, and I'm not an Armenianist. I'm a Biblicist. I believe that both are true. So when I land on a verse that teaches election, I teach election. When I land on a verse that says we must believe, and we must receive and we must repent, I preach that as though I'm an Armenianist. So I'm kind of like you can't figure me out; right? Trust me; I do not do that intentionally to avoid controversy. I've never been one to avoid controversy. And I'm never afraid to tell people what I believe the Bible teaches. And if you disagree with me, that's fine. I believe the Calvinists are our brothers in Christ, and I believe the Armenianists are our brothers in Christ. And both are taught.

You say, "Well, I don't understand. I don't understand. How could God choose us by His sovereign grace and at the same time we have free will, and we need to repent and believe." I don't understand it either. But I'm not going to try to reconcile the two. Whenever we try to soften one down to accept the other one, we end up diminishing the clear teaching of the Scriptures. I believe that they both reconcile in a higher unity. They're like two parallel lines that this side of heaven run parallel, but when we get into eternity, they connect or they cross. In other words, God's smarter than I am; you got that?

People have a nervous breakdown. "Did I choose Him, or did He choose me?" "Did I choose Him, or did He choose me?" Ahh! Why not just be glad He chose you? Amen? And some people go, "Well, what if He didn't choose me?" "Well, then repent and believe in Jesus, and you'll find out He did choose you." I've had people say that. "Well, how do I know? I don't know if He's chosen me." "Well, would you like to accept Christ right now?" "No, I'm not ready." "Well, then maybe you're not chosen." "Well, that isn't fair. Well, that's not right." "Well, then believe in Jesus Christ and accept Him and you'll find out you were chosen." "Well, I don't understand that." "Neither do I."

And I don't believe we should water down one or the other. Now granted; I can't reconcile them. I can't reconcile. Can you reconcile God in three persons? One God, three persons? You go, "Uh, I don't understand that." Welcome to the club. That's what the Bible teaches. Can you reconcile or understand what theologians called the "hypostatic union"? That Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person? Fully God, fully man in one person. How can He be the God-man? I don't understand that. Welcome to the club. I don't understand that, but I believe that they reconcile in a higher unity. But what we need to do is accept both as taught in the Scriptures.

And the Bible makes it clear in Ephesians 1:4—a lot of parallels between Peter and Ephesians, in the Pauline epistle—that we were "chosen...before the foundation of the world." Spurgeon jokingly used to say, "It's a good thing God chose me before I was born. If he had waited till afterwards, He never would have chosen me." Well, that's humorous but not true. God did know you. But remember when you were in elementary school and they had recess, and they had to pick sports teams? And you were always the last one picked? Maybe you weren't the last one picked. You weren't picked. They just had to take you on their team. "Okay, we'll take

him. Come on.” I used to always get to be the captain. I would be picking people, and I knew the people I didn’t want on my team. “Okay, come on.” I used to tell them, “You play third base. Not the position, the base. You just lay down on the ground, and you be the base.” I was mean. Or I’d put them in right field, way in the corner. I’d say, “Look, if the ball comes anywhere near you, don’t move. Someone else will come and get the ball. Don’t touch it.” And you remember when you weren’t picked or you weren’t chosen or no one seemed to like you? I want you to grab hold of this. God actually chose you. All your faults, all your failings, all your weaknesses, and God set His love upon you.

Now I don’t have time again to go into a deep background on this statement where it says, “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” What does it mean when it says the “foreknowledge of God the Father”? I think very simply it means that God set His love upon you. It doesn’t mean that He knew that you were going to accept Christ and so He chose you. That would completely negate election. It means that He knew you and set His love upon you and called you and elected you. So if you feel rejected, if you feel unwanted, if you feel unloved, rejoice oh child of God. Your Father in heaven set His love upon you before the world was ever created. And He chose you. He chose you to be His child. And whom God has chosen, He’s justified. Whom He’s justified, He’s sanctified, and whom He’s sanctified, Romans 8 tells us, He’s glorified. You’re bound for glory. You’re on your way to heaven.

Second word is “sanctification.” And that’s in verse 2, as well. It says in verse 2 that we are chosen or elected by God the Father according to His foreknowledge unto “sanctification of the Spirit.” The choice of God the Father in eternity past began in time by the sanctifying work of God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts you, He gives you new life, He regenerates you, He draws you, He seals you. “No one can come to the Father unless the Spirit draws him.” So God the Father chose you, God the Holy Spirit sanctified you or set you apart. He began to convict you, and eventually He converted you and gave you new life.

But there is faith involved. And I see it in the phrase, verse 2, “unto obedience” or “for obedience to Jesus Christ.” I believe that is a reference to faith. No one can be saved without trusting in Jesus Christ. Now I happen to believe that we are saved the moment we trust Christ. I don’t believe that we are regenerated prior to trusting Christ. I don’t believe that regeneration precedes faith. And I understand all the arguments against that. But I believe being dead in sin doesn’t violate our free will. I believe that we are separated, that the word “dead” there means separated from God. And that we still have the ability to resist God’s grace or to reject salvation or to believe or to not believe. John, in his Gospel, said, “These things are written so that you might believe, and so believing, you might have life through His name,” which indicates that as we believe, we have life. We don’t have life so that we can believe. I believe that there is an element to the truth that faith is a gift from God, that God grants you repentance.

But again, there is a mystery there that we can’t fathom or understand but involves our trusting and believing and receiving Christ. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, “We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” So

2 Thessalonians 2:13 has all of those elements: God chose you, sanctified you and you believed. Notice also it involved the death of Christ, verse 2, the blood of the cross, the “sprinkling” verse 2, “of the blood of Jesus Christ.” So God the Father chose us, God the Spirit calls us and God the Son dies for us. Sprinkling is an Old Testament concept of the priest taking the blood and sprinkling it upon the people. My sins have been forgiven through the cross of Jesus Christ.

And then in verse 3, we have regeneration that took place when we are saved. He says, “Blessed...”—We get our word “eulogize” or “to praise”—“...be unto God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to His abundant mercy hath...”—here it is—“...begotten us again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” But I want you to note that term in verse 3, “begotten us again.” This is where we have the word “born again” come from. Remember what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3? I love J. Vernon McGee. He used to call Nicodemus “little ‘ol Nicky.” “Little ‘ol Nicky.” You know, if anyone could get to heaven by being good or religious or having the right race, it would have been Nicodemus. And you know what Jesus told Nicodemus, this religious, Jewish man? “You must be born again.” For you to go to heaven, for you to see the kingdom of God, there has to be a rebirth. Literally He said, “You need to be born from above.” Nicodemus said, “How can a man, when he is old, enter into his mother’s womb and be born a second time?” Good question. Jesus said, “That which is flesh is flesh, but that which is spirit is spirit.” You need to be born of the water and of the Spirit. I don’t believe that’s baptism. I believe that’s the washing of the water of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God and the Word of God come into the heart of a person, and they are born of God. Regenerated.

Now really important; pay attention to me. “Regeneration” is the technical term for “born again.” A person is not a Christian—a person is not a Christian unless they have been born again; you got that? I say that because a lot of people think they are Christian because they are born in America. “Aw, yes, I’m a Christian. I was born in the U.S. of A. I have a flag on my house. I eat apple pie. I even put cheese on top. I celebrate the 4th of July. I’m a Christian.” “Oh, yeah, I’m a Christian. I go to church.” How many people have you heard say, “Yeah, I’m a Christian. I go to church.” “Did I ask you if you went to church?” I say I’m a little nicer than that. I don’t say that. “Oh, yeah, I’m a Christian. I’m a Baptist.” Billy Graham asked a man one time—no joke—“Are you a Christian?” He says, “No, thank God. I’m a Baptist.” We have an area of the United States called the “Bible belt.” You ever heard of that? The Bible belt. I have a friend who says it’s all belt and no Bible. You’re not a Christian because you live in the Bible belt, because you have white skin or you’re not a Christian because of your race or your religion. You’re a Christian because you’ve been born again. That’s why I often prefer to use the technical term, because I want to be exact in the words I use. Regenerated. You have to be given new life. Unless the Spirit of God has come to live in you—Christianity is the life of God and the soul of man. Everything else is not Christianity. Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian. Believing in Jesus doesn’t make you a Christian. You must be born again. My question to you this morning is, “Have you been born again?” Have you had a rebirth, spiritually? Have “old things passed away? All things become new?” He tells us that we are born again of the Holy Spirit.

And then he moves, secondly, in verse 3 down to verse 5—the end of verse 3—to a celebration of salvation's hope. So we celebrate salvations' birth. Now we move into the celebration of salvation's hope, verse 3. He says, We've been born unto "a living hope..."—end of verse 3 —"...by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead." We talked about the resurrection last Sunday. "...To..."—verse 4—"an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, fades not away, reserved in heaven for you. Who are kept..."—I love it. Verse 5. It's a military word. It means to "guard" or "garrison"—"...by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Now the celebration of salvation's hope—notice these three things. Number 1, it is a living hope. We are born again unto "a living hope" because of "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It's a living hope, because it's based upon the living resurrected Savior. And that was what everything was about last Sunday. It was all about the resurrection. All our hopes lie in an empty tomb. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead; amen? I have hope.

You know, if you're an unbeliever, you don't have hope. You want to see that really clearly? Go to a funeral. And look at the difference between a non-Christian and a Christian. Go to the funeral of somebody that wasn't a believer in Jesus, with people who don't believe in Jesus. And the wailing and the hopelessness and the despair. I'll never forget the first time—very young pastor. I was probably about 21, 22. Just a keeky little pastor. Very first graveside funeral I ever conducted. It was in Blythe in August. I was such a little dorky guy; I had this big, thick corduroy suit on, you know? It's 1974, you know? This really hot, corduroy suit. In Blythe. It's about 120 degrees, you know. But the guy that died was not a Christian, and all the family were not Christians. I'd never done this before. But they were wailing and crying and weeping and literally falling on the ground. I'll never forget that. Hopelessness. And that despair. And then I go to do a graveside service for somebody that loved the Lord, knew the Lord, that had been born again, and Christians gather and we sing. And we rejoice. We "sorrow, but not as others who have no hope." Because we believe that if Jesus died and rose again, those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, God will bring with Him. We're going to see them again. Where can you find hope like that in the world? Hope beyond the grave, hope that we'll be together in heaven, hope of eternal life. And that's what Peter's telling these persecuted, suffering, sorrowing Christians; that we have a "living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

And then he moves, verse 4, to the heavenly hope. He says that it's "an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled. It doesn't fade away, and it's reserved for you in heaven." Salvation means that I will inherit heaven when I die or when I'm raptured. Now notice the term he uses to describe this eternal state of heaven. It's "incorruptible," verse 4. It means that it never corrodes or cracks or decays, that it's death proof. It's "undefiled," verse 4, means that it's an inheritance in itself. It's perfect in its condition. It's never tarnished or stained. That it's perfectly pure and sin proof. And then thirdly, he says, "does not fade away." Means that it can never suffer variations in value, glory, beauty. That it is time proof. That's our eternal destiny.

And then notice what he says. It's "reserved." You ever been on a trip and go to check into a

hotel and find out your name's not in the reservation? Oh, man. That's freaky. "Well, are there any other hotels around here?" "No, no. All the hotels are booked." Sleep in your car overnight? I'll never forget; I was on a long trip to China and the Philippines. I'd been gone three weeks from my wife and young children, and I wanted to get home so bad. I'd literally been in the jungle, I'd been eatin' stuff I didn't even know what it was. I wanted to get home. So I'm on the island of Mindanao, I fly north to Manila, I go to check in on this flight, and the lady says, "Mr. Miller, we have no reservations for you on this flight." You ever seen a grown man cry? [crying] "You're not even on the flight, Mr. Miller. We have no record of you on the flight." "Please!" Well, I said, "How soon can you get me on a plane back to L.A.?" "Well, maybe a couple of weeks." I'm not kidding. You ever seen a grown man really cry? Can you imagine? By the way, I argued with them in Christian love all day long. "I ain't leaving this airport until I'm on a plane!" They got me on a flight the next day. I actually spent eight hours at the airport. "Get me on a flight. Get me on a flight. Get me on a flight." And I got on a flight the next day.

But can you imagine getting to heaven and the books are open and they just start shaking their head. "What'd you say that name was? Is that with an m? Miller? Miller with an m?" "What?! Peter, help!! I'm John Miller. I was a preacher! I was a pastor! It's gotta be in there somewhere. Keep looking!" Can you imagine if it wasn't reserved for you in heaven? Your reservation isn't there. You're talking freak-out time. Hey, if you're a Christian, you have a reservation. It's in heaven. It's in heaven. And when the world starts getting really dark, and you feel like a stranger who's been scattered, and a pilgrim, and your heart becomes weary—someone said, "The trip home is never hard, because it leads to home." When the way leads to home, it's never hard. So I think about that when I get discouraged. I'm on my way home, and when I get there, there's reservations for me. Why? 'Cause God the Father's set His love upon me and chose me to be His child. Because God the Son died on the cross and shed His blood for my sins. And I'm trusting in nothing else besides. And thirdly, because God the Holy Spirit—God the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in my heart. And He said, "I'll never leave you and I'll never forsake you." And He has sealed me unto the day of redemption. And I'm so glad. That in the midst of opposition and persecution and rejection in this world, which is not my home, I'm on my way to heaven. That I have a home waiting for me reserved in heaven. Aren't you?

Let's pray.