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The Inheritance Of God's Children

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"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" (I Peter 1:3-5).

Inheritance is a possession derived by an heir from an ancestor or other person. When property changes hands, the deed is made to the man and his heirs. Much of this world's goods is not owned by men who themselves acquired it by their own toil. It has been acquired through the law that what a man has shall be left to his heirs when he is dead.

Our text speaks about heavenly property. Peter would comfort the poor and sorrowing and discouraged people of Christ by discussing their future blessings as the heirs of God. They had little, if any, of this world's goods, but they were heirs apparent to future and heavenly possessions. They had little or no authority in the affairs of this world, but they were heirs apparent to thrones in the future kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Theirs was the promise that if they suffered with Christ, they would also reign with Him. We will first notice:

THE TITLE TO THIS INHERITANCE

Our title to the heavenly inheritance is by birth—a birth from above. By a natural birth many things are inherited. Some children inherit thrones of kings. They rule over men, not by virtue of their wisdom and fitness for such a place, but because they are the first-born of kings. Some inherit great wealth. We often hear of million dollar babies, that is, babies who belong to millionaires. Some children inherit an ugly disposition from their parents, while others have a sunny and cheerful disposition handed down by their parents. And some inherit terrible diseases. And all of us have inherited a sinful disposition and are by nature children of wrath. The first birth gives us nothing in which to glory.

But in the second birth, the supernatural birth of the Spirit, we become the children of God. And if children, then we are heirs of God. Our birth from above gives us titles to mansions in the skies, to the inheritance described by Peter as incorruptible, undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven. The first or physical birth will not entitle us to any future blessings. To be born only once will mean to die twice: first physically, and then the second death which is the lake of fire.

THE ASSURANCE OF THIS INHERITANCE

The assurance of this inheritance is called a lively or living hope. This means that the inheritance is not yet possessed. We do not hope for that which we already have. Children of the rich, before reaching their majority, do not have possession of the inheritance, but they do look forward to the time when it will be in their actual possession. So the heirs of God have only the earnest or first-fruits of their inheritance, while the greater part of it is reserved for them in heaven. They cannot squander it while they are in their fleshly minority and in this world where nothing is safe.

1. The living hope means that the inheritance is certain to be received. This hope is an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast. The child of a rich man may hope to receive the wealth of his father some day, but that wealth may be lost before he gets it, and his hope may end in bitter disappointment. The hope of earthly blessings is subject to many vicissitudes, but no misfortune can happen to the inheritance of the child of God. Children of kings have been disappointed in the hope to reign over great kingdoms, because their fathers have had to abdicate and renounce the throne for themselves and their heirs. A late illustration of this is seen in King Edward the Eighth giving up his throne for the love and companionship of a woman—he renounced the throne of England for himself and for his heirs forever.

2. But the hope of the saints is a living hope, which means also that death cannot deprive us of it. It is still a living hope in the very ordeal of death. Solomon says of the wicked: "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth" (Prov. 11:7), but in Prov. 14:32, he says "...but the righteous hath hope in his death." Death cuts to pieces all other hopes, and turns men out of all other inheritances; but it only serves to fulfill the hope of the child of God. Death is only a messenger sent to bring the children of God home to the possession of their inheritance.

One of the chief errors of God's people is that they are not willing to wait for their inheritance—not willing to wait for the hope laid up for us in heaven. We put too much emphasis on physical and material things here and now. Esau could not wait for his birthright; he despised it because it was something future, and bartered it for a mess of pottage. He satisfied his stomach at the expense of his soul. He traded his glorious inheritance for a temporary snack.

3. This living hope is based upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead. We are begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection

of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our hope was wrapped up in His work of redemption. If His work was a success, then our hope cannot die. And the resurrection is proof that the sacrifice He made for sinners was accepted of God. He says, "Because I live ye shall live also." The glorious hope is that when we are absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord.

THE CAUSE OF THIS INHERITANCE IS THE MERCY OF GOD

"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" (I Peter 1:3). Merit has no place in an inheritance. Merit is associated with purchase and prizes, but not with inheritance.

It has been said, "Great sins and great miseries need great mercy, and many sins and many miseries need many mercies." And is not this great mercy to make of Satan's slaves sons of the Most High? John says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:1-3). We are children of mercy which means that we were objects of misery before. Mercy is the cause of our being born again. We did nothing to bring about our spiritual birth. In this respect, the spiritual birth is closely analagous to the natural birth. What mercy is this to take firebrands of hell and appoint them to shine as stars in the firmament; to raise up the poor out of the dunghill and set them with princes. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people" (Psalms 113:7,8). Love, faith and hope are all the result of the new birth and not the cause of it. "He that loveth is (Gk. has been) born of God" (I John 4:7). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is (Gk. has been) born of God." And in our text it is written that we are born again unto hope.

THE INHERITANCE DESCRIBED

Our inheritance is described by its qualities and as to the certainty of receiving it. Peter describes this inheritance as being incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. There is nothing in the nature of this inheritance that will be

subject to corruption: it cannot be defiled by anything from the outside; and its joy will be everlasting. Heaven will be no disappointment to the child of God. As to its beauty, it is represented by the most precious things of earth—the most precious things the human mind can conceive of: gold, pearls and precious stones. Heaven will be a place of freedom—freedom from so many things which have cursed the inhabitants of earth. There will be freedom from bodily pain, poverty, fear, and from sin. Paul triumphed over all the grievous and painful ills of life because of his hope of a better day. He had pinned his faith and hope to One who would not disappoint him, but after the ills and sorrows of life were over, would receive him into glory. How miserable he would have been apart from the good hope through grace!

As to the certainty of our inheritance, the Bible says in I John 3:2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." And Paul assures us that: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4). In all earthly hopes there is an element of unrest and uncertainty. He who hopes to become rich cannot be certain that his hope will be realized. He who hopes for continued good health cannot be certain that he will not soon be smitten with some fatal malady.

For God's saints the heavenly inheritance is now a matter of hope, but in the other world, we will possess it. The hope of the Christian is both sure and steadfast, and it goes with him all the way to glory.



THE GOD-CALLED PREACHER

"Because no man hath hired us." Is it a sufficient justification for not preaching to say that no church has called me? If God calls a man to preach, can he justify himself before God by saying that he is not preaching because no church is willing to pay him a salary for preaching? Paul said, "Necessity is laid upon me." He said that preaching was not optional with him; that it was not conditioned upon pay. He said, "I have a stewardship entrusted to me." If a man is called to preach and wants to preach, nobody can keep him from it. If one loves to preach, he will preach. If he merely loves the compensation for preaching, that is another story.

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