

1 PETER 1:3-5 UNION WITH CHRIST

January 11, 2026
Library Bible Study

1

What it means to be saved

- How to handle trials. Dan 3, Isaiah 43:1-3, Deut 29:29. trials 1:6
- Jesus will be with us in the furnace and it will not destroy us. 1:7.
- The coming salvation, v 5, 10, some parts not realized.

- MOTIVE of salvation is MERCY; ie. The mercy of God + nothing
- This mercy is tied into election

2

The MODE/METHOD of salvation is a new birth.

- This is not a type of Christianity, or a degree of Christianity, but a new nature. What do you think when you hear new birth?
- The word for new birth relates to conception, begotten or implantation.
 - *This work is only used here.*
- This is a new reality. See Nicodemus.

3

There are two signs of the new birth: a living hope and a new inheritance.

- Living hope is not general optimism but an assured conviction.
- This applies even when it is 4th and long. Clip
- “Shielded” in V 5 translated as locked up in a garrison for protection.
- Our inheritance is similar to what was promised to Israel.
 - *Ours is kept for us in heaven. Page 30-33.*
 - *What must we do to secure our inheritance?*

4

The Message of 1 Peter

Peter is concerned, therefore, about the *witness* of the Christian church to the pagans of their cities and towns (2:11–12; 3:15–16). They are transients and foreigners, but they are also ambassadors. They reject conformity to the city, but they accept responsibility, living as law-abiding citizens and honouring their rulers and their fellow residents (2:9–10, 13–17; 3:1).

Babylon is not an enduring city, but neither is Jerusalem. By becoming the people of God, these Gentiles are not called to the earthly Jerusalem. They join those who, like Peter, have gone ‘to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore’ (Heb. 13:13).

There is no enduring city here; we must not live as though there were. Rather, we come to the heavenly Jerusalem in our worship (Heb. 12:22–24). To yield the religious devotion demanded by the political gospels of our day is to be guilty of idolatry. The elect pilgrims of the Diaspora are children of the holy Father, purchased by the precious blood of Christ, washed by the Spirit. They must keep themselves from idols (1 John 5:21).

Peter will describe the political and social duties of the Christian pilgrim. But first, pilgrims must know their calling. It is not to pursue the mirage of humanistic hope. Neither is it to bow down to worship the imperial images of totalitarian power. It is to obey Jesus Christ until the day of his appearing.

1 Peter 1:3–12

2. Bless God for our hope in Christ

1. God establishes our hope in Christ (1:3)

In his play *No Exit*, Jean-Paul Sartre gives his own vision of hell. Two women and a man, doomed to perdition, enter a room that seems to threaten no torment. But they are sentenced to remain together in that same room for ever – without sleep and without eyelids. All three enter with pretensions about their past. The man pretends that he was a hero of the Revolution. In reality, he was killed in a train wreck when he tried to escape after betraying his comrades. The women have even more sordid lives. In the forced intimacy of the room their guilty secrets are all wrung out. Nothing can be hidden, and nothing can be changed. Sartre’s imagination has well prepared us for his famous line, ‘Hell is other people.’ But the moral of the play is the line of doom to which the drama moves: ‘You are – your life, and nothing else.’¹

Sartre rejected Christianity, but his play invites heart-searching. Who among us wants to say that we are what we have been, rather than what we meant to be or what we hope to be? Sartre implies that hell begins when hope ends. Sartre’s image falls far short of the reality of hell, for God’s judgment exposes sinners not simply to the lidless eyes of other sinners, but to the all-seeing gaze of God himself. Yet Sartre reminds us of how desperately we need hope. While there is life, there is hope, we say. But if hope dies, what life can remain?

Peter writes a letter of *hope*. The hope he proclaims is not what we call a ‘fond hope’. We cherish fond hopes because they are so fragile. We ‘hope

¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit and Three Other Plays*, tr. S. Gilbert (Vintage, 1946), p. 45.

against hope' because we do not really expect what we hope for. But Peter writes of a sure hope, a hope that holds the future in the present because it is anchored in the past. Peter hopes for God's salvation, God's deliverance from sin and death. His hope is sure, because God has already accomplished his salvation in *the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*.

The resurrection of Jesus was a life-changing reality for Peter. When Jesus died on the cross, it was the end of all Peter's hopes. He knew only bitter sorrow for his own denials. The dawn could not bring hope; with the crowing of the cock he heard the echo of his curses.

But Jesus did not stay dead. On that Easter morning Peter learned from the women of the empty tomb and the message of the angels. He went running to the tomb and saw its evidence. He left in wonder, but Jesus remembered Peter and appeared to him even before he came to eat with the disciples in the upper room. Hope was reborn in Peter's heart with the sight of his living Lord. Now Peter writes to praise God for that *living hope*. The resurrection did much more than restore his Master to him. The resurrection crowned the victory of Christ, his victory for Peter, and for those to whom he writes. The resurrection shows that God has made the Crucified both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). At the right hand of the Father Jesus rules until the day that he will come to restore and renew all things.² With the resurrection of Jesus and his entrance into glory, a new age has begun.³ Peter now waits for the day when Jesus will be revealed from heaven (7, 13). Peter's living hope is Jesus.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Peter blesses God, rejoicing in what he has done. He uses a form of praise to God that was an important part of worship in the Old Testament.⁴ The eighteen 'blessings' that we know from the later synagogue service go back to early times, perhaps in some form even to Peter's day. Those blessings look forward to the fulfilment of the promises of God, yearning for the time of realization:

² Acts 2:33-35; 3:21.

³ The 'new age' of Christ's heavenly authority is the antithesis of the occult 'New Age' movement that would substitute theosophy and paganism for the gospel.

⁴ Gen. 9:26; 14:20; 24:27; Exod. 18:10; 1 Kgs 8:15, 56; Ps. 18:46; 28:6; 31:21; 41:13; 66:20; etc.; Dan. 3:28; cf. Luke 1:68. God's blessing of human beings declares his favour towards those who are blessed. Our blessing of God cannot grant favour to God, but seeks God's favour towards himself. 'Hallowed be your name' is a blessing in this sense. We ask God to lift up his own name, to be what he is.

Speedily cause the offspring of David, Thy servant, to flourish, and let his horn be exalted by thy salvation, because we wait for Thy salvation all the day. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who causest the horn of salvation to flourish.⁵

How different from the plaintive longing of that benediction is the astonished joy of the apostle Peter! Peter can bless the God and Father of his Lord, Jesus Christ. He can exult in the Offspring of David, raised up in salvation to the throne. God's promises have all come true in Christ. There is more to come, for Christ is to come, but our living hope is real in our living Lord.

Christ's resurrection spells hope for us not just because he lives, but because, by God's mercy, we live. *In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* By the resurrection of Christ, God has given life, not only to him, but also to us. We are given new birth by God; he fathers us by the resurrection of his Son. In Christ's triumph God makes all things new, beginning with us.

The resurrection carried Christ not only out of the grave but to his Father's throne. The great day of the renewal of all things had already begun. Yet Peter preached that heaven must receive Christ until the time of renewal, a time still to come.⁶ The time of new birth for the universe will come when Christ comes again. But for those united to Christ in his death and resurrection, that new day has already dawned.

When we speak of the *new birth*, we think of the change that God's grace works in us. We are brought from death to life. Peter speaks of our being born of imperishable seed through the living word of God that was preached to us (23-25). But if we think only of what happens to us, we may be puzzled by the statement that we are given *new birth* by the *resurrection of Jesus Christ*. The means of our new birth is not first the *message* of the resurrection; it is the *fact* of the resurrection. When Christ rose he secured our salvation. He entered that new day of which the prophets spoke, and he brought us with him. Peter is saying what Paul also declared: when Christ rose, we rose. In giving life to Christ, God gave life to all those who are united to Christ.⁷ God's elect have a hope that is as sure as Christ's

⁵ *Prayer Book, Abridged for Jews in the Armed Forces of the United States* (National Jewish Welfare Board, 1943), Morning Service, p. 158. See the citation and comment in Bénétreau, p. 83.

⁶ Acts 3:21. Note Matt. 19:27-28.

⁷ Col. 3:1-4; Rom. 6:1-11; Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 3:5.

resurrection. Christ has not just made their salvation possible; he has made it sure.

Like Paul, Peter also speaks of baptism as the sign of our union with Christ in his death and resurrection (3:21).⁸ Some commentators would see this passage, or indeed the whole letter, as instruction given in a service for baptism. But Peter does not in the least focus on the sign, but on the spiritual reality of our new life in Christ. His teaching is beautifully appropriate for baptismal instruction, but gives no real evidence of being designed for this specific purpose, far less limited to it.⁹

The Father, who gives new birth to his children through the resurrection of Christ, also through Christ brings them to a living faith (5; 3:21). Our faith and hope are in God; his living word, the good news of the gospel, has brought life to us (23). The things to which believers in Old Testament times looked forward have now happened (12).

Yet we, too, look to the future. The salvation that was sealed by Christ's resurrection and planted in our hearts by the seed of the Word will be revealed completely when Christ comes again in glory. Our hope is anchored in the past: Jesus rose! Our hope remains in the present: Jesus lives! Our hope is completed in the future: Jesus is coming! (5, 7, 13).

The apostle leads us to praise God that our salvation is his work. We could not even begin to accomplish it, and we do not in any sense deserve it. Yet, as trophies of God's grace, we have the privilege of adoring the Father of our Lord Jesus as *our* Father. Peter's praise is not a mere formula; praise is the goal of God's gracious work, as Peter later reminds us (2:9).

2. God maintains our hope: our inheritance (1:4–5)

As those given birth by God, we also receive our *inheritance* from him. That inheritance is *kept* for us, and we are kept for it. We may sometimes envy those whose financial future seems secure because of their birth. Sons or daughters of a wealthy family, they are heirs of a fortune. Peter had heard Jesus teach about a better treasure stored in heaven; no moths are there to eat the robes of glory, no rust can corrode the crowns of gold, and no thieves can break into the city of God (Matt. 6:19).

⁸ Rom. 6:3–5; Gal. 3:27.

⁹ For relating 1 Peter to baptism see the commentaries of Grudem, Kelly, Carrington and Selwyn. Bénétreau gives a brief summary in his commentary, pp. 16–17. Kelly shows the distinctiveness of the NT doctrine of the new birth and the decisive role of the teaching of Jesus in shaping it (pp. 48–50).

Peter, however, is speaking not simply of our treasure, but of our *inheritance*. God gave the land to Israel as an inheritance, and in the land he gave every tribe and family an inheritance, with the lasting right of ownership.¹⁰ While they wandered in the wilderness, they were sustained by the promise of their inheritance. Like Israel in the wilderness, the New Testament people of God are foreigners and pilgrims. They make their way through a world that is becoming more hostile. Yet they are not wandering beggars, cast off from their possessions. They hold a sure title to the inheritance God has given them.

Our hope is sure, for nothing can happen to our inheritance. The words that Peter uses to describe our unchangeable inheritance all relate to the land that was the inheritance of Israel. First, our inheritance *can never perish* (*aphtharton*). The land of Israel was at times ravaged and destroyed by invading armies. The prophet Isaiah describes the utter destruction of the whole world in God's judgment:

The earth will be completely laid waste
and totally plundered.

The LORD has spoken this word.

The earth dries up and withers,
the world languishes and withers.¹¹

In the Septuagint version of Isaiah, the word-stem for 'laid waste' and 'withers' is the same that Peter uses. But Peter uses the word in a negative form. The world will be destroyed, but our inheritance is indestructible.¹²

Second, Peter says that our inheritance *can never . . . spoil* (or is 'undefiled', RSV). Isaiah, just quoted, goes on to tell how people have defiled the earth by breaking God's law. In the prophecy of Jeremiah, too, God declares that he gave Israel a fertile land, 'But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable'.¹³ The land of Canaan, Israel's inheritance, was defiled first by heathen inhabitants, then by

¹⁰ Gen. 17:8; 28:4; Deut. 1:8; 30:3–5; Ps. 79:1. See Beare, pp. 56f.

¹¹ Isa. 24:3–4; cf. verse 1. See Selwyn, p. 124.

¹² Peter reverses the term by using it with the negative prefix *a-*. The word is *aphtharton*.

¹³ Jer. 2:7. Again the word for 'defiled' is reversed by Peter in the term *amianton*. Israel defiled the land by idolatry and sexual vices (Jer. 3:2; Ezek. 20:43; Hag. 2:14).

Israel's idolatry. In total contrast, the inheritance we have is undefiled and undefilable.

Third, our inheritance is perennial. It will not *fade*, wither or dry up. Canaan was not only destroyed by invaders and polluted by its inhabitants; it was also parched with drought in God's judgment.¹⁴ Isaiah reflects on the judgments of God that cause the land and its inhabitants to wither like grass or flowers: 'The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures for ever' (Isa. 40:8). Peter quotes that passage at the end of this chapter, and in that context again uses *aphtharton*, the first word of this series (23).

Canaan as the inheritance of Israel is contrasted with our inheritance. Israel received the earthly foreshadowing; we receive the heavenly fulfilment. Because our inheritance is in heaven, nothing on earth can alter or destroy it. Peter must use negative terms to describe it ('imperishable', 'undefiled', 'unfading', RSV) because its reality surpasses our present comprehension. In John's vision it can be seen as the city of God, but the language is still symbolic. Our inheritance is not simply a land, a city, or even a new earth. It is all that God will give us; his *salvation*.

God has prepared his salvation for us (5). The term *ready* suggests that there need be no delay. Our inheritance will be revealed at the last day, but God has it ready for us now. It is finished. Nothing need be added to God's preparation. The salvation that God has got ready does not need a few final touches from us, nor are we called to serve as consultants in designing God's plan. God's salvation, finished, perfect and unchangeable, is kept for us by God himself. Unlike our utopian dreams, or the fantasies of science fiction, God's plan for the future is already a reality. As pilgrims we travel to the city of God, but we know that the city to come is the city that comes to us with Jesus Christ. Indeed, our final inheritance is not merely kept by God; it actually is the Lord himself. God said to Aaron, 'You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites.'¹⁵ God claims his people as his inheritance and gives himself as their inheritance.¹⁶

¹⁴ Jer. 23:10; Joel 1:12, 10. The verb form of the word that Peter uses (without its privative *a-*) is found in the LXX of Job 15:30; 24:24 to describe the withering of flowers and herbs.

¹⁵ Num. 18:20; cf. Ps. 16:5.

¹⁶ Deut. 32:9; Jer. 10:16; 51:19; Ps. 73:26; 16:5. As the Old Testament unfolds, the distinctive inheritance of Aaron and Levi becomes the inheritance of all the true Israel.

Not only is our inheritance kept for us; we are kept for our inheritance. It would be small comfort to know that nothing could destroy our heavenly inheritance if we could lose it at last. The wonder of our hope is that the same *power* of God that keeps our inheritance also keeps us. We are *shielded* until the great day when our salvation will be revealed. The word *shielded* means 'kept under guard'. It is used of protective custody. God has put us under arrest, as it were, to keep us safe for his day.¹⁷ Pilgrims we may be, but the cloud of God's power that leads us in the way becomes a wall of fire about us.

Salvation is God's work. He and he alone is the Saviour.¹⁸ He delivered Israel from Egypt in the Old Testament model of salvation. Hemmed in by the armies of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, the freed Israelites were told to stand firm and see the salvation of God (Exod. 14:13). God's salvation was more than his mighty acts of deliverance; he brought Israel out of Egypt to bring them to himself. Salvation meant that he would be their God and they his people. That promise became the ground of the prophetic message. Israel had sinned, but God would do a yet greater work of salvation in the future. He would deliver his people not only from their enemies, but from their sins (Mic. 7:17–19). God their Saviour would come and lead them as of old through the desert.¹⁹ He would come with the coming of the Messiah.²⁰

Peter preaches the fulfilment of that promise. The salvation that the prophets anticipated is the grace that Christians have now received (10–11). Yet Christians still await the salvation to come. Complete as salvation is, ready as it is, even experienced as it is, it still has a glorious future. *In the last time* it will be *revealed* when Jesus Christ is revealed. Our salvation is our inheritance, the full glory of being with the Lord for ever.

We are kept, however, *through faith*. Peter has described God's saving work for us. God keeps his finished salvation for us, and us for his salvation. But he does not keep us in a cage, or against our will. God who works for us also works in us. Our faith is his way of keeping us; it is his gift. Why does God use faith as the instrument of his keeping power? Because faith is not our achievement, but trust in God's achievement;

¹⁷ *Phroureō* is used in this sense in Gal. 3:23. The gates of Damascus were guarded to keep Paul in (2 Cor. 11:32). See BAGD, p. 867.

¹⁸ Hos. 13:4; Isa. 43:11; 45:21.

¹⁹ Isa. 40:3–5; 43:14–16; 48:20–21; 51:9–10.

²⁰ Isa. 9:6; 49:1–6; Zech. 12:8; Mal. 3:1–2.