

## **An Exposition of 1 Peter 1:3-5, under the Title: “The Hope of Heaven”**

**1Peter 1:3-5** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

### **An Illustration**

Dr Gary Habermas is a Professor of Theology, and expert on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has debated atheists and overturned their arguments against this great truth. But in 1995 his wife Debbie was dying of stomach cancer, what good was his faith then?

He relates the story to Lee Stroble saying;

“This was the worst thing that could possibly happen.” He turned and looked straight at me. “But you know what was amazing? My students would call me – not just one but several of them – and say, 'At a time like this, aren't you glad about the Resurrection?' As sober as those circumstances were, I had to smile for two reasons. First, my students were trying to cheer me up with my own teaching. And second, it worked.”

“It was a horrible emotional time for me, but I couldn't get around the fact that the resurrection *is* the answer for her suffering. I still worried; I still wondered what I'd do raising four kids alone. But there wasn't a time when that truth didn't comfort me.”

“Losing my wife was the most painful experience I've ever had to face, but if the Resurrection could get me through that, it can get me through anything. It was good for 30 A.D., it's good for 1995, it's good for now, and it's good beyond that.”

Habermas locked eyes with mine. “That's not some sermon,” he said quietly. “I believe that with all my heart. If there's a resurrection, there's a heaven. If Jesus was raised, Debbie was raised. And I will be someday, too. Then I'll see them both.” Lee Stroble. *The Case for Christ*, Chapter 13.

What gets us through when we are faced with life's difficulties? It's holding on to spiritual realities, spiritual certainties. This is the main message of the book of 1 Peter and it's the theme of this passage. Every Christian needs to hold on to The Hope of Heaven.

### **The Exposition**

Peter praises our God and Father as the source of our spiritual life. We did not give ourselves spiritual life; this is the gift of God. John 1:13 says we “*were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God*” We are naturally born “*children of wrath*” according to Eph 2:3, therefore we must be “*born again*” to enter God's eternal kingdom, just as Jesus said. The source of our salvation is not in us. It is attributed in this passage to the “*abundant mercy*” of God. What else can it be, that make enemies and objects of His righteous wrath into His precious children?

The passage indicates that we are born again into three things; these are:

1. a living hope; through the resurrection of Jesus Christ
2. an immortal inheritance; guarded by God through faith
3. a salvation; ready to be revealed at the last time

The Greek word for into indicates a point reached or entered, a position, a place. This is a statement

of the reality of our spiritual position in Christ. All three are different aspects of the same thing; they speak of our eternal security. We will deal with each of these three aspects of our salvation in turn

### **1. A Living Hope**

*“Our God and Father,...has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”.*

A living hope is a hope that is alive. It has been translated as an *“ever living expectation”*. Hope in the NT is no dead hope, no “hope so hope”, it is a confidence in God for the future, a hope that doesn't give up, a hope for life. But what is the basis for such a bold hope? Peter tells us simply; the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter was an eye witness to its reality. 1 Corinthians 15 makes it very clear that the reality of the resurrection is the solid basis for our own resurrection and eternal life in heaven; as Gary Habermas learned; *“if Jesus was raised, I am raised.”* Jesus said in John 14:19, *“Because I live, you also will live.”* What a hope!

### **2. An Immortal Inheritance**

*“born again,...to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you”.*

Our salvation and the hope of heaven are often called *“an inheritance”* in the NT. The Holy Spirit is given to us as the *“guarantee of our inheritance”* according to Eph 1:14. A physical inheritance is never certain. Fortunes can easily be dissipated, diluted or lost, Peter uses four terms to describe our heavenly inheritance that demonstrate its certainty: incorruptible, undefiled and unfading and reserved in heaven.

*Incorruptible:* the Greek word gives the sense of un-decaying, not pining away, undying. Not only will this inheritance never decay; it will never produce corruption in those who possess it. Many are those who obtain a great financial inheritance only to be ruined by it. Our heavenly life will never be corrupted and it will never corrupt. It is ever new.

*Undefiled:* To defile is to stain with colour or smear with mud. What is more frustrating than to have a brand new suit splattered with mud or stained with ink. It is ruined and we are disappointed.. Our heavenly inheritance can never be spoiled. It will never disappoint us.

*Unfading:* Having the sense of perpetual, inextinguishable. In verse 23 & 24 of this chapter, the apostle *contrasts* the *“imperishable seed”* of our spiritual life with our physical bodies which are like the *“the grass (that) withers, and the flowers (that) fall”*. Our heavenly hope will never droop, or wilt, it will be ever bright and fresh.

*Reserved in Heaven:* To be “reserved” means to be watched or guarded. It is guarded by God, and who better? Jesus said; *“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. (29) My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.”* (John 10:28,29) Calvin says, *“The inheritance is said to be reserved, or preserved, that we may know that it is beyond the reach of danger. For, were it not in God's hand, it might be exposed to endless dangers.”*

Even more than this, our inheritance is reserved *in heaven*. Out of our own hands, so we cannot lose it; out of the reach of men, so they cannot corrupt it; and away from the grasp of Satan, so he cannot destroy it. And this inheritance is *reserved in heaven, for you*. For all those who put their faith in the Resurrected Christ.

### **3. A Salvation Ready to be Revealed**

*“you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”*

Not only does God keep heaven for us; He keeps us for heaven. If we know the sinfulness of our own hearts; we know, that it is only the power of God that could keep us.

Peter tells us that we are kept *“through faith”*. We receive salvation by Faith, as we are told in Ephesians 2:8. And here we are taught that we are kept for salvation through Faith. Ours is a life of faith *“We walk by faith and not by sight”* (2 Co 5:7).

Furthermore, this salvation is *“ready to be revealed”*. It's already prepared, that's what the word means. When Jesus said He was going ahead to *“prepare a place for us”* in John 14, He used the same root word as the one here, ready.

Our place in heaven is ready, but for the moment it is hidden. It is yet to be revealed, uncovered, disclosed. But when will this revelation, this disclosure be? We are told it is, *“in the last time”*. Peter uses some other terms in this letter to describe the same thing. He calls it *“the revelation of Jesus Christ”* and *“when His glory is revealed.”* and the *“appearance of the Chief Shepherd”*. This consummation of our salvation is directly linked to the personal return of Jesus Christ. Our eternal salvation will be clear for all to see when *“every eye shall see him”* (Rev 1:7) *“When he appears”* says 1 John 3:2, *“we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”* At the return of Christ we will have both redeemed souls and renewed bodies.

### **Conclusion**

Every Christian has the certainty of heaven as an ever living hope, an indestructible inheritance and a protected, prepared and personal salvation. It unseen now, but it is ready, waiting for Jesus to return. Then faith will be sight. Surely this is a motivation to hold on and live for Jesus in the hard times.