

## **Wonderful Hope!**

### **1 Peter 1:3-5**

#### **Introduction**

The Coronavirus and Covid-19 have certainly prompted many of us to realise how tenuous our personal health and economic security is, and even the fragility of some governments around the world. The amount of government support which has been required to assist people has resulted in people saying that our children are going to inherit a debt that will take years and possibly a whole generation to pay off.

However, while the current crisis has been very wide-spread in its impact, dealing with current problems and guarding against future concerns is a pretty common struggle for governments, communities and people in general. In the Lockyer Valley we have had significant works of flood mitigation which ironically go hand-in-hand with work by the Queensland Government to ‘drought-proof’ the state and such work is mirrored by a number of other state governments. On top of this there are other concerns for the environment with people asking what will be the inheritance that one generation will pass on to the next.

I know that there are some people, I think they’re called SKINeys who get their name from “Spending the Kids Inheritance Now” but most people have a desire to pass on a good inheritance to their children. Our current circumstances have shown up just how difficult that can be for us. It is in the light of our renewed realisation of our weakness that makes today’s reading from 1 Peter so timely.

#### **God’s Work Gives Us Hope and Humility (v.3)**

Peter says, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.”

We’re told here that we have an inheritance but Peter uses the phrase, we come “into an inheritance.” This coming into an inheritance connects it with the “new

birth” which we have been given from God the Father. One of the challenges in trying to address global problems is that we require humanity to feel a corporate ownership of our present circumstances and collective identity with the next generation. When dealing with global issues it’s difficult to create significant change if people parochially care about children in their country but not those in other countries. While it’s only mentioned in short-hand, here we are assured that God cares about our inheritance because we have a new birth which he orchestrated and so we are God’s children. We are now part of God’s family because of what Jesus has accomplished and this should give us great hope both for now and the future.

What is the basis of us coming into such a new birth, this new relationship with God? We’re told that this happened on the basis of God’s “great mercy.” This is why the word inheritance is quite appropriate. While there might be some arrogant people who believe that they earned their inheritance, most people know that they receive an inheritance because of choices outside their control. When it comes to receiving an inheritance from God and knowing that we haven’t performed for or worked to gain such an inheritance, our first response should be humble thanks to God.

### The Surety Of Our Inheritance (v.4)

As we think more about the inheritance we may have some concerns. After all, it’s not all that unusual for one person to work very hard and amass considerable wealth only for her or his kids to squander it, or for there to be an economic crash, or for precious items to be stolen, or the list can go on. It is in contrast to the sometimes tenuous and vulnerable nature of an earthly inheritance that our inheritance from God is now described.

We’re told that we come “into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you.” Peter uses a number of negatives to give the idea of how secure our inheritance is: “never perish, spoil or fade.” These words have their own unique emphasis but add-up to a strong image.

Earthly goods perish over time. Items wear out and require considerable effort to keep them still useable. In the culture of Peter's time sandals wore out, crockery broke and clothes tore, etc. Our inheritance from our Father will never perish.

Even if something doesn't wear out, it can be spoiled by the actions of us or someone else. Why is it that you can never drop anything in your house for years but within a month of getting new carpet red wine, curry and tomato soup will all be dropped?!

Although Peter's readers were Gentiles it appears that they had some idea of Yahweh's dealing with the Israelites and so they likely knew that the descendants of Abraham were also promised an inheritance, being the land of Canaan. However, the Old Testament records that the Israelites spoiled the land through their idolatry and sinful behaviour which included child sacrifice. In contrast to that inheritance which was spoilt, we're promised an inheritance which will never spoil by our actions or the actions of anyone else.

Finally, items in our world simply fade. When we were growing up, my sister cared about fashion whereas I didn't. My sister would have a great haircut and amazing tops whereas I was happy with a t-shirt and shorts or a polo shirt and shorts. Now, it doesn't bother me to look at those photos but for my sister ... well, it's another story. What was quite fashionable in the 80s has faded! Some things which we inherit may simply fade in their value or in our appreciation of them. In contrast, our inheritance from God will always be beautiful and cherished to behold.

And incase we still fear that someone may steal this valuable inheritance we're told, "This inheritance is kept in heaven for you." While robbers may take something from our house we're assured here that our inheritance from God is being kept in a secure location and it is being kept there for us. No digital hacker is going to impersonate us and arrange for a transfer of our inheritance into their name. The security of heaven is less to do with a particular location and more to do with what characterises that location. Heaven is God's dwelling place and so it is God who guarantees the security of our inheritance.

## The Surety Of Us (v.5)

However, there may be one remaining concern. What about us? Will we be able to receive our inheritance? We know that we become God's children by virtue of God's mercy and not because of anything we've done but what if we screw up in some really bad way? What if we're weak and fail? Would that be enough for us to miss out?

Peter next says, "This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time." We are shielded by God's power. The image here is of us being in a military fort where God himself acts as a shield against any attacks. This protection will continue until we receive the fulness of the inheritance which is promised to us which is the complete experience of salvation which we now have a foretaste of through becoming part of God's family.

## Conclusion

This certainty and assurance was so important for Peter's readers to hear because it was quite contrary to their current circumstances of suffering. No, we're not suffering in the same way that Peter's readers were experiencing but it's still relevant to us and especially when we struggle with the fragility of this world and of our lives.

Yes, we should work to address environmental issues as well as, economic and health concerns in this world, but we should never forget that everything in their world will fade away and we have a greater and more certain hope before us.

As we think about this hope and this inheritance we should indeed rejoice but also be prompted to great humility because it is God who rescues us, guarantees our inheritance and secure us.

Let us respond by singing praise to God because of the assurance that he has the Whole World In His Hands.