

1 Peter 1:1-13

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[0 : 00] Of the Bibles, page 1219. And I'm going to read from chapter 1, verse 3. To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold, that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you, in the things that have now been announced to you, through those who preached the good news to you, by the Holy Spirit and sent from heaven.

[2 : 06] That's sent from heaven. Things into which angels long to look. Well let's pray together shortly, shall we, before we look at this. Our dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time now that we can meet together and stop in the midst of busyness of this day.

And we pray that you would give us a sense of the true value of all that you give us through the Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray in his name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. What would you do with a spare 50 million pounds? Imagine a day, just fantasise for a second, that somehow, in some way, you came into a huge fortune and you had that kind of money. How would you spend it? How would you enjoy it? 50 million. Just think of it for a second. But you know, for a mother and a son from Middlesex, this was a fantasy that became reality.

The story goes that they were doing a clear out of their inheritance in the attic of their late parents and most of it was worthless junk.

[3 : 18] But then they found a vase boxed up, covered in dust. They put it to one side for a while, but eventually they took it to the auctioneers, Bainbridge's, who valued it at between 800,000 and 1 million pounds.

It was a rare Chinese vase from the Qianlong dynasty. It was a masterpiece. No one expected, though, that the bidding would increase so fast.

And within half an hour, the value was going up in 1 million pound increments. And the total at the end was 53,105,000, including VAT.

The ultimate cash in the attic. At one point during the auction, the mother fainted at around the 40 million pound mark. I don't think I would make it that far, would you?

She couldn't believe how much it was worth. How would you spend 50 million quid? You wouldn't know what to do with it, would you? What an amazing find. What a fortune. But you know, actually, if you'd have taken the Apostle Peter, the writer of this letter that we're looking at, to that auction room, as the hammer went down at 53 million, if he'd have been there at that point, he would have shrugged his shoulders and said, it's not enough.

[4 : 42] It's not enough. Is that it? Is that all you've got? The Apostle Peter, he's got an upside down understanding of the value of things.

Now he writes to a group of Christian believers, and we thought about them last week. An insignificant little group of people spread out on the edges of the Roman Empire, dotted around the

elect exiles, he calls them in verse 1.

They're a group of Gentiles, so non-Jews, who are suffering in the world because of their Christian faith. They're hated by the world. And you know, if people really knew everything that Christians believed, if people really knew what you believed, then someone will hate you, won't they?

He calls them exiles, strangers, foreigners. So how are they going to deal with that, living in a world that hates them? It's a letter to tell them who they are, how they are to live and what they're to do as followers of Jesus.

And it's going to be hard. In the first third of the book, he's got to remind them who they are as God's chosen people. You've got a new identity.

[6 : 00] You're born again into a new family. Do you remember we saw that last week, didn't we? And you know, when you're sure of your new identity, things could get hard, couldn't they?

So just think about the Second World War again, the French resistance. Those people who were so sure of their identity in the French resistance, they had to stick to it, didn't they?

They had to resist because they were sure of their identity. It's hard to know your identity as one of God's people. But, Peter says, you've come into riches.

You've come into an absolute fortune. You've got an inheritance as God's people of surpassing value. The family riches, the cash in the attic.

So what is this new inheritance that he talks about? He says to them in this passage, you have got something so valuable here.

[7 : 02] So have a look at some verses with me. Have a look at verse 4 in chapter 1 and 5. And just notice how he speaks to them directly. He says, it's an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

Verse 9, obtaining the salvation of your souls. Verse 10, concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, searched and inquired carefully.

And look at verse 13. Set your hope on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So he makes it personal, doesn't he?

What belongs to you, he says, is an inheritance of salvation. Salvation of grace. Grace is the most valuable thing you've got.

The undeserved, the sumptuous, the rich, the ridiculous kindness of God. His grace, which he has brought to you in this salvation.

[8 : 27] That's the inheritance. It's going to be hard, but they have struck gold. Well, actually, it's better than gold, Peter says. It's worth a fortune.

It's a masterpiece. He wants them to shrug their shoulders. He wants you to shrug your shoulders at anything the world can offer you, or anything the world throws at you, and say, it's not enough. It's just not enough to match this inheritance that I have in Jesus. You know, I've been reading this book this week. It's called War and Grace.

It's a really good book, actually. If you want to borrow that afterwards, I'd be really happy to lend it to you. It's a collection of stories of how the grace of God has touched people during wartime by Don Stevens.

And I was drawn to the last chapter, which tells the story of Henry Garrick, who was a Lutheran minister from America. For most of his ministry, he'd been involved with serious offenders in prison.

[9 : 34] But after D-Day, he was called to the continent to be the U.S. Army chaplain. And he was there to care for the flood of sick and wounded soldiers who'd been brought back from the front lines.

He'd seen the brutality of war firsthand. And just as the war was over, he received news that all three of his sons had been seriously wounded in battle.

But after the war, he was called to Nuremberg to be the chaplain to the top Nazi war criminals. The prisoners that he would visit included Hermann Göring, Alfred Rosenberg and Fritz Salkel.

One cell that he visited housed Joachim von Ribbentrop, who was a foreign minister to Adolf Hitler at the time. And he was famous for shouting, Heil Hitler!

He was a foreign minister to King George VI on a state visit to England. But as Garrick met with Ribbentrop, he began to change. He became more and more sorry about all that he'd done.

[10 : 44] He became more and more penitent. And more and more eager to turn from the past. Now, Reverend Garrick repeatedly insisted that after years of experience, he knew the difference

between a phony, 11th hour kind of repentance and real faith.

And eventually, he gave von Ribbentrop communion in the prison chapel. After the verdict was given, Ribbentrop, among others, were to face the death penalty.

But walking up the steps to his execution, he was asked for his last words. To which he said, I now place all my confidence in the Lamb, who made atonement for my sins.

May God have mercy on my soul. And then he turned to Garrick, the minister, and he said, I'll see you again. How could he do it?

How could he face the man who'd been responsible for the deaths of so many? For the suffering of his own sons? How could he do it?

[11:54] How could he offer them love and hope? How could he do that? Well, because Minister Garrick knew about grace. The grace of God in Christ Jesus.

The grace that says to the thief next to him on the cross, Today you will be with me in paradise. Even after all you've done. The grace that says in Romans, When we were still enemies of God, Christ died for the ungodly.

The grace that's free for anybody, but it's absolutely priceless. It's almost unbelievable, isn't it, when you hear that story. It kind of makes you stop and it thinks, No, no, this grace is too radical.

Surely this can't be right. The grace of Jesus, it willingly pays the price for all the filth of people like Ribbentrop. And for you, and for me.

The grace of salvation from a lifetime of guilt and regret. Where sin abounds, Paul says, Grace abounds all the more for those who trust in him.

[13:04] Now it's not a cheap grace, is it? It's not a let off. It was paid for in full at the cross. It's a masterpiece of immense value.

Now in the time we've got left, I want to see three things about this grace really quickly from this passage, about this inheritance. First off, you see, it's an inheritance of grace that you can't see yet. It's hidden. You can't see it yet. It's invisible. I don't know if you've seen in the news this week that amazing story about a guy who's dreamt to dream in India of some secret gold hidden underground in a town in northern India.

It's true. He's dreamt the location and the amount, 1,000 tonnes of gold buried under an ancient monument. And they're taking it seriously.

If you go on the website, there's a huge excavation project in process. No one has actually seen the gold yet, have they? It's hidden underground. But just because it's hidden does not mean that it's not there.

[14:15] I mean, what if it is? What if one day this week a JCB moves a bit of rock and there is a glimmer in the darkness, it would be a massive discovery, wouldn't it? All this time a treasure hidden right under their feet.

So the full value of this salvation, Peter, says of grace at the moment is hidden to you. But it doesn't mean it's not there.

Verse 5, it's ready to be revealed at the last time. Verse 13, again, the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

This salvation, the true value of it, is hidden for now. But it will be revealed when Jesus returns. At the moment, it's a bit like cash in the attic.

It's hidden. But it will glimmer more brightly than gold when Jesus appears. You'll be rich, Peter says. You haven't got it all now.

[15:19] It's still to come. What we see now, Peter says, is suffering, isn't it? That's what we experience and see now. Verse 6, stay for a little while.

If necessary, you can grieve by various trials. What you do see now is difficulty and rejection.

But that's only for a while. And it's difficulty that will result, he says, in glory and honour when Jesus returns. So, you see, what you experience now, he says, is suffering in the world.

That's what it looks like to be a Christian. But your inheritance is hidden. And one day, it will be revealed. So, whatever you've got in this life, it is never going to be good enough.

Because you haven't seen the best that this salvation will bring to you. Imagine your perfect day. If you could design a day that would be your perfect day, what would you have for breakfast, where would you go, and all the rest of it.

[16:28] Your perfect day. If you could arrange your day like that, whatever you choose, it will always be imperfect before Jesus returns.

The best is yet to come. It's an unseen inheritance. It's invisible. So that's the first thing. Second, second though, what you have is a salvation that the prophets and the angels long to know about. And see, it's desirable. The prophets and the angels long to know about it. Have a look at the end of the passage in verse 10 to 12 there. And why don't I just read that again really quickly.

Verse 10 to 12, concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven things into which angels long to look.

[17:49] Now, that is a slightly complex section there, isn't it? As we read through that, it's quite hard to keep up with that. Let me just say that in a way he is basically saying that the story of the Bible has all been building up towards you my readers.

The whole of the Bible has been leading up to the moment when you would hear the message as the Old Testament prophets preached. Their preaching wasn't meant for themselves but for you much later to help you understand what Jesus came to do.

That Jesus is the Christ and through him we get salvation. So you see the prophets they inquired they longed to know the details but they only knew the basics and it's us who now know about Jesus the Christ.

The prophets were preaching not for themselves but to serve us. It was all leading up to us. They were desperate to know who the Christ was going to be and when it would all happen.

The prophets are jealous of what we have now this afternoon because we do know about Jesus. We know the specifics.

[19:16] So even though it's an unseen salvation we do see more now than anybody has ever seen. The prophets would long to be sat where you are right now looking at this passage.

even the angels surrounded in glory he says doesn't he in verse 12 peer down and long to know they long to see what we have in this salvation.

You and your little Christian group in Rome or in the Roman Empire you are what it's all been leading up towards.

This salvation message has found you and now the angels watch you in amazement. They watch you at work in the council or at church or at home and they stare and they look and they think this is just too radical this grace that has been poured out this is rich this is ridiculous grace so at the moment it's invisible but it's desirable the prophets long to know it the angels look in amazement but third and last really quick point it's an inheritance that is kept for us and we're kept for it it is kept for us and we're kept for it now throughout this chapter you'll see scattered through there are lots of words about how long things last durability so verse four an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you then you've got verse five haven't you you who by God's power are being guarded kept through faith for a salvation then have a look at verse 18 just over the page knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers not with perishable things such as silver and gold but the precious blood of

Christ and then verse 23 as well a bit further down since you've been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God it is that both you and your future salvation are imperishable they will last forever and ever and ever all good things must not now come to an end you will never lose this salvation once you have it it can never be taken from you it's kept for you and you're kept for it no one can steal it from you it can't be fritted away like an earthly inheritance before you can claim it you can't lose it like you can lose a job or your health it's kept for you and you're kept for it and you will see you will be kept until that day when there'll soon be a glimmer in the darkness even of death not even the grave can take it away from you it can't even tarnish it undefiled unfading imperishable salvation kept for you you kept for it so he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose as

[22:58] Jim Elliot said he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep in this world to gain what he can never lose some people are so poor aren't they in this world some people are so poor that all they've got is gold and silver whatever riches you've got it is just not enough in Peter's mind it's not enough but you Peter says have an inheritance of lasting value of grace rich ridiculous radical grace a masterpiece of salvation it's invisible but it will be revealed when Jesus returns it's desirable the angels long to see what it's all about and it's durable it's kept for you and you're kept for it well let's

finish with a prayer shall we