

# The Nature of Salvation

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[ 0 : 00 ] The title of my sermon this morning is The Nature of Salvation.

! So I invite you to turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 1. I want to read verses 3 through 5. 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 3 through 5.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that does not fade away reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Let's pray together, please. Father, we come this morning with thankfulness in our hearts. We are truly blessed to be able to gather together this morning to look to your holy word, to lift our voices in praise and song.

Father, you have given us a country that affords us the freedom to do that, and for that we are thankful. But Father, most of all, we are thankful for our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us.

[ 1 : 33 ] And this morning as we focus on this portion of your word, I pray that our attention would be directed toward him and the great sacrifice that he made in our behalf.

Father, I ask that you would remove all distractions. I ask that you would allow us to focus our full attention on the words that you have written. Father, I ask you would give me the clarity of thought, the strength of voice, the things that I need to be able to clearly communicate and explain what you have written for our benefit.

I do pray and ask all of this in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen. I read a story not too long ago. Perhaps some of you have heard it.

I would call it a fable. It's about a scorpion who was a very poor swimmer, and so he came to a river and needed to get across, and there was a frog there, and he asked the frog to give him a ride across the river.

Ah, said the frog, if I allow you to get on my back and to carry you across the river, you'll sting me and we'll both drown. Oh, no, said the frog or the scorpion.

[ 2 : 47 ] He said, if I were to sting you, why, in fact, you would drown, but I would go down with you. And certainly you can see there is no logic at all in that.

So the frog said, well, you're right. Hop on. I'll take you across the river. And so the scorpion climbed aboard, and sure enough, halfway across the river, he gave that frog a very mighty sting. And as they both began sinking into the water, the frog said to the scorpion, why did you do it? It's just not logical that you would do it.

The scorpion said, logic has nothing to do with it. It's just my nature. Folks, so it is with salvation. You see, it has nothing to do with logic, because it's not logical that God would give his only begotten son to die in the place of sinners.

[ 3 : 49 ] I can tell you, I certainly would not give one of my children to die for a criminal. I doubt that you would do that either. In fact, the apostle Paul, writing in Romans 5, 7, 5, verses 7 and 8, alluded to this.

He said that it is scarce that someone will die for a righteous person. And yet, God commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

So realizing, it is not logical, but it is according to the very nature of God, who desires redemption for humanity, that Peter explains to us in our text, the very nature of salvation.

And the first thing that Peter tells us about our salvation, he tells us that salvation is not based on our own merits. Look, if you will, at verse 3.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his, that is God's, abundant mercy has begotten us again.

[ 5 : 09 ] Now folks, begotten us again is just another way of saying that we are born again. And I want you to notice that this occurs according to God's abundant mercy.

Now if there's one thing in the whole of Christendom that most evangelical denominations and non-denominations can agree on, it is that one must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. In John chapter 3, Jesus told Nicodemus, you must be born again. Jesus said it, we believe it, and certainly that settles it.

But there's just one small problem. You see, we do not all agree on the method for being born again.

And you see, this disagreement occurs because it's one thing to know that we must be born again, but it's quite another thing to know how to be born again.

[ 6 : 15 ] There's an example of this point. We all know that airplanes can fly. We've seen them fly. Some of us have ridden on them. So if I ask the question, do airplanes fly?

Well, the obvious answer to that is yes. But if I ask the question, how do airplanes fly? I'm sure fewer of us would be able to answer that question because you see, knowing how they fly is far different from knowing that they fly.

And likewise, knowing that one must be born again does not guarantee knowing how to be born again. So consequently, some people would say that we are born again through water baptism. Other people say that, well, we must live a good life. We must remain sinless. Many think that just simply asking for forgiveness will get the job done.

However, you see, the problem with each of these methods is that they base salvation, that is being born again, on something that people do. Well, Peter says clearly in verse 3 that being born again is according to his, that is God's, abundant mercy.

[ 7 : 39 ] That word mercy that Peter uses, it's from a Greek word that means compassion. And it also carries the idea of giving money to a beggar on the streets.

Now, we know that one does not give money to a beggar on the streets out of compulsion. If you give money to a beggar, you do it out of compassion. And what that means is that when you give money to a beggar on the streets, you don't do it because you believe that he has earned it or that he deserves it or that he's done something for it.

You give it out of mercy, out of grace. And so it is with being born again. Folks, we're not born again because we deserve it.

We're not born again because we've earned it. It is based solely on God's abundant mercy, his grace. However, there is a requirement for receiving the new birth.

That requirement is faith. You see, faith is the vehicle that God chose to deliver his mercy to mankind. And so our responsibility in being born again is not to work for our salvation.

[ 9 : 03 ] It is to believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose from the grave. And folks, it is this simple act of faith and this alone whereby you must be born again.

Now to some people, it may seem logical to think that one can earn his or her salvation. But according to Peter, it's against the very nature of God who desires to give salvation to all who depend on the sacrifice for sins that God provided.

You see, Peter is telling us that the very nature of salvation demands that we be born again according to the abundant mercy of God, not according to our own merits.

And Peter goes on in verse 3 to tell us that we are born into a living hope. You know, we've all heard it said perhaps often that where there is life, there is hope.

And truly, life itself does bring hope. And Peter is telling us that the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the life of our hope.

[ 10 : 33 ] Or expressed another way, because Jesus lives, we will live also. And folks, so important is the resurrection to all that we believe.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15, 14, if Christ be not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain or baseless.

You see, it is certain without the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would have no salvation. However, it is just as certain that because He is alive, our hope is alive.

But just exactly what does Peter mean when he uses that word hope? Does he mean wishful thinking?

Some describe hope that way. Or does hope as he uses it here have a much deeper meaning? Suppose with me, if you will, that I have two people here beside me.

[ 11 : 43 ] On my right hand is John Doe. On my left hand is Joe What's-His-Name. Now, so I know that you're not asleep yet and your imaginations are working, just say hello to my friends, will you?

All right, thank you. Now, both of these men are gainfully employed and both have the hope of someday owning their own business.

And in anticipation of this hope, old Joe what's-His-Name takes 20% of his weekly paycheck and he goes to the racetrack where he wagers on the horses.

You see, he has the hope, he is convinced that someday he will win the big jackpot and have enough money to start his own business.

On the other hand, our friend John Doe puts 20% of his money in the bank every week. he puts it in a savings account so it can draw a little interest and continue to grow.

[ 12 : 51 ] Now, it can be said that each of these men has the hope of owning his own business.

Well, you see, what Joe what's-His-Name really has is wishful thinking while John Doe has real hope.

That is, a reasonable expectation backed by a degree of confidence. You see, when Peter says that we have a living hope, he is saying that we have an expectation that is alive.

It is backed by confidence because our Lord Jesus Christ is alive. Folks, this hope is not wishful thinking. Rather, it's like John Doe's money in the bank.

He can reasonably count on it to be there when he needs it. You see, the logic of the world says that Christian hope is wishful thinking. But the nature of salvation says our hope is a very reasonable expectation.

And it's made alive because our Lord Jesus Christ is alive. love. Third thing that Peter says about salvation, he says that salvation is an inheritance.

[ 14 : 16 ] Look at verse 4, please. He writes, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

I think it's interesting that Peter would call salvation an inheritance because I think the use of that word gives us a tremendous insight into our salvation.

Now, I'm sure you know that inheritance and inheritance is the result of a relationship with someone. And conversely, those who have no relationship with someone receive no inheritance from that person.

So it is with salvation. Because it is an inheritance, those who have no relationship with God have no salvation.

Galatians 3.26 says this, for you are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. You see, to be a child of God, to have a relationship with God, to have an inheritance from God, to have salvation, a person must have faith in Jesus Christ.

[ 15 : 41 ] And to those who have this relationship established by faith in Jesus, Jesus says in John 14, 2, in my father's house are many mansions.

And he goes on to say, I go to prepare a place for you. Folks, that's an inheritance. Clearly, clearly, clearly, our Lord Jesus Christ has prepared an inheritance for everyone who is born again.

But not only does Peter tell us in verse 4 that we have an inheritance, he tells us the exact kind of inheritance inheritance that it is.

And the first thing he says is that it is incorruptible. As I mentioned earlier, Annie and I are native Okies.

Before I was called to Herman, Missouri, we lived on a farm in southern Osage County where we raised our daughters. And we had barns and outbuildings and that sort of thing.

[ 16 : 49 ] And people who would come to visit would sometimes go out with me in the barn or whatever. And many of them would comment on all the merchandise that I had stored in those buildings.

I have to admit, many of them called it junk. But I called it merchandise. And occasionally, not too often, but occasionally, I got the spring cleaning bug and I would go out and thin some of my less desirable merchandise.

so I could make room for a new shipment. You know how it works. And so it was on one of these occasions that I came across a bicycle that Annie and I had bought for our youngest daughter several years before.

And that day as I looked at it, it brought back a flood of memories. I remember how much she had wanted that bicycle and how proud she was of that bicycle.

my mind could see her as she rode down the gravel road to her neighbor's farm. She would ride to her grandparents down to the creek.

[ 18 : 03 ] Wherever she wanted to go, she rode that bicycle. And I remember that at that time in her life, that bicycle was her most prized possession.

It was new. It was shining. It was dependable. It was but that day when I found it in the barn, both tires were flat and rotting.

The shiny, once shining chrome wheels and spokes and handlebars were rusted. The paint was faded and chipping.

The seat was split. Corruption had destroyed its usefulness. You see, unlike my daughter's bicycle, Peter is saying that our salvation, our inheritance, will never rust, it will never rot away, it will never be destroyed, because it is incorruptible.

Peter says next that our inheritance is undefiled. for a contrasting idea of what Peter is talking about when he uses that word undefiled.

[ 19 : 23 ] I think one need only turn on the television set, watch the news programs, go to a movie. You see, it seems that our society is defiled in practically every area.

Many of our business leaders, our government leaders, our families, and I'm sad to say even many of our church leaders have given up their integrity through the compromise and defilement of sin.

And today, because many, many, many, many, many, let me repeat that, many people have a greater commitment to themselves than to God, family, or country.

Everywhere we look, Satan has managed to defile that which is good. But I want you to know, Peter says, our inheritance is undefiled.

Folks, it is just as pure today as it was when our Lord Jesus Christ purchased it for us at Calvary. And it will be just as pure tomorrow and forever.

[ 20 : 34 ] You see, as Christians, we look forward to an eternity free from the defilement of sin. then Peter says that our inheritance does not fade away.

I'm sure you know to fade is to disappear slowly. It's to die gradually. And the truth is that everything in this earth fades.

People fade, things fade, ideas fade, nothing on this earth is permanent. We must all fade as the flower and wither as the grass.

But folks, in the midst of all this, Peter tells us that our inheritance will never, never, never fade away.

I think perhaps John Newton caught a glimpse of what Peter meant. In his famous hymn, he wrote these words, when we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days of seeing God's breath that when we first begun.

[ 22 : 10 ] Be it ten thousand times ten thousand times ten thousand years, heaven will shine brightly and our inheritance will never fade away.

Fourth thing he tells us about our inheritance, it's reserved in heaven. many years ago, I was somewhat younger, obviously.

I think the year was about 1962, early 60s, I don't remember the year exactly, I do remember it was the year that the University of Arkansas won the NCAA football championship.

And on this particular Saturday morning, some of us met at the office, the place where I worked, I was serving an apprenticeship at that time.

And my employer had just recently earned his pilot's license, so that morning they all came up with the bright idea that they would fly to Fayetteville to see the Razorbacks play.

[ 23 : 18 ] Now, understand they had no tickets, but those four guys were confident that they could gain admission to the game. They figured they could buy tickets from scalpers or whatever.

However, when they arrived at the stadium in Fayetteville, it was a complete sellout and there were people lined up outside the stadium just listening. And so when no tickets were available, they went up to the gate and they tried to bribe the ticket taker.

And he would have none of it. So next they tried to buy their way into the employee entrance. They would have none of it. Third, they tried climbing the fence, but a policeman had been watching them and he would have none of that either.

Now, I think sitting here this morning, we understand that because they had no tickets, they had no reservations. And because they had no reservation, they couldn't get into the stadium.

And I think most of us would agree this morning it was quite foolish to show up at that ball game to fly several hundred miles without a ticket. Because if you don't have a ticket, all the seats are reserved for those who have tickets and without a ticket, you don't get in the stadium.

[ 24 : 45 ] Now, as obvious as this is, would you believe that there are people who think they will show up at heaven's door someday and buy a ticket at that time.

Or maybe they think that God will just let them in heaven without a reservation. Maybe because they think they deserve it. Because they've been pretty good people.

Maybe because they've been baptized. Folks, the only way to have an inheritance reserved in heaven is to believe that Jesus Christ died in your place for your sins and rose from the dead.

The fourth thing that Peter says about the nature of salvation is those who are born again are kept by the power of God. Who are kept by the power of God through faith and to salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Verse 5. I think it's interesting that that word kept comes from a Greek military term. It means to surround or to fortify.

[ 26 : 06 ] And so Peter is telling us that when we are born again God builds a fortress around us with his own power. therefore our security is not based on our own merits or our own power but it's clearly based on the power of God.

Leonard Carter was my friend and mentor. Leonard served as the treasurer of the Tulsa Association for something like 42 years. He once told me a story about taking his family to the Royal Gorge in Colorado.

If you've been to that bridge you know that it is a I think it was and may still be the highest suspension bridge in the world I think is their claim. But at any rate you know if you've been there it's across this gorge it's about a mile above the river below.

But what recent visitors may not know about that bridge is that it was originally built with no guard rails and no barriers between the suspension cables.

When I was a kid we went there and it was literally open between those cables that come down to hold the bridge up. Well anyway Leonard said that he and his family were walking across that bridge and they like most everybody that walked across it in those days was well to the center.

[ 27 : 33 ] You just stayed as close to the middle of that bridge as you could get because you could feel it swaying and it seems like the wind is always blowing there. And he says as they walked across it he suddenly sensed that their youngest daughter wasn't following them and he said he looked around and immediately his heart was in his throat because his daughter was standing at the edge of that bridge with her toes against it looking over the edge.

Leonard said that he was afraid that if he said anything it would startle her and she would fall off the edge. And so he said his heart raised his hands began to sweat and he slowly moved toward the edge of that bridge and his daughter and he said he got up to the side of her and reached down and with his big daddy hand he grabbed her little hand and pulled her back from the edge of that bridge. Folks it was not that little girl's hand holding on to her daddy. that provided her security. It was daddy's big old hand holding her little hand that provided the security.

That's how it is with Christians. Folks we are not kept by our own power to hang on to God. But we are kept by his power.

It is not our hold on him that provides our security. folks it's his hold on us that provides our security.

[ 29 : 14 ] It's his hold on us that keeps us secure. That's why Peter writes that we are kept by the power of God.

God's Well in this passage Peter tells us that salvation is a living hope. It's an inheritance that's incorruptible.

It's undefiled. It's unfading. It's reserved in heaven. And then he says we are kept safe and secure by the power of God.

such is the nature of the salvation that comes by grace through faith in the substitutionary death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

the only way to have this salvation is to believe that Jesus died in your place to take your punishment that he rose from the grave to give everlasting life to all who trust him.

[ 30 : 33 ] . Thank you.