



TIME OF GRACE®

Evolution of Faith: From Fear to Peace

Study Notes

Summary

Peter praises God for the riches of the inheritance of God's kids, riches that can't fade, riches that are kept in heaven and shielded by God's power. When we were reborn into God's family, we became filthy rich with spiritual blessings.

- **1 Peter 1:3,4a:** 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.
- God is guarding your _____.
- **1 Peter 1:4b,5:** 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.
- God is guarding _____.
- **John 10:27-29:** My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

Points to Ponder

1. Which "ditch" is more of a spiritual danger for your faith: Believing that you could never fall away from faith even if you lived in sin? Or believing that you might fall away from faith even if you are fighting against sin?
2. Read Ephesians 1:3-14 (yes, we encouraged you to read this last week too!). How do verses 13 and 14 support Peter's point that God will guard and protect his chosen people?

3. Challenge: Memorize 1 Peter 1:3-9.

Homework for Next Week

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9.

"Little kingdom living is an endless search for earthly treasure and unending focus on personal need. Grace calls you to a bigger kingdom."

—Paul Tripp

Time of Grace Ministry
Evolution of Faith: From Fear to Peace
1Peter 1: 3-9
November 15, 2020

Pastor Mike Novotny

Whether it's your heart or the peer pressure of this broken world or the spiritual enemies that fight against our faith, what happens if something gets in between you and the promise of heaven?

There were people who went to church and they prayed the prayers and they read their Bibles at home and then one day, things changed. There were kids who sat in these same chairs, they went to these same churches, and they said they believed in Jesus and they fought against sin until one day things changed. Do you ever wonder if your story might be the next story just like that?

It's scary to think about when you think about the kids growing up in church with the people who are following Jesus that one day something might happen to change their mind. Have you ever thought about that? Could that happen to you? Could your devotion to Jesus be kind of train wrecked by job opportunity and you know you're not going to take forever off of Sunday church but it's just one week, that turns into two, which is one month that turns into two, and then five years down the road you're just not as close to Jesus as you were. Is it possible you could fall in love with someone who maybe isn't really into God or the Bible or Christianity? And they say they're fine, they're not going to oppose you, but you find out really quickly when there's someone wanting you to stay home on those long weekends when you kind of want to it's pretty easy than to get out the door and to learn about God's love. Is it possible one of my children could fall in love with someone who's not passionate about Jesus and that man would plant a seed of doubt that would grow into something more and make one of my girls question what she grew up in my home believing?

Or do you ever read the headlines and just wonder what's going to happen to us or to the next generation of Christians? And you kind of notice the trends and you track what's happening in our culture. You see the statistics of the average size of the average Christian family compared to those of other religions and you wonder 10 years from now, 50 years from now, what's going to happen to Christianity in the world? What kind of culture and world will my grandchildren grow up in?

Or maybe your fear isn't from something out there; maybe it's more something in here. And it's not all that unreasonable to think that, you know, maybe this sin you've been fighting and you battle, this desire that's in your heart and it's just war every single day, what happens if you just get sick of fighting and you go back to this desire, to the passion, to the smooth wide road that's traveled by so many. What happens if sin gets the best of you? What happens if the devil doubles down on his temptation and he knows what works and he knows what temptations to use and he knows what to put on the hook; the bait that always makes you bite. What happens if he

gets you? If it's your heart or the peer pressure of this broken world or the spiritual enemies that fight against our faith; what happens if something gets in between you and the promise of heaven?

The Bible has a pretty interesting answer to that question; an answer that some people think is actually contradictory. On the one hand, if you would read through the Bible, you would find this whole list of passages that would say to certain people, "You should be afraid." In fact, there are whole books in the Bible - like the book of Hebrews, the book of Galatians, the book of 1 John - that are written to people who just weren't taking their behavior or their beliefs very seriously. They were thinking, "Whatever. I'm going to be fine. I believe in God. It's not a big deal." And they went down a path, the Bible would say very sternly, but in a deep conviction of love, "Be careful." If you think you're standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. If you think nothing can happen to your faith, be careful because it just might. To a person who's not fighting sin, who's taking what they believe lightly as if all beliefs are equal, the Bible would have a really stern warning that apart from Jesus, one cannot make it to the paradise that we call heaven.

And then there are all these other passages; these passages that seem to say just the opposite. The passage is written to people who are fighting against their sin and do want to try to keep the commandments and maybe, just for the sake of simplicity today, I'm going to speak to you like you're one of those people. A person who cares about the will of God. A person who hates sinning. A person who as much as they're struggling, doesn't want to turn their back on Jesus but wants to follow him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Because if you're one of those people, the Bible has the most amazing promise; a promise that will just obliterate your fear and take away your anxiety and rid you of all of your worry and leave you instead with this deep sense of peace that goes beyond understanding.

And so, you find in passages throughout the Bible - but specifically in a passage I want to share with you today - that Jesus' friend Peter preached. Peter had friends that were being persecuted, their faith was under attack, and he wanted to write them a letter to give them a deep sense of peace and comfort in this broken world. But before I show you Peter's words, I need to tell you what's standing up here in front of me. An old preacher once told me, "If you want to keep people awake during church, just put something under a sheet and they won't fall asleep until you pull the sheet off." So I'm going to take the chance now because Peter is about to describe something like this: A treasure.

Can you imagine if inside this treasure chest was a treasure that'd make you so happy that nothing would ever make you sad again? Something if you just got your hands on it, if you could just take a peek and get a glimpse of it, you would be so elated and so overwhelmed with joy that no matter how your body was feeling or how functional your family was, you would have this inexpressible joy and a peace that goes beyond understanding. If you could just get to this treasure, life would never be the same.

But do you know the problem with treasure chests? If you've seen a movie or two, you know that treasure can get taken. That's why we watch, right? It's the tension, the uncertainty, the anxiety, the fear: Is the treasure going to stay? Or will the treasure get taken?

Which is why the Bible would make a really bad movie because Peter's going to tell us that there is a treasure for the people of God; for those who follow Jesus. But despite all the threats and all the danger, it can't be touched. In Peter's movie, the movie that we call the Christian life, there is no fear. There's no anxiety, there's no reason to worry. Instead, there's just this amazing reason to sleep like a baby because God is guarding our treasure.

So let me show you Peter's words here from 1 Peter 1. He starts the second longest sentence in the entire Bible with these words: "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." The point of Peter's sentence is to praise God. And why would we praise him? Well, he's given us new birth, which means we're born again into God's family. Into a living hope; that means an alive and well for sure future that can't be touched because Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning. And how here's the treasure: And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

Let's talk about the word "inheritance." Inheritance is generally something that parents pass down to their kids, right? It's normally something really valuable and in general, an inheritance is something really valuable that's not here quite yet. The kids have to wait until that inheritance gets into their hands. So when Peter's talking about the inheritance of those who are born again, those who are followers of Jesus, sons and daughters in God's family, what exactly is he talking about? What's the treasure, the inheritance that God the Father wants to give to you as his child? Something really good, really valuable, but something that's not here quite yet? And the answer is himself. To simply be with God is the inheritance of the people of God. Now you might call it heaven but the only reason heaven is any good is because God is there and you see his face. When Jesus comes back, it's called the new earth; this home of righteousness where we get to be with God and see his face forever and ever. This is the inheritance. This is the treasure for God's people. And I love the peace that comes with this treasure because Peter says it's an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

Now if you've ever done marital counseling with me, I've told you one of the 10 commandments of communication is that you should never say never and always avoid always. Right? It causes arguments between husbands and wives. Except, according to Peter, you can use the word "never" if it's "always" true. And Peter says it is. This treasure, the inheritance that God's people have, is something that can never perish, spoil, or fade. I love those three words. Peter's saying that God's presence and your face-to-face with him can never perish. You know, a briefcase full of a hundred dollar bills could perish in a fire. A one of a kind work of art could perish if it was ripped into pieces or thrown into a body of water. But if God is our inheritance and treasure and God is immortal, how could our inheritance perish? Who's going to kill God? What fire, what flood, what catastrophe could ever get into heaven, wrestle God to the match, choke him out, and leave him dead? Peter says it will never happen. God's eternal. He has no beginning and no end so God is a treasure that can't perish. Then he says it's an inheritance also that can never spoil. You know, God's not like a good bowl of guacamole, alright? It's really good and then it goes bad. You will never get into the presence of God and say, "Eh. You know, I don't know, the pastor kind of oversold it a little bit." You're going to freak out with such inexpressible joy when you see God face-to-face, it will never spoil. It will never go bad. And finally, Peter says, it will never fade.

You know the new car smell? If that new is your treasure, that fades. The best haircuts that you can get, the color, the highlights, they fade. The best things in life fade away except God. God can't. I love this thought about heaven that there will not be a moment for all eternity - when you look at the agenda of heaven, praise God - there will never be a moment when you say, "Again? Oh, man. Aren't we done with that already? We did that yesterday. Do you guys have Netflix here in heaven cause, I don't know, I'm kind of getting," - no, like seeing God face-to-face will be so beautiful and powerful and thrilling that there are these Christian songs that we sing that there are 10,000 reasons and even after 10,000 years, our praise will still be unending. And if you grow up singing that great Christian song, "Amazing Grace," you remember that line, "When we've been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun. We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun." After 10,000 years, God will be so beautiful and powerful and amazing to you, there's nothing that your heart will want to do except praise and worship his holy name. This is your treasure. Everything else is temporary. Everything else can be gone in a second. But your inheritance will never perish, spoil, or fade.

In other words, you're face-to-face with God is not like the Mona Lisa. You know one of the most famous works of art in all of human history? The beautiful Mona Lisa? Did you know that in 1911, the Mona Lisa got stolen. It was an Italian man named Vincenzo Peruggia, if my Italian is any good. He was a handyman and he actually built glass coverings for some of the priceless works of art at the Louvre, but Vincenzo had an idea. One day, as he was working, he slipped into a closet and he waited until everyone cleared out of the museum and then he snuck out under the cover of night, he grabbed Mona Lisa, he tucked it underneath his cloak, and he bolted for the door. Vincenzo grabbed the doorknob and just as he was about to escape, he found out that the door was locked. So he wiggled the handle - and I'm not making this up - the doorknob fell off of the door. And just then, there are footsteps behind him and who comes walking around the corner but the plumber. Except he doesn't know the Mona Lisa's under Vincenzo's cloak and so the friendly plumber, instead of calling security, he unlocks the door and lets Vincenzo go free. And for two years, the Mona Lisa's missing. For two years, the treasure wasn't enjoyed and experienced by the people who went to the Louvre. Until late 1913, this treasure was gone.

And Peter's saying your hope, your treasure, is nothing like that. There's no Vincenzo, there's no devil, there's no demon that can touch the presence of God because the presence of God is not kept in a museum or in a vault or in a chest. Now look what Peter says next in 1 Peter 1:4. He says, "This inheritance is kept in heaven for you." Your inheritance, the presence of God, is kept in heaven so who's going to get to heaven and take your inheritance? Like, who's going to build a ladder and get up to God? What demon or devil is going to like crawl through the ductwork and snatch Jesus off of his throne? Who can get into heaven and distract the angel security guards to get at the presence of God? And the simple answer is no one. Nothing. My inheritance can't be touched or taken because my real treasure, the face of God, is kept in heaven for me.

So if you're taking notes in your program today, here's Peter's first idea to move you from fear to faith: God is guarding your treasure. And unless someone can get past the presence of God, they can't touch your lasting treasure. But that doesn't end our fear, does it? Well, the truth is no one can ruin the treasure and no one can destroy it but people can ruin you. The truth is this

inheritance, this treasure, is kept in heaven but you're not in heaven. You're on earth. And maybe the demons can't build a ladder to get to the presence of God but they sure can attack you. This earth is often called the domain of the ruler of the kingdom of the air. Satan himself prowls in this world. Your sinful heart is here in this world. The sinful broken world is here in this world. So if that's the case, how can we ever actually have peace? You know, if in the movie the treasure was kept in a place where no one could get to it but the hero is still out in the streets being hunted and chased after, how can we not leave the edge of our seats? How could we not be afraid that something would happen to the hero, to us, before we got to the treasure?

And Peter knows that's good logic and that's why he doesn't stop writing his letter there. He continues with these words. He 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." It's not just the inheritance that's guarded and kept in heaven; it's you, who through faith, are shielded by God's power.

I love that picture; that God is like this powerful dad and he shields his beloved kids behind his legs. Thankfully, your Father in heaven is not some scrawny dude like me. He's like a beefy, Navy Seal, 17th degree mixed martial art champion and when some punk wants to touch his kid he says, "No, no, no. You stay back here," and he fights for us. I love that picture of God. He's not just waiting in heaven saying, "Hey! Hope you make it!" He's not just at the finish line hoping that you have the endurance to get there. Instead, he's right there. He's fighting with us and he's fighting for us and that's why we love him, isn't it? Because every time you get in contact with this good news, God is - he's fighting for you. Every time a friend prays for you or opens the Bible and encourages you with a text and a passage, God is fighting for you. Every time you come to church and you remember that you've been baptized and God put his name on you or you take communion and the pastor says, "Go in peace. Your sins have been forgiven," God is guarding you and protecting you. The only chance that the devil has to get to you is if you believe a lie that you're unlovable and unforgivable and Jesus could never save a person like you. But every time we come in contact with the gospel, God shields us by his mighty power.

I love those two little words. He says "through faith" we're shielded by God's power. It's not through our efforts, it's not through our improvements. It's not through, "Look how much better I'm getting! Look how my behavior is evolving!" Instead it's through simple faith that Jesus lived for me and Jesus died for me and he rose from the dead to declare to me that all of it is true.

And so this is Peter's beautiful two-fold message. If you're afraid you're not going to make it to heaven, what if sin gets the best of you, what if the devil pounces on you, what if the world influences you, what if it comes after my kids, your best friend, my family? Peter would say it's not just the fact that God is guarding your treasure. Second of all, Peter would say this: Don't forget that God is guarding you. And if the almighty God whose love cannot be stopped guards both the treasure and the one who's after it, what could possibly make us afraid? Jesus said, "My sheep," my people, "listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."

And you put your name in that passage and just watch what happens to your fear. Put your name in there. If I said, "Ryan listens to my voice." "I know Mary and she follows me." "I give William eternal life." "And Bob shall never perish." "No one will snatch Brooklyn out of my hand." "My Father, who has given Kim to me, is greater than all." "No one can snatch Lauren out of my Father's hand." When we put our name in these passages, it comes to life. Never. No one. My Father is greater than all. And what is he doing? He's holding his people, his flock, his sheep, in the palm of his loving hand.

So when you're anxious, when you're afraid, when you wonder if your sins are too much for God to protect you and save you and give you that treasure when you will see him face-to-face, just open to Jesus' words or this page in 1 Peter and remember that God is guarding you and he's guarding your treasure. Because friends, it's about to get really, really good for the people of God.

I want to go back to Peter's words. He said 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. Let me unpack that last little phrase that Peter uses: There is a salvation that is ready to be revealed. The word "salvation" or "be saved" in the Bible, just a simple definition, means to be rescued from danger. But it's also kind of a nuanced, complex idea because salvation in the Bible can be something that happened, that is happening, or that will happen. There's like a past, a present, and a future aspect of salvation. On the one hand, we could say that salvation happened in the past; Jesus saved me, past tense, when he died on the cross for my sins. Or every Christian could say in the present, "I am saved." I'm not in danger of going to hell. I'm not in danger of being separated from God. Jesus died for me and right here, right now, I'm one of God's saved people. But Peter here isn't talking about the past or the present. Did you catch his language? He's saying there's a salvation ready to be revealed. Like there is something coming, a rescue from the dangers we haven't escaped quite yet. And lots of you know exactly what that's about, right? Every day, we're in danger of sadness and grief and loss and death. Every day, our hearts are in danger of being criticized, ignored, rejected. People can be cruel to us, mean to us, abusive to us. There's all these dangers that we can't escape in this broken world, no matter how hard we pray. But Jesus says one day, very soon, in this last time, his salvation is ready to be revealed.

That makes me think of those home remodeling shows. Just a show of hands here - do any of you watch those home remodeling shows? Like, I don't even watch much TV but once you start one of those shows, is it humanly possible to stop? You know you hear the blueprints and you see the plans and the dreams and they give you like little snippets of how they knock down this wall to open up this living room but you have to watch to the end because in the end is the big reveal. And you know how people's faces look during the big reveal? When the old life they were used to is transformed, when they move the bus, the semi, when they pull back and there they see it in full view. What these people have been working on for so long, it's so close to being revealed, and once they see it there's this inexpressible joy that the cameras love to zoom in to catch every moment of it.

And essentially, that's the Christian life. I mean, you think it can be good in this life? Jesus says just wait. Just wait. There is a treasure and you are this close to opening it up and looking

inside. And once you see it, the angels are going to zoom in their iPhone 11 that they use in heaven, they're going to take a picture, and they're going to blow it up and post it on the wall because that is the face you will make for all eternity. And so for all of you who are worried about the struggle. For all of you who stay up at night wondering if your sins are too much for God to forgive. For all of you parents who are worried about your kids and your grandkids, what if something gets in the way of their faith? Take a deep breath. Turn your fear into peace because there's a God who's guarding your treasure, our treasure, and that same God is guarding you. And if you ever forget, just stop by my office. Cause there's a priceless work of art in my office that makes the Mona Lisa look like nothing. It's a 2012 creation made for Father's Day by the renowned American artist Brooklyn and Maya Novotny. Those are my two daughters, if you don't know. A few years ago, my daughters made me this incredible painting. Last week, my wife stopped by my office and she looked and she said, "Wow, that's really faded." She was right. After years of sitting in the sunlight, the bright colors that my little girls had painted had faded over time but the message, it hasn't faded one bit because they painted for their daddy this: "The Lord is the stronghold of my life."

My whole life is not sitting in some shack or bank account. My life is in a stronghold. My joy and my peace are in a mighty fortress and a strong tower and his name is the Lord and there's nothing on earth stronger than him. And the Lord is the stronghold of your life. So when you're afraid, open up to Psalm 27 or 1 Peter 1 or John 10 and you tell all the forces of hell that nothing can touch your treasure and nothing can touch you because God is guarding them both. That is how you turn fear into peace.

Let's pray.

Dear God, we thank you for a peace that goes beyond understanding. Every time we scroll through our social media feeds or open the paper, there are a thousand headlines that make us afraid because they forget about you and they tell things from an earthly point of view. But we have something so much better than that; we have a spiritual point of view in Christ. And so, I thank you, God, that we Christians have the opportunity to be different. When the world is consumed with anxiety, when it just sits in a pool of shame because of its sins, when it reads the headlines and doesn't even know what to do, we can be unique; a people who are set apart from this broken and uncertain world.

I thank you, God, that we don't have to do this by ourselves. You've given the Holy Spirit as a deposit, an inheritance, that's guaranteed to come. So please, keep your promise, God, and protect your church. For all those who are battling spiritual anxiety today, open their eyes to see what a loving father you are and what a great savior Jesus is. We pray all these things in his powerful name, Amen.