

Sermon Title: Your Perfect Inheritance
Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:4-5 (1 Peter #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-13-16

We sang of the Shepherd leading us. "The Good Shepherd" (Jn. 10:11, 14), "the Chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4), has led us into the Book of First Peter. How do we know that? Because that is what we are studying (Prov. 16:9).

We are opening this book because it is very obvious, in the world in which we live, how rapidly things are turning in a decidedly negative way, if you have a Christian worldview. And we wanted to visit this book for the riches that are here to help us live in an ever more hostile world (2 Tim. 3:13).

As we begin this book, Peter's first two or three sentences are an absolute *goldmine*. The nuggets are easy to find. Collecting them will make you rich in the resources that you need to live victoriously as a Christian in a hostile world.

In this text that we will finish exploring this morning—the first five verses—your spiritual past, present, and future are outlined.

Your past goes all the way back to "before the foundation of the world" when you were in the mind of God, and He "chose" you (Eph. 1:4; cf. 1 Pet. 1:1-2)—that is "your election" (1 Thess. 1:4, NKJV; cf. Rom. 8:29-30; 9:11-12, 15-16; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9).

Therefore, because of what Christ has done for you, and what you have now by faith in Him, you have a "living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3)—and that is the present tense for all of us (Rom. 5:2; Col. 1:27).

And as we look to the future, we anticipate our secure "inheritance" (1 Pet. 1:4)—and that is the new material that we will be looking at today.

But we have to put it all together, so look at Verses 1 and 2 with me. We will quickly review the first three, and then look at what the Lord has for us here in Verses 4 and 5. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure." (NASB-1995—and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

This was the Apostle Peter; toward the end of his life, he wrote this; and then he wrote Second Peter, and that is the last that we know of him, biblically-speaking, before he was martyred—if tradition is accurate, and we believe it is (Jn. 21:18-19; 2 Pet. 1:14).

This was originally addressed from "Peter...To those who reside as aliens" who are "scattered"—then he lists those particular places; we chose not to do a travelogue on them. In his opening words, Peter teaches much *absolutely spectacular* truth. You will never understand what your role is in this world as long as you regard this world as your home. He was writing to people—and he regarded himself as one—whom he calls "aliens" who have been "scattered." You see, when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you become an "alien" (Heb. 11:9; cf. Heb. 11:13; Jn. 15:19; Gal. 4:26). This world is not your own—like Philipians Chapter 3, Verse 20 says: "Our citizenship is in heaven."

Sermon Title: Your Perfect Inheritance
Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:4-5 (1 Peter #3)

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Date: 3-13-16

We are awaiting the arrival of the King, who will bring the Kingdom of Heaven to Earth (Rev. 19:15; 20:4-6). And so, between now and then, we pray: "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10); because we have our feet here, and we have our hearts in Heaven—and that is where our "citizenship" is.

I haven't had a chance to, because it hasn't been published yet, but I am looking forward to hearing the recording of Scott's sermon from last week, but I already know that the text fits perfectly with Peter's description of us as "aliens." What did you look at last week? First John Chapter 2, Verse 15—"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (cf. Jas. 4:4).

You see, if you love God through Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 5:1; cf. Jn. 8:42; 1 Cor. 16:22), *you don't fit in this world* (Prov. 19:13; Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; 1 Jn. 5:19). And if you are fitting well in this world, I'm worried about your soul (Lk. 6:26); because if you love the things of this world more than you love God, you are either a child of God who is committing spiritual adultery (Jas. 4:4), or your faith is a pseudo-faith and you are deceived about the reality of salvation (Ps. 145:18; Prov. 14:12; 30:12; 2 Cor. 13:5b).

I was listening to the radio as I was travelling earlier this morning, and I heard a Christian broadcast from a church, and they wrapped up that radio broadcast with an absolutely *perfectly* well-done mini-Gospel that *left out the most important things!* It said, "Do you have sorrow? Christ can give you joy. Do you have pain? Christ can relieve it. Do you have anxiety? Christ can give you peace." *Not once* did they say: "If you have *sin*, Christ died for it." (see 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18)

We are *not here* to make people comfortable, happy, peaceful—*on their way to Hell!* (see 1 Thess. 5:3) If you do not deal with the issue of *who you are* apart from Christ (Eph. 2:1-3), and then come to the Savior by faith, I don't want to make you happy *now!* I don't *want* to make you feel better!

Good preaching *does* comfort the afflicted—but it better *also* afflict the comfortable (see Ps. 73:12, 18-20; 2 Tim. 4:2), or it is *not the truth* (see Acts 17:30-31; cf. Prov. 28:13; Jer. 23:22). That is what Peter understood. If you love this world, you are loving something you should not be belonging to.

You and I are, as the text says, "scattered" to this precise place on Earth that we are in right now (vs. 1), according to the plan of God worked out in His providence (Acts 17:26; cf. Ps. 139:16).

And if we belong to Christ, it is because He has "chosen" us "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (vss. 1-2). Before the world was created, God had you in His heart (Ps. 103:17; Rev. 17:8), and *predetermined* to have a relationship with you (Gal. 1:15)—*that* is how you come to Christ (Jn. 1:13; 6:37, 44-45), because your salvation is not anything *you* can accomplish (Prov. 20:9; Jer. 13:23); it is accomplished "by the sanctifying work of the Spirit," as it says in the text (vs. 2; cf. Titus 3:5)—again, something you could not do on your own (Jn. 3:3, 5-6; 6:63).

Sermon Title: Your Perfect Inheritance
Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:4-5 (1 Peter #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-13-16

And if you have come to true faith, the evidence of your faith and your salvation is that you will "obey Jesus Christ" (vs. 2; cf. Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 2:4), showing that you have been "sprinkled with His blood" (vs. 2)—that is a metaphor based upon all the Old Testament sacrifices where the animal would be sacrificed and the procedure would be followed, and then the blood of the animal would be "sprinkled on the altar" on behalf of the worshipper (Ex. 24:6); that was the application of the death of the animal so that the "atonement" was made (Lev. 17:11). Or, the Passover: The blood could not just be shed, it had to be painted on the "doorposts" (Ex. 12:7) for the Angel of Death to "pass over" (vs. 13). So, to be "sprinkled with His blood" is nothing less than to be spared from "the wrath of God" (Rom. 5:9; cf. 1 Cor. 5:7; Col. 1:20, 22). And so, when you have that, you "stand" in His "grace" because you have "peace" with Him (Rom. 5:1-2), and so Peter says: "May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure" (vs. 3).

And he was writing to people who had it tough (1 Pet. 4:12); they were persecuted. They had *good reason* for anxiety! They had *good reason* to be uncomfortable! They had *good reason* to be mourning! The world was after them. And writing to them, Peter is presenting the things that they needed to know, and the things that we need to know, in order to glorify God through our every trial.

In our world of pop psychology and rampant biblical illiteracy, what Peter writes here is considered by most to be "impractical" for "real" Christian living. Now, that is not an indictment of Peter, that is an indictment of the pathetic state of most of what passes for Christianity in our world today. There is a great *bias* against "doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3), against theology, against true Bible teaching. And that, my friends, is a very strong theological position to take! *Everybody* has their own theology. There is *something* that you believe, and we can tell what it is because it drives what you do, and it establishes your priorities (e.g., Prov. 14:2). The people who say that doctrine is impractical are the ones who are *rejecting* the doctrines of the *Bible* and substituting horribly inadequate things in their place! (see Jer. 2:13; 8:9)

Being ignorant of the great doctrines of the faith, being ignorant of God's Word, leads to spiritual anemia (contra 1 Pet. 2:2; cf. Acts 20:32), and it leads to countless pseudo-conversions which are producing pews all around the world full of pseudo-Christians who have been deceived into thinking that they are on their way to Heaven when, in fact, they just adopted a lifestyle that can make them cultural moralists feeling better about themselves without dealing with the real issues (see Matt. 7:23; 22:11-13; cf. Is. 61:10).

Let me remind you of the contrast between what the world says is practical and what Peter says here. The world says you need a support group, or you need a pill, you need counseling, you need whatever. There is a place for *all* of those things, but Peter says: "Do you understand you are an 'alien'? Do you understand you are 'elect'? Do you understand the 'foreknowledge of God'? Do you understand 'the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit'? Do you understand 'obeying Jesus Christ'? Do you understand being 'sprinkled with His blood'?" By the way, do you understand the Trinity—all three of whom are mentioned in those first couple of sentences? Most of the world would say: "That is not *practical*."

Sermon Title: Your Perfect Inheritance
Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:4-5 (1 Peter #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-13-16

Let me remind you what I quoted from Todd Friel last time, on what Peter did instead of being what the world calls "practical." Here is what Peter had the audacity to say that you *need* to do in order to live in a Christ-honoring way in the world. He says: Remember your salvation. Think about Heaven. Grow in holiness. Read your Bible. Love one another. Remember how Jesus was treated on your behalf. Submit to bad governments. Submit to unsaved bosses. Submit to unsaved spouses. Prepare to suffer the same way that Jesus suffered. Pray. He says pastors are to be good shepherds. He says submit to your elders. And he says submit to God, and resist temptation.

The first layer of foundation for living in this world is knowing that *God chose you*. Start there (see Col. 3;12). This is *His* work! You are a trophy of "*His* grace" (Eph. 1:6). So, first is your election—that is your past. Go back and review it if you need to.

Last time, we looked at your "living hope" (vs. 3), which is the present condition of each one of us in Christ. Peter proclaims the blessedness of "God" the "Father" and the "Lord Jesus Christ," and last time we saw that that word that is translated "blessed" here at the beginning of Verse 3 means that blessedness is part of God's nature; *He* is "blessed forever" (Rom. 1:25). All the blessings that *we* received are *derived* from Him who is "blessed forever." So Peter says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

If you look again through that verse, you can find another description of what has gone on if you have become a Christian. You can take away some of the supporting clauses and all of that, and notice it says: "God...has caused [you] to be born again to a living hope." God is the cause of your salvation (Jn. 1:13; 3:5; Rom. 9:16; 1 Cor. 1:30a). You cannot save yourself. The Bible teaches that you would *never* have chosen God if it was solely up to you (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; 12:3b). Jesus said: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (Jn. 6:44). Oh, and by the way: "The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (vs. 37). It is the work of God from beginning to end (Rom. 8:29-30). He is the One who receives the "glory" (Ps. 115:1).

But look again: He has "caused [you] to be born again to *a living hope*." It doesn't just begin in the future, it's a *living* hope—it's a *right now* hope (Rom. 5:2; 15:13). The same word is used to describe the Word of God in Verse 23—"the living and abiding word of God" (ESV). And where does it begin? "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"—that is what guarantees your future to God (Jn. 14:19; Rom. 8:11). "Living hope"—that is the accurate description of a Christian! A "living hope" is nothing less than eternal life (see Prov. 23:18; 24:14; Col. 1:27). If "living hope" is not an accurate description of how you feel when you ponder your life and what drives you and what sets your priorities, you need some serious Bible reading to ingrain these great doctrines!

"Hope" means "confident optimism" that comes from God (Rom. 5:5; 8:25; 12:12; Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18; Heb. 6:19). It is ministered by His grace (Rom. 15:13; 2 Thess. 2:16). It is revealed in the Bible (Rom. 15:4; Col. 1:5). It is guaranteed by "the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (see 1 Jn. 3:2).

Sermon Title: Your Perfect Inheritance
Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:4-5 (1 Peter #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-13-16

So, if you are going to handle tough times when they inevitably come (Ps. 34:19; Jn. 16:33; Acts 14:22), you need to begin with understanding that you are "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

The second layer of the foundation for living in this world is having "a living hope." The first layer: your election. The second layer: your "living hope." The third layer of this foundation is your secure "inheritance," and this has to do with your future.

Last time, I tried to help you get this off just being words on the page and into your heart by suggesting what might have been going on through Peter's mind as he penned the opening sentences of this letter. I would like to pick up where we left off. I think of Peter writing these things, and then pondering the majesty of what God had just guided him to write.

We back up to Verse 3—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away" (vss. 3-4).

I can picture Peter just being humbled by that. Maybe he was thinking something like, "You know, if anyone in the world could mess up eternity, it would be me. No one denied the Lord with the flair that *I* mustered that night. Yeah, the others ran away; I stayed there and *cursed and swore* that I never knew Him, right in public! (Matt. 26:74) And then there was that time when my friend Paul rebuked me in public, and wrote it down in a letter, and sent it to all the churches—about how I had given in to the legalists (Gal. 2:11-21). And the worst part of that is: He was *right*. I *did*."

"So now, I have my very worst moments recorded in Scripture forever. Ah, but oh, how sweet to know that everything *Jesus* promised me is secure! (Lk. 22:31-32; Jn. 6:39) It *cannot* be tarnished by me (Jn. 5:24; Rom. 5:1; 8:1, 31-39). What a great God! What a wonderful Savior!"

And then he read what he wrote next: "reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

I imagine Peter may have thought, "Nothing keeps me going like knowing Jesus went before us into Heaven (Heb. 9:24), and that everything we labor for is waiting for us there. This old body is starting to give out. And you know, the hatred of the world against Christ—it still hurts when it comes my way. No one ever *truly* gets used to being reviled for His sake (Matt. 5:11; Lk. 6:22). But God *protects* us (Jn. 17:15; 1 Jn. 5:18). Even if the persecutors rise up and kill me, all that they will accomplish is getting me out of their hair while they set me free to move to my place in Heaven! I remember what Jesus said when He forgave me, and He told me to 'tend' His 'sheep' (Jn. 21:17). When John heard that, he says he is pretty sure that Jesus was telling me that I will eventually be killed because of my ministry for His sake, and I think he is right (Jn. 21:18-29). I think it's coming (2 Pet. 1:14). Lord, if it comes today, I'm ready. This time, I won't be slashing off an ear (Jn. 18:10). 'Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven'!"

Sermon Title: Your Perfect Inheritance
Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:4-5 (1 Peter #3)

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"Oh, how wonderful it will be when we are in Heaven! If knowing Christ brings this kind of 'peace' here and now (Rom. 15:13; Phil. 4:7), if Jesus relieves all of our 'anxiety' from Heaven (1 Pet. 5:7), how *fantastic* to be with Him *forever!* (Ps. 16:11) 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus!' " And I can think of Peter saying, "I have to give *that* line to John. He might want to include that somewhere." (Rev. 22:20, NKJV)

I don't know for sure what was on Peter's mind, but I know from his words that it passed through his heart. Let's look carefully at the words that the Holy Spirit guided him to write—the new portion for today as we finish up this goldmine of the introduction to this book. In Verses 4 and 5, he says: "to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

You might notice, if you are a good observe, that the word "obtain" is added in italics by the translators of the New American Standard Bible. There is nothing really wrong with that, but as much as it pains me to say it, I actually like the New International Version on this verse. I pick on the NIV often enough, but this time they capture it. It says: "In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope...and into an inheritance," It is not like he is saying, "*Now* you get the 'living hope'; *later* you get the 'inheritance'—it is something you don't have." You are "born again" into "a living hope" *and* "an inheritance"; that is the way the Greek really describes it. Now, it is true: An inheritance *is* something you get in the future. But he is saying it is yours *now* (see Eph. 1:11; cf. Acts 26:18); it is a wonderful confluence of now and then, or already and not yet—both at the same time.

Your "inheritance" is all of the future aspects of your salvation. It is described in a whole lot of different ways. Before Jesus went to the Cross, that same night that He instituted the Lord's Supper, He said this in John 14—"In My Father's house are many dwelling places"—the King James says "mansions"; it is probably not a mansion, but perfect for you. "In My father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (vss. 2-3).

We are going to be "with the Lord," as Paul wrote in Second Corinthians: "absent from the body...at home with the Lord" (5:8; cf. Lk. 23:43; Phil. 1:23). Or, Paul said it this way in Romans 8:15-17—"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' " God has made us His *family!* We are brothers and sisters in Christ, and God is our "heavenly Father" (Matt. 5:48; cf. Eph. 2:19). "Abba" is an Aramaic form that is sort of like "Dad" or "Daddy"—it's a personal, intimate kind of a thing. He continues: "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children"—here it comes—"heirs *also*, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

You are adopted *now* (Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5); you are God's child *now*. That is your "living hope"; but in the future, you are going to be glorified with Him (1 Jn. 3:2), and you are going to sharing in this spectacular inheritance (Col. 3:24; 2 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 9:15).

Sermon Title: Your Perfect Inheritance
Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:4-5 (1 Peter #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-13-16

It is also described in Ephesians 1:13-14—"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him"—the "seal" is the guarantee, the promise—"you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our"—here's the word—"inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

Now, if we look back at how Peter describes this inheritance, you will notice in Verse 4 that he uses three negative expressions to describe the heavenly reality of your salvation; they are all contrasts to things on Earth:

First: "imperishable" It is something that *never* withers away. You know what "perishable" means. You're a little hungry, it's in the evening, you open the refrigerator, you look in there, and there is something that looks good—you can see it through the baggie or the Tupperware. You start thinking, "Oh, I think I'll have that!" And you think, "Wait a minute. Saturday, Friday, Thursday, Wednesday—I think I put that in there *Tuesday*..." You know what "perishable" means. You have something *utterly* "imperishable"!

Second: "Undeified" Hey, what happens if you don't dust? Your house gets dusty. What happens if you don't wash your car? You lose track of what color it once was. It tarnishes, it gets stained—everything in the world does! Your "inheritance" *cannot* tarnish; it *cannot* be stained (Matt. 6:20).

And thirdly: It "will not fade away." Earthly beauty is passing. Your "inheritance" will *never* diminish in its beauty. It's like a flower that not only *does not* wither, it keeps blossoming (Ps. 1:3).

Your future in Heaven won't rot; it cannot be polluted; and it never, ever fades.

Now, I want you notice: There are two things side by side here. One is the "inheritance," the other is *you*. The "inheritance" is guaranteed by the promise and the character of God, so that *you* have a good idea—a good understanding from what He has revealed—of what is to come. On the other hand, *you* are as secure as *God Himself* makes things secure! The "inheritance" cannot rot; "you" are safe.

Look at it again: Verses 4 and 5—"reserved in heaven for *you*"—and now, listen to the description of a Christian—"you who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Do you see the two things side by side? It is absolutely *majestic*, what is here! On the one hand, the "inheritance" is perfect; on the other hand, "you" are "protected" from losing the "inheritance." (see Jer. 32:40)

I want to wrap this up by making one more pass through these five verses. I want to wax a bit theological, if you will, because there is some *vitally* important stuff here that can give you the confidence to be able to keep on keeping on by faith through whatever the Lord may bring your way (Ps. 37:24; Prov. 24:16; Dan. 11:32b).

Sermon Title: Your Perfect Inheritance
Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:4-5 (1 Peter #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-13-16

In the first five verses of this book, there are six very strong supports for the doctrine that we call "Eternal Security." That means that as a Christian, your position in Christ, your eternal destiny, are *absolutely secure*—guaranteed by the character of God Himself (see Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). You are "protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Now, there are people who claim to preach Christ, who *deny* the Doctrine of Eternal Security. There are people who believe that you, born in sin, can come to the point that you repent, you put your faith in Christ, and you are saved—and then you sin again, and you can be lost...and then you can be saved, and then you can be lost; and you can be saved, and you can be lost. It is a horrible, *horrible perversion* of what is *absolutely* crystal-clear in the Word of God—that we are secure in Him! And they say, "Well, it says they are 'protected by the power of God *through faith*'—so, you lose your faith, you lose your salvation!" Well, let's see if that is what this says! I think what you would find is that the Bible teaches quite clearly that true faith endures "to the end" (Matt. 10:22; 24:13). Saving faith is *enduring* faith (Ps. 37:24, 28; 97:10b; 125:1; Prov. 10:25; 24:16; Jer. 32:40; Lk. 22:32a; 1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6; Heb. 3:14; 10:39; 12:2a; Rev. 14:12). Anything that is fleeting faith is *pseudo-faith* (1 Jn. 2:19; cf. Matt. 7:23).

Let's see what this actually says. I want to suggest to you: You are secure, and I will give you six reasons from these five verses:

Number 1: You are secure because, according to Verse 1, you are "chosen." Yes, that is the word that means "elect" (Rom. 8:33). God "chose you" for Himself (Jn. 15:19). Ephesians 1:4—"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." Second Thessalonians 2:13—"God has *chosen you...for salvation*." That is what the Bible teaches (e.g., Matt. 11:27; Jn. 1:13; 6:37, 39, 44, 65; 15:16, 19; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29-30; 9:15-16; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 1:15; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 1:9; Jas. 2:5; Rev. 13:8; 17:8, 14). I know there are people who deny that; they are denying what the Bible clearly teaches.

So, you are secure because you are "chosen." Therefore, unless God *changes His mind*, you are secure in Jesus Christ. Does God *ever* change His mind? No! He is absolutely immutable (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; Jas. 1:17).

Secondly: You are secure because, as it says in Verse 2, you are "sanctified" by the "Holy Spirit." Your standing in the holiness and righteousness of Jesus Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit of God, not yours (Jn. 3:5-6; Titus 3:5). Now, yes, you need to "repent" (Ezek. 18:32; Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30; 20:21; 2 Tim. 2:25; 2 Pet. 3:9); yes, you need to "believe" (Mk. 1:15; Jn. 3:16; 8:24; Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:16). Yes, you make choices and all of that (see 1 Jn. 4:19; cf. 1 Cor. 2:14), but "the sanctifying work" is the work "of the Holy Spirit" (see Deut. 30:6; Jer. 24:7; Ezek. 36:26-27; Acts 16:14; 1 Cor. 12:3b).

I have said these things in other contexts, but I want to emphasize them again here: So, if you are "sanctified" by "the Holy Spirit," *then* we could say that, unless the Holy Spirit stops doing His work, you are secure in Jesus Christ. Well, the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 3:17). Is He ever going to quit? Philipians 1:6—"He who began a good work in you *will perfect it* until the day of Christ Jesus."

Sermon Title: Your Perfect Inheritance
Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:4-5 (1 Peter #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-13-16

Thirdly: You are secure because, as it says in Verse 3, you are "born again"—it is a new birth—you are "born again" by God's doing (Jn. 1:13). That verb translated "born again" is in the aorist tense; that is the tense that means it was accomplished *and completed* at a point in time—it is a *completed action* (Jn. 5:24).

That metaphor of it being like a new birth was chosen by the Holy Spirit for several reasons. One of them is to emphasize that it is a thing which *cannot be undone!* I have seen a lot of people renege on a lot of things, but never on being born! You are born, and you *stay born*. If you are "born again," you *stay* "born again"! (Prov. 10:25; 1 Jn. 5:4)

And the other reason I think that metaphor is so powerful is the lesson that Nicodemus understood when Jesus used similar words with him, and he said, "That's not possible! What am I supposed to do, crawl back into my mother's womb and be born all over again?" To which the paraphrase would be: Jesus says, "You got it! *You cannot do that!* Only God could do that!" (see Jn. 3:4-6) Or, as Jesus said to the disciples when they were saying, "Well, if a rich man cannot be saved, who *can* be saved?" and Jesus said, "With men this is *impossible*, but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

So, that means that unless you can figure out how to get unborn, you are secure in Jesus Christ.

Number 4 (we just saw this one in Verse 4): Your "inheritance" is "imperishable," "undefiled," and unfading. Well, what does that mean? Unless God is *lying* by describing your salvation in this way, you are secure in Jesus Christ. It is a secure as *the character of God* is secure (Ps. 37:28; 103:17; 121:7-8; 138:8; Prov. 24:14; Jn. 6:39; 10:27-29; 17:11; Rom. 5:8-10; 8:1, 31-39; 11:29; 1 Cor. 1:8; Eph. 4:30; Col. 3:3-4; 1 Thess. 5:23-34; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18; Heb. 7:25; 10:14; Jude 24; 1 Jn. 2:1; 5:4).

Number 5: You are secure because—also in Verse 4—God says that your "inheritance" is "reserved in heaven for you." The word "reserved" translates a word that we usually translate "keep" (cf. Jude 1b); it can also mean "watch," "guard," or "protect." When you make the reservation, you know that they are "keeping" a place for you; they are saving the spot for you. This one is in the perfect tense, which means it has been put on reservation for you, and therefore it *stays* on reservation for you. So, unless God is unfaithful to His promises, you are secure in Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:24; cf. Ps. 91:4; Lam. 3:23; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; 2 Thess. 3:3; Heb. 6:17-18).

And Number 6: Also in Verse 5, it says you "are protected by the power of God." Here, the word that is translated "protected" is a military term which means "to guard," "to garrison," "to protect"; you have the *armies of God* protecting you, if you will (Ps. 91:11; Heb. 1:14). And this one is present tense, which means that this is an ongoing ministry of God's power. This is really cool! You have three different verb tenses here that all relate to [your salvation]: It was accomplished at a point in time, so the reservation is made and stays in force; and until you collect on the reservation that has been made for you and is being kept for you, you are being "protected by the power of God." So, unless God Himself has a power failure, you are secure in Jesus Christ (Jn. 10:29; cf. Ps. 62:11; 145:3; Is. 26:4; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:21; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 3:7).

Sermon Title: Your Perfect Inheritance
Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:4-5 (1 Peter #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 3-13-16

Friends, this is not an unclear doctrine! I have not twisted, bent, or even winked at *one word* in this entire text—and this is *one text* of the Bible! It is *absolutely* crystal clear! I do believe that there are some people who will be in Heaven with us who have somehow failed to recognize the Doctrine of Eternal Security. Some of them are going to be surprised as all get out that they are there!

But on the other hand, I want to say: If you *teach* that a person can be lost, and then be saved, and then be lost again, you are *not* teaching what the Bible says (see Heb. 6:6). What is "temporary eternal life"? I don't know! What is a God who promises to keep you, and cannot? What is a God who makes promises to you, and yanks them back? It is not the God that I see in the Scriptures!

This is five verses of one book—and this is not the only place that it is taught, by the way. I alluded to Philippians 1:6—"He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

Or, how about the words of Jesus: John 10:27-29—"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 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."

Whenever I mention that, I always want to explain what it means: It means *exactly* what it says in English! I have been studying and teaching New Testament Greek for a long time. There are some key words here: "I know"—it means "I know"; "they follow"—it means "they follow"; "eternal life"—it means "eternal life"; "never perish"—it means "never perish"; "no one" means "*no one*"; "greater than all" means "greater than all"!

It is *absolutely plain*, crystal clear: There are no *tricks*, there are not *footnotes*, there is no *fine print*! If you belong to Christ, you belong to Christ (Jn. 6:37, 39, 44). You have been "chosen" (Eph. 1:4), and you have a present "hope" (Eph. 1:18), and you have a *perfect* "inheritance" (Eph. 1:11, 14).

Now, that is great doctrine—and *it is true*! But we are also human. We also struggle—I know that. Some people struggle more than others with confidence about belonging to Christ; and if you are struggling, *now* is the day to figure out why (2 Cor. 13:5).

It might be that the reason that you struggle is that you have never truly put your trust in Christ (see Ps. 145:18). Maybe you have never realized the majesty and the finality of what He accomplished on the Cross (e.g., 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:17; 10:14; 1 Jn. 2:2). Peter says that you are "protected by the power of God *through faith*." Have you anchored your "faith" in Jesus Christ? (Acts 20:21; 26:18)

There is a cool thing about the Greek language of the New Testament, and how it describes faith. We say, "Believe in" something; we sometimes say, "Believe on" something. I love the way that the language that the Spirit inspired uses the verb for "believe" and it uses the preposition "into"—you "believe *into* Jesus Christ," you "put your faith *in* Christ," you are "anchored *in* Him" (see Heb. 6:19). It is a really great picture.

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So, if you struggle with the confidence that you belong to Christ, I have to ask you: Are you really putting your faith in Christ *alone*? Have you abandoned every scrap of thinking that you have *a little bit of a shred of something* that helps you deserve salvation? Because that is not trusting in Christ; that is trusting in Christ *plus* what *you* can bring (see Is. 64:6; Lk. 17:10; Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16; 3:10).

Or, if you are having trouble with confidence, your doubts might simply be [caused by]—really obvious—there might be some sin that you are clinging to that you are not willing to let go of (see Ps. 32:3-5; 51:12; 1 Jn. 2:3, 5; 3:21). Like Scott preached last week: You are either going to love your sin and push Christ away (Prov. 30:9a), or you are going to love Christ and turn away from your sin (Ps. 97:10; Prov. 8:13a; 14:2; 16:6b). Do you hate your sin? (Ps. 38:18; Ezek. 6:9; 20:43; 36:31; Lk. 18:13; Rom. 7:19, 24) Do you love your Savior? (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23-24; 1 Cor. 16:22; 1 Jn. 5:3) That resolves most of the doubt issues.

You know, some of your doubts, some of your lack of confidence, might simply be because you have been keeping yourself ignorant of the glorious truth of God's Word (see Jos. 1:8; Ps. 1:2-3; Acts 20:32; Eph. 1:17-19; Jude 20). This isn't simple stuff, here in First Peter Chapter 1, but it is *extremely important!* How *is* your intake of God's Word?

You know, most of the time when I sit down and talk to somebody who asks for help in a crisis, we get to some really simple stuff: "Have you been reading your Bible?" "W-well, no." "Have you been praying?" "Well, n-no." "Is there a problem between you and your spouse?" "Yeah, that's why I'm here." "Why don't you read the Bible with your spouse? And why don't you pray with your spouse? Try maybe 'speaking truth in love' in your home (Eph. 4:15)." It's not that *complicated!* It's *messy*—I mean, we all have our creative ways of sinning and disappointing each other and offending each other and all that, but you know, so often we think, "I just must not be a Christian." Well, are you *acting* like one? Are you acting like you really want to hear the voice of your Shepherd? (see Ps. 85:8; Jn. 8:47)

Remember when Justin Peters was here? He sells the tee-shirts. He's the one who invented the line: "If you want to hear the voice of God, read the Bible. If you want to hear it verbally, read it out loud." I have had that tee-shirt redesigned and printed in Russian, and I am taking it there when I teach them how to study the Word of God next month.

You might also have doubts simply because you deny yourself the depth of fellowship that God wants you to have with His people (Pr. 18:1; Ecc. 4:9-10; Col. 2:2; Heb. 10:24-25). You know, there is strength in us being together. A funeral yesterday was *not* how I wanted to look forward to spending a Saturday afternoon, but there was a silver lining involved in it: to see people coming together, throwing their arms around each other, weeping together—some of whom, there had been rifts between them. I got to sit down and have fellowship with a pastor friend that I last talked to *22 years ago*, when he moved away. Our first chance to be reunited, we find out: God has led us in parallel paths to do the same things in different places. I got to see people who really had been alienated, coming together.

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Listen: You come to faith in Christ individually; nobody can do it for you (Prov. 9:12). *You* must "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"—or, believe *into* the Lord Jesus Christ—"and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31; NKJV). But once you are saved, you become part of a family (Eph. 2:19); you become part of a "body" (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 20, 27). And while you are saved by your own personal faith, your encouragement almost always comes through fellowship with other believers (Rom. 1:12; Col. 4:8, 11; 1 Thess. 5:11). And so often, people get into crisis, something goes a little bit wrong—they *run away from* the fellowship, instead of running *toward it*. Sometimes I think they know they are going to hear what they don't want to hear.

Listen: This is a *wonderful, wonderful* "inheritance"! This is a spectacular "living hope"! This is the playing out of the plan of God from "before the foundation of the world." I urge you: If there is something that the Holy Spirit is convicting you about, respond to Him today in trust, in repentance. If hearing this has made you doubt whether you are in Christ, I am *so glad* that you have come to that point, because we can give you the assurance based upon what God has said. We can introduce you to the Savior that you might realize you have only known a caricature of. If you belong to Him, and there is something that is keeping you from full, joyful service, we can help. God can change it.

Father, how we thank You for this "inheritance" to which we look forward. How we thank You for this "living hope" which is ours right now. How we thank You that You are the One in charge of all of this. Have Your way with each of us, we pray this morning, as we stand waiting for the ministry of Your Spirit and Your Word and Your people. In Jesus' name. Amen.