

To Inherit an Inheritance Kept in the Heavens as a Living Hope

First Peter 1:3 tells us that through the resurrection of Christ we have been regenerated unto a living hope. Then verse 4 goes on to say, “Unto an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, kept in the heavens for you.” At the end of verse 3 there is a comma, and verse 4 begins with “unto.” This indicates that “unto an inheritance” in verse 4 is in apposition to “unto a living hope” in verse 3. This means that the living hope is the inheritance and that the inheritance is the living hope. A living hope, resulting from regeneration, is our expectation of the coming blessing; an inheritance is the fulfillment of our hope in the coming age and in eternity.

A living hope is a hope of life. In particular, it is a hope of eternal life. Eternal life is our enjoyment and also our inheritance. All the riches of God’s being are involved in His life. These riches have become our inheritance in the heavenly bank. Our daily experience of eternal life is also an experience and enjoyment of the inheritance kept for us in the heavens. This indicates that the living hope and the inheritance are one.

The inheritance in 1 Peter 1:4 comprises the coming salvation of our souls (vv. 5, 9), the grace to be revealed at the unveiling of the Lord (v. 13), the glory to be revealed (1 Pet. 5:1), the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4), and the eternal glory (1 Pet. 5:10). All these items of our eternal inheritance are related to the divine life which we received through regeneration and which we are experiencing and enjoying throughout our entire Christian life. “This inheritance is the full possession of that which was promised to Abraham and all believers (Gen. 12:3; see Gal. 3:6ff.), an inheritance, as much higher than that which fell to the children of Israel in the possession of Canaan, as the sonship of the regenerate, who have already received the promise of the Spirit through faith as a pledge of their inheritance, is higher than the sonship of Israel: compare Gal. 3:18, 29; 1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:5; Heb. 9:15”—Wiesinger, quoted by Alford.

Through our second birth, regeneration, we have been born into a new inheritance. According to 1 Peter 1:4, this inheritance is not on earth; rather, it is kept in the heavens. Although this inheritance is kept for us in the heavens, we can enjoy it now on earth. Our heavenly, divine, spiritual inheritance is kept in the heavens; yet it is continually being transmitted into our spirit for our enjoyment.

In verse 4 Peter uses three words to describe our inheritance: incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. I believe that this threefold description points to the Trinity. The word “incorruptible” refers to the nature of this inheritance. This is God’s nature, signified by gold. Here incorruptible refers to the substance, which is indestructible, not decaying. In contrast to any earthly inheritance, our heavenly inheritance is incorruptible, for it is not material. Anything material or physical is corruptible. But our inheritance kept in the heavens is divine and spiritual, altogether incorruptible.

“Undefiled” describes the condition of the inheritance and refers to its purity, to its being unstained. This means that our inheritance cannot be defiled; nothing can make it unclean. This condition is related to the sanctifying Spirit.

Finally, “unfading” refers to the beauty and glory of our inheritance; it speaks of its not withering. Because our inheritance is unfading, its beauty and glory cannot wither.

Thus, “unfading” refers to the expression of the inheritance. This inheritance has unfading glory. First Peter 5:4 speaks of an unfading crown of glory. The everlasting expression indicated by the word “unfading” is the Son as the expression of the Father’s glory.

The three excellent qualities of our eternal inheritance in life—incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading—describe the Father’s incorruptible nature, the Spirit’s sanctifying power to maintain the inheritance in an undefiled position, to keep it holy, clean, and pure, and also the Son as the expression of the unfading glory. Therefore, the threefold description of our inheritance is also a description of the Triune God.

The Triune God Himself will be our basic inheritance. Related to Him as our inheritance we have five other matters: the coming salvation of our souls, the grace to be revealed at the Lord’s coming, the glory to be revealed to us, the unfading crown of glory, and the eternal glory. These five items, added together, are a subsidiary inheritance related to God Himself. Although these items are not the Triune God directly, they are related to the divine life, which is God Himself.

Consummating in Being Made God’s Inheritance

As heirs of God, the believers are joint heirs of Christ according to the promise and the hope of eternal life, through justification by the grace of Christ and regeneration in the resurrection of Christ, to inherit the Triune God as their inheritance with the Holy Spirit as the pledge, to share with all the saints in the light the Triune God embodied in Christ as their portion, to be glorified with Christ, and to inherit an inheritance kept in the heavens as a living hope. This consummates in the believers being made God’s inheritance. Ephesians 1:11 says, “In whom also we were made an inheritance.” The Greek word rendered “were made an inheritance” means to choose or assign by lot. Hence, this clause literally means we were designated as a heritage. We were made an inheritance to inherit God’s inheritance. On the one hand, we were made God’s inheritance (Eph. 1:18) for God’s enjoyment; on the other hand, we were made to inherit God as our inheritance (Eph. 1:14) for our enjoyment. According to our natural being we are not worth anything, but in Christ we have been made God’s inheritance. It is by having the Triune God wrought into us that we are constituted into an inheritance. As God’s element is wrought into our being, we become His inheritance in reality. Therefore, we are still in the process of being made God’s inheritance in full.

Ephesians 1:18 indicates that God’s inheritance is in the saints. First God made us His inheritance as His acquired possession and gave us to participate in all He is, all He has, and all He has accomplished as our inheritance. Consummately, all these become His inheritance in the saints for eternity.

In Ephesians 1:18 the Greek word translated “in” may also be rendered “among.” God’s inheritance is in and among the saints. We, the saints, are God’s inheritance. However, what we are by nature cannot be God’s inheritance. God does not desire to inherit our nature, our flesh, our natural being. He desires to inherit all that He has wrought into us of Himself. Therefore, whatever God has wrought into us of Himself becomes His inheritance.

As those who are God's inheritance, we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13). To be sealed with the Holy Spirit means to be marked with the Holy Spirit as a living seal. Because we have been made God's inheritance, at the time we were saved God put His Holy Spirit into us as a seal to mark us out, indicating that we belong to God.

Actually the Spirit Himself is the seal. To be sealed with the Holy Spirit means that God has been dispensed into our being. Hence, this seal is living and moving within us, for the Spirit is constantly sealing us with God's essence. To be sealed in this way is to be saturated with all that God is. Therefore, the sealing of the Holy Spirit also indicates that God is being wrought into us. Through the sealing of the Spirit God is working His essence into our being that He may enjoy us, His acquired possession, as His inheritance.

Ephesians 1:18 speaks of "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." The riches of God's glory are the many different items of His attributes, such as light, life, power, love, righteousness, and holiness, expressed in different degrees. Since glory is God's expression, the riches of His glory are the riches of God's expression. It is God Himself within us who constitutes His inheritance among the saints. In this inheritance are the riches of God's glory. If God is not wrought into us, we could not become His inheritance, His peculiar possession. The believers become precious to Him by being saturated with the divine essence. Only in this way can poor sinners become God's special treasure. In this universe God is the only One who is precious. Now this precious God of matchless worth is working Himself into us to make us His glorious inheritance. When the New Jerusalem comes, we shall see that it will be altogether a valuable inheritance, shining with God's glory. Therefore, the fact that the believers are becoming God's glorious inheritance, a precious treasure to Him, indicates that He is working Himself into us.

After being saved, we are children of God, sons of God, partakers of the divine nature, and heirs of God. As heirs of God we enjoy Him as our inheritance, and we become His inheritance for His enjoyment. Therefore, our enjoyment of the divine inheritance consummates in our being made God's inheritance. We enjoy God. Then our enjoyment of Him makes us His enjoyment.

Daily we enjoy God in the way of the Spirit's pledging. God pledges Himself as the Spirit within us for our enjoyment, guaranteeing that we shall eventually have the full taste of the Triune God. This enjoyment of God as our inheritance is the dispensing of God into us. The result of this dispensing is that we become God's inheritance for His enjoyment.

We need to understand not only doctrinally but also experientially that we have the Holy Spirit within us as the firstfruit of God for our enjoyment. This firstfruit is the foretaste, the guarantee, the pledge, that we shall enjoy God in full. Our continuous enjoyment of the Triune God will make us His inheritance. This means that first we inherit Him. Then as He is dispensed into us and constituted into us, we become His enjoyment. Eventually God will enjoy Himself in our constitution.

We thank the Lord for bringing us deep into the truth concerning the believers as heirs of God. Through redemption, justification, and regeneration God has put Himself into us to be our inheritance. Now we enjoy Him in the way of a pledge. Daily we participate in Him, and He dispenses Himself into our being. Eventually we shall be saturated with Him and constituted of Him as our inheritance. This enjoyment and constitution will make us His inheritance. Therefore, we are God's inheritance not in ourselves or by ourselves but by His being our inheritance. Then our enjoyment of Him will consummate in our being God's inheritance for God to enjoy eternally. Ultimately, the New Jerusalem will be a mutual dwelling place and also a mutual enjoyment. In the New Jerusalem we shall enjoy the Triune God as our eternal inheritance, and He will enjoy us as His eternal possession. This consummation will be the issue of God's dispensing Himself into us and constituting us of Himself. His dispensing makes us His inheritance, and through the enjoyment of Him as our inheritance we become His inheritance.

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