

1. The focus of life

Greg and Barry are watching cricket on TV. At lunch after discussing the Aussie win in the World Cup Greg asks, “What are you going to do at Easter, Barry?” Barry replies, “It’s a family tradition, we get together at Mum’s place. She likes to have the whole family together, my brother, sister and all the kids. We have an egg hunt then lunch. After that the adults talk or sleep and the kids play in yard.

On Monday we go down the coast to holiday house. I like to spend time with kids, we go fishing, then I might play some golf and relax. How about you, Greg? Going away?”

Greg says, “No. I’ve got to get back to work. I’ve got a big contract I’m working on. I’m really excited. This is the big one. If I get this one right I recon I’m in for a promotion. Ever since the wife got sick I’ve wanted to take her on a decent holiday. I recon we should be able to afford it soon.”

Listen to conversations. What are people interested in? What do people get excited about? What really gives them meaning and purpose in life?

What do you get excited about? What gives you meaning: family, job, sport, holidays, house, money, friends, hobby?

These are not bad things, but has God been pushed to the sidelines? You may still believe in him and go to church but does he play a significant part in life? Does he shape your lifestyle as these other things do?

Our whole focus of life can be on these other things for meaning, purpose, security and our sense of identity.

Peter calls us to focus on our future inheritance. He tells us we have, *“An inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you. (1:4)*

An inheritance is something that belongs to us but we don't have it yet. We have to wait to experience it, perhaps till a certain age, perhaps 21, or till someone dies. We won't receive God's inheritance until Jesus returns but it is the thing that should shape our lives here and now.

Peter is writing a letter to Christians in various places throughout what is Turkey today. They are facing significant persecution. He is encouraging them to remain faithful and to live a holy life even if they do suffer for it. 4:19 is a key verse: *“So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.”*

He tells them not to compromise or to give up the Christian life. For them this view of a bigger reality, a heavenly inheritance would give them a strong incentive to remain faithful.

For most of us the problem isn't persecution. For some it is other difficulties in life but for many it's other attractions or distractions of daily life. It's these other 'good things' take our eyes off God's will. If we are to live God's way in this godless society we also need to hear the message of this letter.

2. Our future inheritance - is worth waiting for

a) It is something much greater than this world

To live just for things of this life is like a person who lived their whole life inside a house. They run around the house to find fulfilment with the things in the house. One day a curtain is drawn back from a window and they see a whole new world outside: sunshine, flowers, sky, wind blowing, the sea and so much more; a much bigger reality.

Jesus' resurrection is like that window. It is a window on reality. Peter says, *"³ 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, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade."* (1:3-4)

Jesus' resurrection shows there is more than just this world, there is a greater life beyond. It shows also the effectiveness of his salvation, that his death has opened the way to life with God. It gives us a *living hope*, a real confidence about the future.

b) It is an unfading inheritance (1:4)

What sort of inheritance would you like? Would you like a pile of cash? It can easily vanish in Global Financial Crisis. Would you like a grand mansion? These often require millions of dollars in maintenance. Would you like to inherit a media empire? You would have to work 24/7 to keep it running. Things in this life don't last. They don't bring ultimate satisfaction.

The tennis champion Boris Becker, who is now Novak Djokovic's coach, spoke about his feeling of emptiness. *"I had won Wimbledon twice before, once as the youngest player. I was rich. I had everything ... I know that this is a cliché. It is the old song of the movie and pop stars who commit suicide. They have everything, and yet they are so unhappy ... I had no inner peace. I was a puppet on a string."*

How many young people are bored these days? Boredom is not having nothing to do. It is having nothing to live for. Something is missing. People try to fill their emptiness with frenetic activity, an adrenalin rush, becoming a

workaholic, drink, gambling or drugs. They are desperate for something to fill the void inside.

So many pleasures of this life are short lived. You enjoy a holiday, then go back to work. It seems like you've never been away. All you have is a few photos and no one else wants to look at your holiday photos.

This is *"an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade."* It won't wear out or rust, no Global Financial Crisis will devalue it, it won't go out of fashion. It will last for ever.

c) It is secure a secure inheritance (1:4-5)

"This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ 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."

(1:4-5) God guarantees it. His power keeps heaven for us and keeps us for heaven.

If you buy a lottery ticket the odds are strongly against you winning anything but with our inheritance there is a 100% guarantee that we will receive the jackpot because it all depends on God not us. We can be sure.

d) It is a glorious inheritance (1:10-12)

¹⁰ *Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and*

circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. (1:10-11)

He speaks of the glories that would follow Christ's sufferings, glory not only for him but for us as a result. We will share his glory. In 1:7 he has spoken about the "*praise, glory and honour*" we will receive when Christ is revealed. In 5:4 he talks of receiving "*the crown of glory that will never fade away.*"

He says this is something far greater than the prophets understood, and even angels didn't see how wonderful our salvation would be! "*Even angels long to look into these things.*" (1:12)

But we know these things. Christ's resurrection has given us this living hope. We can be sure of our future, its greatness, its security, its unfading nature and its glory.

3. Our future inheritance - is worth living for

He does not say that life will be easy. Malcolm Frazer warned us, "Life wasn't meant to be easy." Peter says, "*Now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*"

For the church back then it meant persecution. It still means persecution in many part of the world today. We

remember the Christian students who have lost their lives in Nigeria. We may have to endure other things in life or we may have to make sacrifices to really follow Jesus. But it is worth it.

a) Suffering prepares us for our inheritance.

“⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (1:7)

God uses our suffering even if we don't see it at the time. Precious metals like gold are heated to remove all the impurities. Suffering purifies us to prepare us for God's presence.

b) God gives us joy even if things are difficult

“⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice.” (1:6) “⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” (1:8-9)

Having faith in Jesus, love for him and being confident that we are receiving salvation gives us a deep joy that transcends outward circumstances.

Think of a swimmer who wants to win gold at the Olympics. They have to start training when they are young. They must get up while still dark and do laps before school. They will spend time working in the gym. It takes years of training, hard work, pain and effort. But they are focussed on their goal, winning gold. Only one person in world will win gold in any event at the Olympics but it gives them a real purpose in life, a motivation to push through pain, and joy in the achievements they make along the way.

We have a much greater prize before us, a much greater confidence. We all receive our inheritance. We have a much greater purpose to live for, to love Jesus.

So Peter goes in in 1:13-15 *¹³ Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed ...¹⁵ just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.*

As athletes focus on winning gold and that is what shapes their life so we are to focus on our future inheritance. This will give us joy and purpose and will shape our lives, and in the end will give us eternal blessings with God.