

Discussion on 1 Peter 1:3-5

Sunday School – Sleater Kinney Road Baptist Church – April 23, 2017

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1. TEXT (1 Peter 1:3-9):¹

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, has caused us to be born again in order to have a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, in order to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, which has been reserved in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.

In this you must greatly rejoice, even though now, for a little while if necessary, you may have to be distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, more precious than gold which, though perishable, is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And, though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him with joy inexpressible and full of glory, because as the outcome of your faith you have been given the salvation of your souls!

2. THOUGHT-FLOW DIAGRAM & GREEK NOTES:²

Doxology	- ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
God's mercy	- who according to (i.e. <i>in keeping with</i>) ³ His great mercy (ὁ = God = subject)

¹ The base text is the NASB, sprinkled with some bits of the RSV and a few of my own additions, as I saw fit.

² This format is based off Richard Young's discussion on thought-flow diagrams (*Intermediate Greek* [Nashville, TN: B&H, 1994], 268-271) and the format in the ZECNT commentary series. It blends both versions, and I'm not entirely sure it gets the point across well, but I'm using it for now.

³ See Harris' remarks on the preposition (*Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002], 152). BDAG remarks that the sense of "in accordance with" and "because of" are basically merged in the usage here, in 1 Peter 1:3 (s.v. "3938 κατά," 5.a.d.).

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	Correspondence w/preposition	- has caused us to be born again (<i>Gk = God is the active agent</i>) ⁴
	First purpose of new birth	- in order to have (<i>purpose and/or result</i>) ⁵ a living hope
	How first purpose is accomplished	- through (<i>manner</i>) ⁶ the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
	Second purpose of new birth	- ⁴ in order to obtain (<i>purpose</i>) ⁷ an inheritance
	Description of inheritance	- which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away,
		- [which has been] reserved ⁸ (<i>i.e. “guarded”</i>) in heaven for you,
	More about “you”	- ⁵ who (<i>i.e. you</i>) ⁹ are being protected ¹⁰ by the power of God

⁴ The crux is what the article refers back to. Grammatically, the article precedes the prepositional phrase, forms a noun phrase, and syntactically functions as the subject (cf. Young, *Intermediate Grammar*, 60). So, what does the article refer back to? It could be Jesus, or it could be the Father. Who is the subject of v.1? It is the Father. The article refers back to the Father - Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ κατὰ τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος . . .

⁵ The preposition here (εἰς) could legitimately refer to purpose or result. If the former, the sense would be, “we have been born again **in order to have** a living hope.” If the latter, the sense would be, “we have been born again, **thus** we have a living hope.” Harris suggests it could be both (*Prepositions*, 101). In light of Peter’s predestinarian emphasis on the Trinity in salvation as a foundation for rejoicing during various trials (cf. v.6), I’m more comfortable opting for the sense of *purpose* here.

⁶ There are three general ways to take the preposition δι’ here: (1) **Personal agency**. This seems incorrect. The resurrection is not a personal agent who can act and accomplish something. It is impersonal, in that it is an action done to Jesus. The resurrection *in and of itself* is not an agent that can act. (2) **Means**. This is very closely related to agency. It seems to refer to the inanimate instrument by which something is accomplished (e.g. I wrote these words *with* a computer). (3) **Manner**. This describes *how* something is accomplished (cf. BDAG, s.v. “1823 δια,” 3.b.).

This seems to make the best sense. How are we born again in order to have a living hope? It is *through or by* the resurrection of the dead!

⁷ This second preposition (εἰς) provides the second purpose for God giving us a second birth. Greg Forbes believes the preposition is basically exegetical. “Given the lack of a connective καί, the inheritance that is now depicted should not be understood as a further result of new birth in addition to the living hope (as NRSV, NJB, NIV; Achtemeier 95; Elliott 335), but a further definition of the living hope,” (*1 Peter*, in *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* [Nashville, TN: B&H, 2014; Kindle ed.] KL 919-921).

⁸ The participle here is in apposition to the noun (εἰς κληρονομίαν ἄφθαρτον καὶ ἀμίαντον καὶ ἀμάραντον **τετηρημένην** ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς). The context suggests a gnomic perfect; that is, an action which is not timebound (“**has been** reserved”). The Scripture is clear that God predestined the elect before the foundation of the world itself (cf. Eph 1). The voice is a divine passive; it is God who guards our eternal inheritance.

⁹ The article refers back to Peter’s plural audience. The article τοῦς is accusative, and so is the pronoun (ὑμᾶς; “you”) it refers back to.

¹⁰ The participle φρουρουμένους is in apposition to the noun ὑμᾶς from the tail end of v.4. Context suggests a descriptive present; that is, a progressive action taking place as Peter wrote the letter. Believers are always “being protected” by the power of God. The voice is a divine passive; God is doing the protecting. We do nothing.

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	Means of God's protection	- through faith (<i>means</i>) ¹¹
	Purpose of God's protection	- for (<i>purpose</i>) a salvation ¹² ready to be revealed at (<i>prep = time</i>) the last time.
Refers to vv.3-5; imperative command		- ⁶ In this (<i>all the preceding</i>) ¹³ you must greatly rejoice (<i>possibly an imperative</i>), ¹⁴
Element of uncertainty about trials		- even though now
		- for a little while, if necessary ¹⁵
		- you may have to be ¹⁶ distressed (i.e. <i>deep sorrow, anguish, grief</i>) ¹⁷ by various trials,
Purpose of trials		- ⁷ so that (<i>ἵνα; purpose</i>)
		- the proof (i.e. <i>result of testing</i>) of your faith,

¹¹ Here, the preposition διὰ seems to give the sense of *means*. Faith is the way by which God guards us. Peter gives no hint of where this faith comes from; he is not presenting a doctrinal treatise.

¹² The word σωτηρίαν does not always mean “salvation” in the spiritual sense. It can also mean something like “deliverance” from physical harm or danger. I believe that is the sense here. In this context, I believe Peter is referring to Jesus’ perfectly delivering us from this sin-cursed world at the specific point in time when He returns to defeat Satan. See Jobes (*1 Peter*, 88).

¹³ It seems best to assume the relative pronoun refers back to the entirety of vv.3-5.

¹⁴ This verb could be either indicative (most English translations) or imperative. Either one is certainly possible, and grammatically defensible. Because Peter’s goal here (vv.1-5) is to lay a foundation for encouraging his audience to persevere, I prefer to take it as an imperative; e.g. **“Rejoice in this!”**

¹⁵ The RSV didn’t translate the phrase “if it is necessary” (εἰ δεῖον ἐστίν).

¹⁶ How should we interpret the aorist tense-form of the participle λυπηθέντας? The NASB takes the default option, and translates as a culminative aorist (“you **have been** distressed”), where the focus is in the past. This seems like a poor choice, especially in light of the construction ὀλίγον ἄρτι, where the focus is on the present.

It could be an ingressive aorist, where the focus is on the entrance into a new state of affairs (e.g. “you **are beginning to be** distressed”). This is a sound choice, but the construction εἰ δεῖον ἐστίν (“if it is necessary”) gives an element of uncertainty on Peter’s part. He leaves the possibility open that some people have not yet suffered, and some are suffering now.

I think the best option is a futuristic aorist, because Peter leaves it all open to God’s will (“if it is necessary”). The NET and RSV take this option.

¹⁷ The meaning is not simply “suffering” in the sense of persecution. The sense is deep sorrow, anguish, grief and sadness (cf. BDAG, s.v. “4624 λυπέω,” 2.a.). It is a deep internal affliction, which may be caused by various things. Moises Silva wrote that, in general Greek literature, the word is “applied sometimes to physical pain, but more often to mental distress or emotional suffering.” He stated that in the NT, apart from a few exceptions, “the terms always allude to emotional pain,” (*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014], 3:178-179).

Herod was “sorry” he made a rash promise, and now John the Baptist had to die (Mt 14:9). Jesus that, when He left, they would be “sorrowful,” but that “sorrow” would later turn to joy (Jn 16:20). Paul did not write to the Corinthians to make them “sorrowful,” but to express his love and concern for them (2 Cor 2:4). The disciples were “greatly distressed” when Jesus revealed to them that He would be betrayed, killed, and rise again from the dead (Mt 18:31). Paul rejoices that the Corinthians were “made sorrowful to the point of repentance,” (2 Cor 7:9).

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	Parentetical aside, description of faith	- more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire,
	Purpose of trials	- may redound to praise and glory and honor
	Time purpose achieved	- at (<i>time</i>) ¹⁸ the revelation of Jesus Christ.
Description of proper attitude		- ⁸ And though you have not seen Him, you love Him (<i>possible imperative</i>); ¹⁹
		- though you do not see him now, ²⁰ you believe in Him
		- and greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,
Reason for proper attitude		- ⁹ [because] ²¹ as the outcome of your faith
		- you [have been given] (<i>permissive middle</i>) ²² the salvation of your souls.

3. THINKING THROUGH THE TEXT:

a. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,”

- Note the reference to the Trinity; it is *not* an invented doctrine
 - o Jesus is separate and distinct from the Father
 - o Yet, the OC tells us that God is one (Deut 6:4-5), and that God never changes (Mal 3:6)
- **Q #1: Why does Peter write this here; is it just a throwaway line (e.g. “how are you doing!?”)**

¹⁸ The preposition could be expressing a point in time when something happened, or the duration during which an event occurred. I believe it is the former.

¹⁹ The verb could be indicative or imperative. I believe imperative *could* fit here, but it is awkward rendering it into English. There is nothing wrong with indicative, however, so I’ll keep it.

²⁰ The Greek is difficult here. A very wooden rendering would be something like, “concerning him, you are not seeing Him now,” (εις ὃν ἄρατι μὴ ὁρῶντες). I take the preposition to be expressing *reference*.

²¹ How should we interpret the participle κομιζόμενοι? I take it to be an adverbial participle, modifying the verb ἀγαλλιᾶσθε in a causal manner. This seems to make the best sense. Why does Peter’s audience rejoice so much? Because they have received the salvation of their souls as the outcome of their faith. This gives more weight to the argument that the verb from v.8 should be translated as an imperative. The NET and NIV translate the participle as causal.

²² This verb is tricky. The real sense is passive (“you are being given the salvation of your souls, as the end of your faith”). For the permissive middle, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 426-426.

A deponent middle will not do, because then the sense is active (“you are obtaining the salvation of your souls”). People do not *obtain* their own salvation. They do not save themselves. This would fly in the face of Peter’s predestinarian theme from vv.1-5, not to mention Jesus’ (e.g. Jn 6:65; Lk 10:22-23) and Paul’s (e.g. Eph 1:1-13) own teaching. A direct middle is out of the question; this is not a reflexive action. An indirect middle is likewise unlikely.

How should we interpret the present tense-form? I believe the context argues for a durative present, especially given that I interpret the participle at the beginning of v.9 as adverbial and causal.

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- Probably in light of what came before (v.2), and what follows (vv.3-5)
- If you're a Christian, what He has done for you should provoke wonder, awe, joy and thankfulness

b. "who, according to His great mercy,"

- Q #2: Who does "who" refer to; the Father or Jesus?

- The Father – He is the subject of the sentence, who Peter just wished would be blessed

- Q #3: What does "mercy" mean?

- Mercy means "lenient or compassionate treatment"²³
 - It means punishment that is deliberately withheld by somebody in authority (e.g. a child and a parent)
- God is the One in authority, and you are the one who deserves punishment

- Q #4: What is the significance for Christians?

- It means God **should** have and **could** have destroyed you, but He decided *not* to
- Embedded in this definition is the idea that **(a)** you are a criminal in God's eyes, **(b)** you do deserve punishment for your crimes, and yet **(c)** God decided to withhold your punishment
 - If this isn't true, then Peter wouldn't have used the word "mercy"

c. "has caused us to be born again to a living hope"

- Q #5: Who causes you to be born again? You, or God?

- It is God
- This construction is passive, which means the action was done *to* you – you didn't do it
 - e.g. Jonah didn't swallow the great fish; he was swallowed *by* the great fish!

- Q #6: Why did God cause you to be born again?

- Because it was in accordance with His great mercy

²³ Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003), s.v. "mercy," 2.a.

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- You deserved punishment, but in keeping with God's great mercy, He caused you to be born again at a specific point in time
- Your new birth has nothing to do with you

- Q #7: Why did God decide to have great mercy to you?

- Because He loves you; **read Eph 1:3-7** (cf. Deut 7:6-8, 9:4ff).
- There are two reasons why God caused us to be born again; **(1)** to have a living hope, and **(2)** to have an inheritance

- Q #8: Why is the passive ("caused you to be born again") important? Why is this not a nerdy grammatical point?

- Because Peter is focusing *relentlessly* on God's grace in salvation (He did it all, you did nothing) in order to build a foundation these Christians can trust in as they suffer for Christ's sake in the real world
- He's doing the same thing for you
- When you're tempted by nagging doubts about God's goodness, God's grace, God's favor, God's holiness and His reasons for putting through things, you need to turn to these truths with a death grip and say to yourself:
 - **(a)** I am part of God's plan
 - **(b)** I was sanctified by the Spirit
 - **(c)** The Spirit made me be obedient to the Gospel
 - **(d)** The Spirit sprinkled me with Christ's blood of the New Covenant
 - **(e)** Blessed be the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ
 - **(f)** Because of His great mercy, He caused me to be born again to a living hope!

d. "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"

- Q #9: How did God accomplish your new birth?

- He accomplished it through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead
- Note the focus on the resurrection, *not* the Cross!
 - We'll come back to this later

e. "in order to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away,"

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- Q #10: What is this “inheritance?”

- It is probably best to consider the inheritance a citizenship in God’s coming Kingdom (cf. Rev 21:5-8)
- It is membership in His family
- It is adoption into His family
- It is a heavenly citizenship as one of God’s people, in God’s new and better creation, once this old one is scrapped

- Q #11: Why does Peter focus so much attention on the inheritance? What does he want us to “get” from all this?

- He’s emphasizing this inheritance:
 - (a) will **never** die,
 - (b) will **never** become defiled, impure or unholy, and
 - (c) will **never** fade away (i.e. lose its luster, decay like flowers, etc.)
- Take your issues, your problems, your worries, your concerns, your pain, your sorrow, your suffering and the trouble you’re enduring from those who do you wrong, and remember this:
 - (a) God has saved you
 - (b) He did it by the sanctification of the Spirit
 - (c) so you would be obedient to the Gospel and be sprinkled with Christ’s blood
 - (d) and, therefore, your inheritance of heavenly citizenship with God forever, on a new earth in a new and perfect creation, will **never** die, **never** become defiled and **never** fade away
- These problems are temporary, and they cannot touch you

f. “[which has been] reserved in heaven for you,”

- Q #12: Who is guarding, keeping and reserving your inheritance?

- It is God – this is passive, not active!
 - This isn’t a timebound action; if you’re a Christian, God did this for you before creation itself, before time existed, before anything that was made was made (cf. Eph 1:4-5; 2 Tim 1:8-10)

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- Your inheritance has nothing to do with you at all; it has everything to do with God – He is the One guarding it

g. “who are being protected by the power of God”

- The ESV is the only major English translation which emphasizes the present, continuous nature of God’s protection
 - He is protecting you *right now*
 - His protection is **constant**, **ever-present**, **ongoing**, **continuous** – it will **never** stop, slacken, fade away or weaken
- This is passive; God is doing the protecting

h. “through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.”

- **Q #13: What is the means God uses to guard your inheritance?**
 - It is faith, which the Scriptures tell us is a gift from God (Eph 2:8)²⁴
 - After all, Peter just told us we are chosen according to God the Father’s plan, *by* or *through* the Spirit’s sanctification, so that we would be obedient to the Gospel and be sprinkled with Christ’s blood
- Peter says, “who by God’s power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time,” (1 Pet. 1:5). This sounds strange, almost as if our salvation isn’t finished yet!
 - **(1)** Option #1: “who by God’s power are guarded through faith for a **salvation** ready to be revealed **in the last time.**”
 - **(a)** *Already/not yet.* This suggests our salvation is not yet complete, because we don’t yet have glorified bodies and the world is still ruled by evil, but that Christ will *completely* finish His work when He returns
 - **(b)** *The focus is on a period of time;* that is, Christ’s return, rule, imprisonment and final defeat of Satan
 - **(2)** Option #2: “who by God’s power are guarded through faith for a **deliverance** ready to be revealed **at the last time.**”

²⁴ Most commentators agree that the reference is likely to the entire concept of being saved by grace through faith, not *just* faith itself.

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- (a) *The focus is on rescue from oppression; we're finally and completely rescued, delivered and made safe*
- (b) *The focus is on a very specific point in time – Christ's return*
- Option #2 is probably best, because Peter is focusing on God's grace in choosing, saving, preserving and now rescuing and delivering His children – as a foundation to allow them to persevere

4. GROUP DISCUSSION:

a. The Living Hope:

- Peter wrote that God, according to His great mercy, caused you to be born again *in order to have* a living hope (1 Pet 1:3)
 - Q #14: What is the “living hope” Peter is referring to?
 - It is hope in eternal life, eternal inheritance, eternity with the Lord
 - Q #15: Why does he call it a “living” hope? What is he contrasting it with?
 - Contrasting with the “dead” hope of life in continued rebellion against God (e.g. Ps 2; Rev 21:1-8, 22-27; Rev 22:1-5; cf. 2 Thess 1:1-10; Rev 20:11-15)
 - Q #16: According to 1 Peter 1:3, how do Christians get this living hope? Think about whether the action is active or passive; who performs the action which results in this “living hope?”
 - It is passive; God *caused you to be born again*
 - Q #17: What does this mean for your everyday life?
 - God has great mercy
 - God decided to shower that mercy on you, individually and specifically
 - God did that by causing you to be born again
 - You made a decision to repent and believe the Gospel,
 - but you only made that decision because God used tens of thousands of means (e.g. events, people – ultimately the Spirit) *to cause you to be born again*
 - He did it all; you did nothing

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- You only repented and believed because He caused you to be born again – Peter says the sanctification by the Spirit comes first (cf. 1 Pet 1:2)

b. Born Again Through the Resurrection:

- Christians often focus on the Cross as the central act of Jesus' life. Here, Peter focuses on the resurrection. He does this often (Acts 2:24-46; 3:15; 4:10; 4:19-20; 5:29-32; 10:39-41).
- Peter wrote that God, "has caused us to be born again in order to have a living hope, *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, in order to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, which has been reserved in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time."
- You were born again for two purposes;
 - (a) to have a living hope, and
 - (b) to obtain an eternal inheritance (see diagram, above).
 - Peter is saying the resurrection is the *means* God uses to achieve our new birth in Christ. This is a bold statement; your living hope of eternity with God is achieved through *more* than the Cross – it's also achieved through the resurrection! Why?
- **Q #18: Why does Peter focus so much attention on the resurrection, and not the Cross? What does this tell us about how we should preach and think about the Gospel?**
 - It means the resurrection should be a key component of our Gospel preaching, sharing and explanation
 - It was for Peter, and it was for Paul (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-8; Rom 4:25)
- **Q #19: What does the resurrection have to do with the new birth? If Jesus was already perfect for us (and He was), and if He already let Himself be punished and die for our sins (and He did), then why does the resurrection matter?**
 - Think up some of your own reasons:
 - I have four basic pillars:
 - (1) Death doesn't apply to Jesus, because of who He is – *therefore death won't apply to His children, either*

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- (2) Jesus was resurrected as the “firstfruits” because the curse of death has no hold on Him – *therefore you will be resurrected to be with the Lord forever, too*
- (3) Jesus must return to rule, reign, defeat all enemies, and set everything right that has gone so horribly wrong – *therefore you know how this will all end!*
- (4) Jesus lives forever to make intercession for His children in the Father’s presence in heaven (Heb 7:23-28)

○ Then (if you have time), make a list of reasons from the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 15:

- (1) The Christian faith is useless without Christ’s resurrection (1 Cor 15:13-14; 30-34)
- (2) Your sins are not forgiven if Christ hasn’t been raised from the dead (1 Cor 15:17-19)
- (3) Christ’s resurrection is the “first-fruits” of all who have died (1 Cor 15:20-23)
 - If Christ wasn’t raised, you have no future after death
 - But, He did, and therefore so do you
- (4) Christ must reign over everything and defeat all enemies, including the curse of death (1 Cor 15:24-26)
 - If Christ isn’t raised, He won’t reign, He won’t defeat any enemies, and He will have been conquered by the curse of death
- (5) Then, Jesus must “hand over” all creation to the Father, in a sort of “mission accomplished” moment (1 Cor 15:28)
 - If Christ isn’t raised, He isn’t going to hand over all creation to God – because *He’s dead*
- (6) Your physical (i.e. sinful) body must be replaced by a spiritual (i.e. holy) body – because flesh and blood (i.e. our sinful, corrupted physical bodies) cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:42-58; esp. vv.54-57)
 - Our cleansed and righteous souls must be joined to cleansed and righteous *bodies* to be with the Lord in the new creation forever

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- **Q #20:** Why did Peter write that God “has caused us to be born again in order to have a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . .”? What’s his point for the audience? For you?
 - If Christ wasn’t raised, none of this will happen, therefore you don’t have a living hope, therefore life is pointless, and you’re still in your sins
 - But, He *was* raised from the dead, so:
 - (1) God *did* cause you to be born again
 - (2) God *did* give you a living hope *through* Christ’s resurrection from the dead – and everything it accomplished for you
 - (3) God *did* give you an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, and unfading
 - (4) It *is* being kept in heaven for you
 - (5) You *are* being guarded by God’s power through faith
 - (6) You *will* be delivered and rescued at the last time, when Christ returns

c. A Salvation Ready to Be Revealed?

- Peter wrote, “who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time,” (1 Pet 1:5)
 - **Q #21:** What kind of encouragement is that to a new Christian who heard Peter’s letter read?
 - **Q #22:** What kind of encouragement is that to you, today?