

# Love Before First Sight

**Introduction.** It is not difficult to see that many of the problems in life are caused by neglect. By neglect of education, children grow up unprepared for life; by neglect of husbandry, a farm grows up in weeds and thorns; by neglect of upkeep, a house will sit and decay; by neglect of planting, a man will have no harvest; by neglect of harvesting, the crop will rot in the field. No worldly interest can prosper where there is neglect.

The first book of Peter opens with one of the most precious doxologies, or an expression of praise to God, about salvation by grace through faith (1 Peter 1:3-9). It is an extraordinary elaboration of faith and this faith, if properly nurtured, produces a love before first sight.

## I. ***Our Godly Inheritance***

A. God's mercy has begotten us again.

1. Peter makes it clear that the whole process starts with God's mercy. The great outpouring of God's kindness has made redemption possible. It is for this reason Peter states that we are to praise our God who has given us this wonderful gift.
2. We must be born again (John 3:3-8). As God is the Author of our life in a natural sense, so He is the Author of our life in a spiritual sense (Ephesians 2:1-5). Each Being in the Godhead has a part:
  - a) The Father's part (John 1:13).
  - b) The Son's part (Colossians 2:12-13).
  - c) The Holy Spirit's part (Titus 3:5).
3. Only the gospel has the power to initiate the new birth which the scriptures make clear is essential to our salvation (Romans 1:16; Titus 3:5).

B. We have a lively hope.

1. Every person who has never experienced the new birth is a hopeless creature. That sounds cruel, but it is true. The Bible teaches that the only one who has any hope of salvation is the Christian. This hope is not a dead hope, but a living hope. It is not based upon speculation or sentiment; it was proven by the resurrection of Christ.
2. Of all parts of the gospel, the resurrection is the most significant. Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 15 that if Christ had not risen, then all his preaching would have been in vain. Our hope rose up with Christ. If this event did not historically occur, then there would not be any reason for any of us to be sitting in this building today. Christ's resurrection demonstrated that God accepted Christ's death as full payment for our sins, that He is victorious over death and it assures us of our own resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51-56; 2

- Timothy 1:10).
- C. We have an inheritance.
1. This inheritance is defined as "the eternal blessedness in the consummated kingdom of God which is to be expected after the visible return of Christ." Christians know this inheritance as the promise of heaven and eternal life. There are four characteristics of this inheritance:
    - a) It is incorruptible -- All corruption is a change from better to worse, but heaven is without change and without end.
    - b) It is undefiled -- The two grand defilements that mar the beauty of the world are sin and misery. This inheritance will be pure. It will never defile the heart.
    - c) It fadeth not away -- This inheritance retains its vigor and beauty. The crown of glory will never dim and the streets of gold will never lose their luster.
    - d) It is reserved -- It is kept safe until the saints claim it. It is reserved for them and all the rest will be shut out.
- D. We are kept by the power of God.
1. This watching and guarding preserves us for the attainment of salvation. God has the might or ability to preserve us for the attainment of this inheritance (Romans 8:35-39). "Kept" is a military term which suggests the idea of God providing a fortress or garrison for the protection of the inheritance and for its recipients.
  2. This does not mean that man's part is any less significant. Only through working faith can we enter the fortress of God's power (Romans 5:2; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2). The salvation or inheritance spoken of is future. It is hidden but it will be revealed when Christ comes again (Matthew 25:34; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 John 3:1-2).

## II. ***Our Faith Will Be Tested***

- A. We can rejoice in trials.
1. The prospect of a future inheritance is a source of highest joy. Although persecution, opposition and tribulation by adversaries of Christ cause us much pain, grief and sorrow, there is nothing foreign in this situation (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 4:12). The Bible teaches that we will have persecution (Matthew 5:11-12; Acts 14:22).
  2. "Trials" can either represent a testing of faith or character which is good or bad. The context must determine the usage. Here it represents the afflictions of Christians which are designed for the trial of our faith. God's will in allowing His people to be afflicted is their advantage, not their ruin.
- B. The results of our testing.

1. Peter had a double comparison of faith and gold. Gold is the most valuable, pure, useful and durable of all the precious metals. Faith is the same way with the Christian. But Peter says that the trial of faith is much more precious than the trial of gold. In both, there is a purification and a discovery of the good in the metal and faith.
2. Gold does not increase and multiply by trial in the fire; it dwindles. But faith is established, improved and multiplied when it meets with oppositions and afflictions (Luke 22:32). Genuine faith that is revealed through trials comes to fruition in being approved, commended or praised at the revelation of Jesus Christ. It also causes glory to the cause of Christ (Acts 5:41; Romans 2:10).

C. Love before first sight.

1. Our love for Christ is not based upon His appearance, but on who He is, what He has done for us and our relationship to Him. If there is anything for which a human being should be grateful, it is that God has loved him and given him the hope of eternal life.
2. The people to whom Peter wrote had proven their love for Christ. It was not an idle claim. They had passed through trials and had stayed by the side of their Lord. Nothing was allowed to deter them from obeying His voice. Our willingness to obey His voice in all things is the gauge of our love for Him. Does a lack of love for Jesus keep us in mediocrity?
3. We love Christ because we see Him by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). Just like in a court of law, we rely by faith on what others saw (John 20:29-31). We do not appeal to people to accept the scriptures blindly, but we should ask them to approach the scriptures honestly, investigating them diligently and without prejudice (Romans 10:17).
4. Love for Christ and faith in Him brings us blessings while we live upon the earth. We are able to greatly rejoice with a joy and glory that cannot be put into words. If every problem we encounter knocks us down; if we are full of complaints about how rough life is for us; if we are bitter and resentful; if we are unable to feel or express joy; then we are missing the blessings these brethren enjoyed.

D. The outcome of our faith.

1. The design of faith is to save people from the consequences of sin and deposit their souls safely in eternity. Jesus is coming again, and I am ready to welcome the end when my faith will melt away and I will live by sight. But if the end should not come just yet, then I am ready to continue to live by faith, and not by sight (1 John 3:1-2).
2. The word "receiving" here alludes to a game where the winner re-

ceived from the judge of the contest a reward, which he carried off in triumph. The salvation of the soul was a prize that the Christians fought for, the crown they labored for, and the end at which they aimed. Is that our goal?

**Conclusion.** We look forward to new, incorruptible, spiritual bodies. We have not seen them yet, but we will. We look forward to a home without sickness, pain or dying. We have not seen it yet, but we will. We look forward to seeing our God face to face and to know for the first time the absolute pinnacle of glory, love and beauty. We have not seen Him yet, but we will. How do we know? The salvation of our souls is the outcome of our faith. This is our goal, and if any have a different goal, then may God bless you with the wisdom to change it.

Are you heavy laden and burdened with sin? You can trade that heavy load for a heavenly inheritance. If you want to be born again to this living hope, God promises that He will protect it for you if you are obedient. If you are here and suffering because of Christ, do not be discouraged. The testing of that faith produces greater faith. Find out what it really means to "re-joyce" because of the grace of God. Obey today and realize the "inexpressible joy" from knowing that you have made the decision to stand with God.