

1 Peter 1:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

Analysis

Peter shifts from believers' regeneration (v.3) to their inheritance, employing three negative adjectives to describe its excellence. "To an inheritance" (*eis klēronomian*, *εἰς κληρονομίαν*) uses terminology from property law—a secured legacy passing from parent to child. It is "incorruptible" (*aphtharton*, *ἀφθαρτον*)—unable to decay, immune to corruption, unlike earthly possessions subject to rust and moth (Matthew 6:19-20). It is "undefiled" (*amianton*, *ἀμίαντον*)—morally pure, unstained by sin, unlike earthly inheritances often obtained through unrighteousness or maintained through compromise. It "fadeth not away" (*amaranton*, *ἀμάραντον*)—literally "unfading," retaining full beauty eternally, contrasting with flowers that wilt. The inheritance is "reserved in heaven" (*tetērēmenēn en ouranois*, *τετηρημένην ἐν οὐρανοῖς*)—the perfect passive participle indicates completed action with ongoing results: it has been and remains kept safe by divine power, beyond Satan's reach or earthly calamity. The phrase "for you" (*eis hymas*, *εἰς ὑμᾶς*) personalizes this—each believer has individual, certain claim secured by Christ's death and resurrection. This inheritance contrasts sharply with Old Testament Israel's earthly Canaan, which could be lost through disobedience. The believer's inheritance is eternally secure.

Historical Context

Peter's original readers, facing persecution and property confiscation for Christian faith, needed assurance their true inheritance remained secure. Roman law allowed property seizure from condemned criminals and religious non-conformists.

Many believers lost homes, businesses, and family inheritances when disowned for faith in Christ. Peter assures them their ultimate inheritance—eternal glory with Christ—cannot be touched by Roman authorities, family rejection, or economic devastation. The threefold description (in incorruptible, undefiled, unfading) deliberately contrasts earthly possessions' vulnerability to decay, corruption, and loss. This echoes Jesus's teaching to store treasures in heaven where moth and rust don't corrupt and thieves don't break through and steal (Matthew 6:19-21). Early church fathers like Chrysostom emphasized this verse when encouraging believers facing state-sponsored persecution to remember their permanent, heavenly wealth surpassed any temporary earthly loss.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does confidence in your incorruptible, eternal inheritance change your response to earthly losses—financial setbacks, property damage, or material disappointments?
2. In what practical ways are you currently investing in your eternal inheritance versus accumulating earthly possessions that will perish?

Interlinear Text

εἰς κληρονομίαν ἀφθαρτον καὶ ἀμίαντον καὶ
To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and
G1519 G2817 G862 G2532 G283 G2532

ἀμάραντον τετηρημένην ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἰς ἡμᾶς
that fadeth not away reserved in heaven To G2248
G263 G5083 G1722 G3772 G1519

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 21:27 (Parallel theme): And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Hebrews 9:15 (Parallel theme): And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

1 Peter 5:4 (Parallel theme): And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

2 Timothy 4:8 (Parallel theme): Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Colossians 1:5 (Parallel theme): For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

Matthew 25:34 (Parallel theme): Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Ephesians 1:18 (Parallel theme): The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

Acts 20:32 (Parallel theme): And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Acts 26:18 (Parallel theme): To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Psalms 31:19 (Parallel theme): Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

