

# (1 Peter - Part 5): The Defiled World and Our Undefined Inheritance

by A.W. Tozer

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*Our inheritance is a legacy from the Father, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for us.*

**Duration:** 43:34

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 1:3

**Topics:** "Inheritance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of everything being in motion and constantly changing. He emphasizes that nothing can be defined or understood without comparing it to something else. The preacher also talks about the false sense of security that people often find in worldly possessions and government support. He questions whether God would preserve an inheritance for people that He cannot preserve. The sermon is based on the book of First Peter, specifically focusing on the first chapter and the first four verses.

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## Transcript

Now those of you who are familiar with the way we proceed in our Bible preaching, know that we are following through books of the Bible Sunday after Sunday. Having those expositions interrupted from time to time by visiting speakers or by absences, we are now in the book of 1 Peter, and we are still in the first chapter. Very much in the first chapter, inasmuch as we're only to verse 4. In other words, Father and Son, William R. and Philip, do what they call verse-by-verse exposition.

I do not quite follow this method. I try to follow idea-by-idea rather than verse-by-verse, because there are times when, in an epistle, one idea will be embodied in a half a dozen verses, or it will take a half a dozen verses to embody one idea. To me, therefore, it would be impossible to stay by the verses.

I stay by the ideas. So we come this morning to another great idea, a great spiritual principle that lies embodied here in the fourth verse of chapter 1 of 1 Peter, reading verses 3 and 4, maybe 5 too. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, preserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith, under salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

And the last time I spoke here, I said, following Peter, that Christians are not born upward into a vacuum, and that the new birth is not an end in itself. It is a means to yet a higher end, and that Christians are born unto an inheritance. And I pointed out that that inheritance is not a present gift, such as eternal life is.

It's not a future reward, which comes by faithfulness and toil, but it is a legacy from the father to his children. Neither direct present gift, nor reward earned by works, but a legacy which comes to the child by virtue of his or her relationship to the father. Now, in today's lesson, there are three qualities that are attributed to this inheritance.

It is described by three words. And these qualities, which are said to inherit in our inheritance, are precisely the qualities that distinguish our inheritance from any earthly thing. The things of God and heaven itself, they are not simply an upward projection of our imagination, of the very best that we have or know or can imagine in this world, upward and in touch with perpetuity, so that they are eternal.

They're mostly contrary to the things of earth. And you'll find this inheritance, which we mentioned this morning, to be of a kind which distinguishes it sharply from any earthly inheritance that there may be. There are three words.

Incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. King James says, fadeth not away, which of course is unfading. So now let us look at these three words, and remember that they are inherent in the legacy which is left us.

They cling to it, they are part of it. They describe it, they do not define it. But they are the qualities that belong to our heavenly inheritance, which we have in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

The first is the word incorruptible, and that according to the Greek means undecaying in essence and endless in years. That which cannot be corrupted then is undecaying in essence, and I suppose only secondarily, endless in years. Now I want to ask you what a man can possess in this world that has about it the quality of incorruptibility.

I want to ask you what there is on the face of this earth that you could have even if you had the power to call to yourself whatever you would want, some Aladdin's lamp to rub and bring to you whatever gift you desired. I ask you what there could be on earth that can be properly or inaccurately described as being incorruptible that does not decay in its essence and is endless in its years. Now our Lord said, Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break through and steal.

Now these were not the words of a sinner, neither were they the words of a defeatist. We are often, we Christians, charged with being defeatists. They say it's defeatism.

They say that the colored man of the south sings so beautifully about heaven and the golden street because he had to live in a little wooden shack somewhere and live on corn foam. That he is trying to create for himself what his master in the old slave days already possessed and then pushing it upward into perpetuity, and that was the colored man's heaven. And so we are charged with this.

They say that this is because you are defeated. You're nihilistic in your outlook. And because you're defeated, you're dreaming of a place where there's no defeat.

Because you're unhappy, you're dreaming of a happy, happy land where no one wipes away, or needs to wipe away a tear. Now all that would explain everything except for the small matter that is not true. Our Lord Jesus Christ was not a defeatist.

Our Lord Jesus Christ never suffered, as they said Abraham Lincoln did, from glandular deficiency, and that's what made him the way he was. He put in people and they said that's a glandular deficiency. But our Lord Jesus Christ had so no such deficiencies.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was not a defeatist. He was not a serious optimist, certainly. Neither had he any of the heavy-handed, heavy-hearted pessimism that is characterized by the great many thinkers in the world.

Our Lord Jesus Christ saw everything clearly. If there ever existed in the wide world a man who earned the right to be called a realist, Jesus Christ was that man. For he saw everything exactly as it was.

It was all real to him. He did not shave one edge of something to bring something else into relief. He did not either in ideas nor in the words that expressed those ideas put his best foot forward.

He saw everything exactly as it was and described it and spoke of it exactly as it was. He was the world's most perfect realist because he was himself truth. And so our Lord was neither dreaming of some heaven that he had never seen, neither was he projecting his imagination upward away from the grief and miseries of this world to some lovely heaven, some mansion which was being prepared.

He spoke of things as they were and as they will be found to be. And he said, lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, for moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. And there we have that ugly word corrupt again, and Jesus applied it to all traders.

And he said that the moth took some of it and rust took other of it. He certainly didn't give us a complete picture, but he did say that there was corruption in the earth. And even if you did not wait for it to corrupt, a thief might easily break through and steal it.

So you see the vanity, the futility of it all. What a cheat the devil is and what a deceiver, what a confidence man he is. He sells poor people the Brooklyn Bridge and then grins as he takes their last dollar and goes and leaves them to find out too late that the Brooklyn Bridge wasn't his to sell.

He's a liar, I say, and a deceiver. And he's leading people to spend the best years of their life laying up for themselves treasures, which, even before they die, will begin to rust and rot and decay. Incurruptible is a word that cannot be applied to any earthly thing.

Nothing is there that is undecaying in its essence and endless in its years. But there is an inheritance, which Jesus Christ, the Realist, Jesus Christ, the Heavenly One, came to give to his followers, to his believers. Now, that inheritance is incurruptible.

And the word incurruptible here is exactly the same word as he used of the dead who shall rise again at the coming of Christ. We sing, people who sing, sing, The dead shall be raised incurruptible. Remember that.

The dead shall be raised incurruptible, and that's exactly the same word to describe the glorified human body as is used here to describe the inheritance of the saints. It cannot decay, it cannot corrupt. Job, poor, weary, sick, tired Job, said that the skin worms would devour his body.

And there are those who have tough enough stomachs that they can remind us with a straight face that the very element, the very powers that shall devour our bodies in the grave already are active in our bodies. I personally don't like to think of that. I'd rather think of something a bit more pleasant.

But if it is true, as it probably is true, there will be a day when those skin worms will be no more. God will shake them loose and say, let him alone. Let him alone forever! And it's also true of the inheritance of the saints.

God's people have an inheritance that the skin worms cannot bother. It can never decay and will be endless in years. Now that's the first thing that describes it.

And I say that this quality that describes our heavenly inheritance is precisely the quality that distinguishes it from all earthly treasures. The second word is the word defiled, undefiled. Now I ask you, what earthly treasure is safe from defilement? The Bible has very little kind to say about money, very little.

Very little it is kind to say about the heaping up of trade. The Bible uses the word lucre for meaning profit and then adds the disgusting adjective filthy before it and calls it filthy lucre. And the man Paul, who was not defeatist and was not compelled to rationalize his poverty, but who had given up a high position to become a Christian, he said that the love of money is a root from which all evil springs.

Note he did not say that money is a root from which all evil springs. He said the love of money is a root, not the root, for there are other roots. But the love of money is a root from which all evil springs.

Now everything that we have in this world is defiled and has been defiled. Even though a saint may have it, it does not come to him undefiled. The very ten-dollar bill you have folded in your wallet, that you expect to give to missions today, I don't know, but it could be that that same ten-dollar bill was part of a wad that somebody paid somebody else to kill somebody that was in his way.

It could easily be that that bill was part of a wad handed out in some gambling den or some house of ill-fame. There is scarcely a dollar smell that dollar bill or that ten-dollar bill. The very smell of it indicates where it's been.

It smells like itself. There is something that isn't altogether morally right about it. I don't mean there's morally wrong for us to own it and to use it and to give it and to use it for our families, because we keep pure by virtue of the washing of the blood of Jesus.

But I mean that nothing that this earth has is quite pure. There is an element of defilement upon it all. The very lot whereon your house stands, that very lot once belonged to the tribes of red Indians that roamed the deep woods in the section we call Illinois.

And it's yours now. You got it honestly, so I don't want to lay anything on your conscience. I only want to say that that once belonged to another race.

And we white men came without any payment in kind and kicked them out to the western seas and put them on little rice-infested reservations and toss them ashock from year to year to try to solve our own conscience for the guilt of having upset and invaded and cast out a race that once owned this. But on the other hand, that race was just as guilty as we, because the red Indians, the Chippewas and the Seminoles and the rest of them that roamed the North American continent, history tells us, once invaded and drove out a race that preceded them. So if we are thieves for taking it from the Indians, we only took it from thieves who had taken it from others who were probably thieves in turn.

And when you go to the map of Europe and look at it, you will see how men are arguing and fighting for their borders, those flexible and changing borders. And yet I long ago threw up my hands and said, My

God, I'll never be able to decide what nation owns what land over there. Because if you go back far enough in history, you will find that they got it by invasion, by massacre, by murder.

And then they had squatters right on it, forgetting that they got it and the only payment they made was the blood of the people that owned it. So, there isn't anything in the world that isn't defiled. Injustice and oppression runs through everything.

And it is this that gives the vile devil-possessed communist the one lone weapon that he has. No man can think less of the communist than I. No man can be revolted as though it were some bottomless pit that had been loosed and locusts had come out and called themselves communists. That's what I think of the whole thing.

But I also know that all they say about us is not lies. I also know that that charming and beautiful hotel on the North Shore that raises its gracefully rocked story one above another into these elegant corridors where come and go the rich and the great and the learned and the celebrity. I know it's kept that way, but poor tired old women with mop buckets who go up and down the halls, weary, defeated ladies who for a pittance make the beds and mop up the halls.

So I say that while the devil invented communism, we sinners tossed them weapons to cut our own heads off with. There isn't any treasure probably that isn't defiled. I suppose you drive up the coast, Florida or New England, and you see a yacht flying at anchor there or floating gracefully over the broad bosom of the deep.

And you say, how beautiful, and wish secretly that you had one, or in a bracket where you could have one. If you knew how much of iniquity there was rocking to that graceful thing, you'd never want it. I can only repeat again the say of Emerson.

A young man said, Emerson, you want to be president? You want to go to the White House? Ah, if you only knew how much of his manhood he had to sell out to get there, you wouldn't want it. If you only knew how he must obey those who stand erect behind the throne and tell him what to do. This is no political comment, whether a Democrat or a Republican or a straddler is an artist.

Everything is defiled because everything flows out of the human breast, and the human breast is defiled. You cannot get pure water out of any pile or fountain. You cannot pluck sweet figs off of a thorn tree.

You cannot get sweet grapes off a wild grapevine. And you cannot get edible chicken eggs from a buzzard. You cannot get pure treasures from impure hearts.

I repeat, this is not a blanket indictment. I believe we have men in there listening now, men listening to me, who would scornfully turn their back on anything that wasn't honest and fair. I do not go along with those that hold that every businessman is a crook.

I don't believe it. I believe it entirely possible to live a clean, upright life. A man may not have as big an income, but I believe it's entirely possible to live where I can be in the business world.

The very money that flows into your hand and out again, however honest it may be as far as you're concerned, I repeat, may have bought the hired killer or the hired whore. So everything in this world is undefiled. But our inheritance is pure and unsought.

And that which the redeeming God has given to his redeemed children has no trace anywhere of defilement upon it. You can trace it back to the roots of its beginnings. Because it flowed out of the pure undefiled heart of Jesus Christ, it is undefiled as he.

And incidentally, that word undefiled is used to describe the Savior too. It says he is holy and harmless and undefiled, separate from sinners and higher than the highest heaven. And the treasure he gives to his children is a treasure as undefiled as the heart of the one who prepared it.

Then there is the word faded not away, unfading. Now I ask you if unfading describes anything in this world. I do not know of anything in this world that the word unfading could describe really, particularly any treasure that you may have.

You buy a piece of property, and then you die, and your children after you have a hard time getting rid of it. To you it was a wonderful thing. Go down Michigan Avenue, if you please, and see the great old brownstone mansions.

One time housed the elite. More blue blood flowed in and out of the old brownstone. And yet today they're inhabited by anywhere up to a dozen to fifteen families of colored people.

They're running down. And all the royalty that one time went in and out of there, I mean social royalty, whose names were in the who's who, that didn't happen to know what's what. I borrowed that from Kyleite.

Well, they're gone, they're gone, and their property has degenerated, deteriorated, prices going down. And so it is with everything. Marries her today in her blushing womanhood.

Beautifully seen, but in ten years she begins that process they call fading. Then she scrambles off to Woolworths and to Walgreens and to Steinways. It wasn't for men like me who were supposed to have altars, and women like you who were fading.

Steinways had run out of business. I had to get pills from my altars and you to get something to prop up your fading beauty. But everything fades, everything fades in this wide world.

Old letters fade, old books, old paintings. There's great difficulty, they're restored. But another generation or two will have to be restored again, and each restoration means a fading.

So everything, no matter what it is, fades in this world. You cannot use the word unfading to describe anything earthly. The Bible tells us that we are like the flower of the field that faded.

Today it is, and tomorrow it is cut down and withered and is gone. And the bouquet that cost the young swain lovesick and sighing like furnace, \$15 on Saturday night, Wednesday noon, will be thrown out to be carried away Thursday morning by the man with the big yellow wag. Everything fades, and we're like it.

Fading beauty, fading presence, fading values. Did we all do fade as a leaf? Doesn't sound like, Arthur, God forbid, does it? Doesn't sound like the paid comedians the courts ruled you they're painting in bells who make millions to keep us from thinking about the fact that we all do fade as a leaf. How very wise the devil is.

How very wise he is. And if he was right, I'd want him on my side. For he's wiser than any Christian I've ever met.

He knows how to keep people from thinking about the fact that they're fading, and their treasures are fading. He gives them some silly little thing to do, offers them twenty questions or something in order to keep them from thinking about themselves. God's children have an inheritance that shall not fade nor pass away.

Now I believe that, brethren. I do not believe that's poetry. I do not believe that is highly inflated metaphor.

I believe that God's people have an inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that faded not away. Which can be said about that inheritance, but can be said about no other inheritance in the world. Now, it says that this inheritance, this unincorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance is reserved in heaven for you.

Well I've been thinking this week that heaven is a place. One is almost startled when he comes to think about heaven and how little anybody believes in heaven anymore. Either a hillbilly with a guitar sings about heaven in a way that would make any intelligent man wish he'd never seen such a heaven, or else we don't think about heaven at all.

The corrosive action of unbelief has worn down our belief. And heaven, and the belief of the things in heaven, the inheritance that is ours laid up in heaven for us, it's almost gone. You see, two men have partly, men I think responsible for that.

One was Copernicus. There was a day when men were geocentric in their thinking. They said, the earth, the earth, that's everything, the earth is the center of everything, God made the earth and put it here, and everything else revolves around it, flies over it, goes around it, goes above it, and goes over it.

And it's solid, it's fixed. God nailed it down and established the foundations thereof. And then along came Copernicus, and the risk of his life went on to prove that it wasn't so tall.

The earth isn't nailed down anyplace. The earth isn't frozen fast, and you're stuck fast. The earth moves, and the sun stands still, yes and all.

The sun only seems to stand still in relation to the earth's motion. The sun, in fact, moves in a wider orbit, faster through the vast, vast spaces. So that filtered down from the scientists into the colleges, and the colleges, and everybody knows it now.

And so everybody is saying, now what about this heaven idea? What about heaven? There was a day when heaven was right up there, and the stars were the peepholes of heaven, and you could look up and see the bit of the light of the glory. And so we laughed it off, but it got hold of us, and it acted like a downer belief in heaven. And the second man that came along was the man Einstein with his relativity.

Now relativity is true, it must be true. There isn't anything in the Bible that says that it isn't. But he not only took the earth out, he took everything out.

And so there isn't anything that's fixed anyplace. Nothing's standing still, everything is in motion. It wasn't exactly a new idea, all the creatures had done the same thing before Christ's time.

But he said everything is in motion, and everything is only in relation to something else. So there isn't anything against which you can measure something and say, that's it. He says, no, that isn't it, that's only it in comparison with something else.

Find that other it, and say that is it in comparison with it. Then when you get to it number two, you don't say, ah, now we've got something nailed down, something fast against which we can figure everything, because it's number two already, and in comparison with it number three. So we go on in that infinitum, world without end, and there isn't any place fixed.

Oh, I don't know, after I read that kind of stuff, I like to say, oh, rest my long-divided heart. Fixed on this blissful center, rest. There is a place where neither Einstein nor Copernicus trouble us in the wicked art, rest.

And it is the heart of God who made all these flying balls and these worlds within worlds. There is one we call God. And yet I say that the idea of relativity and of the motion to the heavenly bodies has helped to destroy faith in heaven as a place.

I don't see why it should. If God could create an earth and put a race on it, why couldn't he create something else and put a redeemed race on it? You know, I don't have to trouble some people. Thank God, and I'm not troubled intellectually.

What worries others doesn't worry me. I believe that if God could make the earth and put a race like us on it, he could make another place and call it heaven and make a race on it that has been redeemed. We are redeemed.

That's very simple for me. So Copernicus and Einstein can lie down with their fathers. And they won't bother me at all.

But it is, it has taken away the idea of heaven. We try to make heaven as another plane. We say it's another dimension.

We say heaven's another dimension. Others say that heaven is a state of mind. And we get rid of heaven, the whole thing is simply the artful dodging of unbelief.

I believe that there is an inheritance laid up, incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for God's children. And when God said to Abraham, Abraham, I will look around you now. Get up on this high mountain.

We can take a look around. All this is to be yours and your children after you. Abraham could have taken out a notebook and written in Arabic or whatever.

This is mine and my children's for inheritance. And along comes the relativists and the rest of them and say, now just a minute, Abraham, don't you realize that Palestine isn't anything fixed? It's just what it is in relation to something else. And that something else is what it is in relation to something else.

Don't imagine that Palestine is a place. Just don't think crudely like that and basically think spiritually. Palestine is just a state of mind.

Abraham said, you can't talk to me, friend. You may have better education than I, but I have heard God say, Abraham, this inheritance is thine. Put a stake down from Lebanon to the great sea and from the Mediterranean to the river Euphrates.

It's all yours. You can locate that on the map. And Abraham, see, true to the word of God, went in there and took over and lived for hundreds of years with a mailing address.

You can locate him. It was a place. God had given them an inheritance.

And so all these gas-brained dreamers that tell us that heaven is not a place, it's a state of mind. And let them go clamorful. I still believe that the God who made the earth and put a people upon it can make heaven and put a redeemed people in it.

Do you? All right, let's sing more about heaven, brother. Not necessarily this morning. But, you know, more as we go along.

I used to sing a song when I was a boy about a scarlet sky. And I thought it said scarlet sky. And I wondered what on earth they were singing about.

And all we hear about heaven now that I know. But they sing about some gold. God help me to be somewhere without some golden daybreak.

And just beyond the sunset and all that kind of thing. If I die around Chicago, die of dust and noise, if I die, in God's name, don't worry my resting body beyond the sunset and some golden daybreak. Don't do it.

Give us a rest from golden daybreaks and all that dreamy land of somewhere. I'm not interested in a beautiful isle of somewhere. I'm interested in an inheritance reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith under that inheritance.

And that's just as real as your right hand. And just as trustworthy as the lock number on the lock for your house. And you go down to the court records and find it and send a man out and survey it.

And so this inheritance of ours is just as real as that. In spite of all that we now know of astronomy. The God who can fling somewhere.

If you were to go out to Mars or somewhere, I suppose, and there were anybody there, they'd be arguing there couldn't be such a thing as a race of men loving and weeping and dying and grieving and writing great music and painting great paintings and building bridges and highways. There couldn't be such a thing. But there is.

Here we are. Still hanging on by the grace of God to the power of gravitation. And we're out of Europe riding around the sun.

So let all the marshals argue we're here. And there's a people somewhere, a great cloud of witnesses our brother preached about last Sunday. They're there, kept by the power of God.

Now, just listen to them down there. Kept by the power of God through faith. Why does it say we have an inheritance? And not the inheritance, but we are kept by the power of God through faith.

Why, it would be unthinkable if our inheritance was incorruptible and we corrupted, wouldn't it? It would be unthinkable if our treasure was unfaithful and we failed it. It would be unthinkable if our treasure outlasted us. And God found himself in the embarrassing position of preparing an unfaithful treasure for a people that he couldn't keep to enjoy.

All the papers of the man who looks with unutterable love upon his boy in the cradle and takes a quiet vow. God helping me, I'll have an inheritance for that boy. God helping me, I'll invest wisely.

God helping me, this boy's not going to go through what I did. I'll have an inheritance for the boy. As the boy gets older and learns to walk and talk, the father gets happier and prouder and more sure of himself.

He's invested in gilded securities. He puts the government behind his securities. As long as the flag flies and America stands, it's good.

And he says, if I died or more, I'm a boy's God. He'll not have to work as I worked twelve hours nights, as I used to think I did as a kid. In fact, he won't have to do it.

And one day out of the blue somewhere, the dark shadow falls upon that boy. They cry, oh, Rapolio, twelve hours he's gone. The inheritance is there.

Put the boy down. It's capous there, I said. Poignant, piercing, too deep for human tears.

What is there quite so touching to the human soul as the little treasure of the one we love but couldn't keep to enjoy? Is God going to be caught in such an emotional tangle? Is God going to allow himself to preserve an inheritance for a people that he can't preserve? Never, never while the world stands. You are kept by the power of God through faith unto an inheritance reserved in heaven for you. So I'm leaning back very strongly on the keeping power of God.

What are the earmarks of the kept? Just above us it tells us, elect, begotten, obedient, and believing, that's all. Elect, obedient, begotten. Elect, that's God's business before we know anything about it.

Begotten, that's God's business as we believe in his Son. Obedient and believing who are kept by the power of God through faith unto an inheritance. So there we are, friends.

Once more I repeat, we Christians are not only rich. We Christians are nobly rich. Soundly rich.

Rich with riches that we need not apologize for. Rich with riches that we need never fear came to us through defiled hands. Never any corruption, never any worm to make the tree of life safe.

We're rich people. I wonder when we'll begin to act like it. Instead of acting like the poverty-stricken creatures that crawl around the earth amassed, whether we can please crawl under a leaf and be not seen.

Let's let the world know how rich we are, let's tell it. Unto an inheritance. What are you doing there, Junior? I'm a converted Christian, just gave my heart to God.

What are you going to do? Well, immediately you think, oh, I'll go to Niagara movies there. But if you go to Niagara movies, it doesn't mean this or that. The big thing is, you are now begotten unto an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for you, and you are being kept for the power of God's enjoyment of that inheritance.

So that's what you're saved for, brother. And whether you go to Moody, Nyack, Wheaton, or where, it makes little difference. God will guide you in that.

I believe that. But that isn't the big thing. Say, you want to go into the work.

You're in the work as soon as you're born, brother. You're going to go into the full-time work? You're in full-time work as soon as you're born into the kingdom of God. Cultivating the riches of your inheritance

and of God's inheritance in the sense, telling the story, letting the world know how rich you are, and telling them where you got it and how you got it.

That's the business of a Christian. May God help us to go to work at that just as soon as we get up from the altar and have given our heart to the Savior. Amen.

Good night. Lord, we pray for the afternoon that it may not be wasted, but that it might be used in some good, positive way to know thee better, to cultivate spiritual things, to do good unto all men, to witness of saving grace to a world that's dying. Now may grace and mercy and peace from God the Father and Son and Holy Ghost be with us.

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