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Born Into Privilege by Ben S.

Tara Palmer Thompkins was born into an aristocratic family. Her father represented Britain in the winter Olympics in 1964. Prince Charles was a family friend. She was a socialite hounded by the press, famous for being famous. She would have a dinner party with her friends and then afterwards they would get on her private jet and fly to Venice for a proper after dinner coffee. She was the life and soul of the party in the 1990s. We could feel very resentful towards her and others like her who have been born into more privilege than we have.

Peter's addressed the Christians (Jew and Gentile) in northern Turkey as elect exiles, strangers, refugees, pilgrims passing through this world to their home in glory. The answer to the question, 'Where Do We Belong?' is that we don't belong to this world, we belong to God, the one who chose us and fore-loved us, forgave and cleansed us. But as we live in exile and see confident, guilt-free, high achievers we can be tempted to feel resentful and envious. We often feel unimpressive and odd because of what we believe about Jesus and because we don't join in with them. As we try to keep from sin, troubles still come into our lives. How is this fair? In verse six the Christians were suffering all kinds of trials. If you have a lump of clay and a lump of wax and you leave them out in the hot sun, the clay will go hard and the wax will soften. When as Christians we are subject to the heat of trials and difficulties, how can we keep a heart soft like the wax so it does not grow hopeless and joyless and hard like the clay?

Peter who knew deep suffering, surprisingly, starts his letter with the words, "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." Peter was a man of hope who lifts our eyes from our struggles to the Lord of heaven. He reminds the burdened believers of all the blessings of the new birth they have been born into and received from the gracious hands of God.

There are three privileges Christians have been born into. Verses 3-5 tell us of the **'Living Hope'** This is not a flimsy or uncertain hope. Not like the flimsy hope for dry weather we have living in Wales. Biblical hope is in Jesus who rose from the dead. Jesus is our living hope. He stands in heaven, alive! One day we will stand with him united to him by faith. We have many men and women who were great 'break-through pioneers' Jesus is the greatest 'break-through pioneer in the whole of history. He is the first person to break through death into resurrection life. He has opened up a way for all who trust him to also break through to eternal resurrection life with him. His resurrection is the guarantee for all those who believe. Peter describes that living hope as an inheritance that does not perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept for you. Jesus says it is "where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal." (Matt 6:20) We work so hard to keep things in this aging world: youth, houses, cars, gardens, children, productivity, strength, memories, sight, life. It all gradually slips away from us. It's a comfort to know that by God's grace we have an inheritance, a land, a home which will always remain untouched by death, sin or time. 'Rejoice that your name is written in heaven'. Peter adds something even more wonderful. "You, through faith, are shielded by God's power." (v5) God's power garrisons his people. Salvation's walls surround us. The foe cannot ultimately get to

you. Your soul is safe and secure in Jesus, surrounded by songs of deliverance. Lift your eyes to the Lord Jesus Christ if you are in despair. Remember your pilgrimage is long and it is tiring but every step you take brings you one step nearer to glory.

We are born into a persistent joy. v(6-9 to) "In all this you greatly rejoice." We are sorrowful yet rejoicing at the same time. Grief here is a strong word that means deeply troubled like a stormy sea. We suffer loss like Job who tore his clothes and put ashes on his head. Yet he did not sin. The pain and sorrow is real. Think about Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. He was not just sitting there with a smile on his face saying I'm just trusting the Lord He cried out in anguish.

During WWI Edward Shillito (1872-1948) wrote the prayer "Jesus of the Scars" (quoted above). We worship a wounded God and his wounds speak to our wounds. They tell us he understands. He cares. His wounds are for us and by them we are healed and redeemed. Our trials are like the refiner's fire that proves our faith is genuine. The fiery trials of our faith doesn't burn us up. We come out as refined gold: brighter, purer: "When we all get to heaven what a day of rejoicing that will be. When we all see Jesus we'll sing and shout the victory." When we emerge from this place of trial we will rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. George Matheson lost the love of his fiancée when he went blind. Again when his caring sister left him to marry he felt the grief of being left. The Holy Spirit gave him the words to the hymn *O love that will not let me go*: "O Joy that seekest me through pain,/ I cannot close my heart to thee;/ I trace the rainbow through the rain,/ And feel the promise is not vain,/ That morn shall tearless be."

We have a much admired salvation. (v10-12) The prophets and the angels longed to experience the grace and joy that we experience this side of the cross. We have the one that they spoke of. The angels would love to know what we know. They can only peer into the mysteries of our salvation from the outside. They have never tasted salvation from the inside; never known what it is like for our creator to give up everything to win our salvation. What is it like to be so lost and then born again into so much privilege or for these Christians to sing songs about their debt being paid by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ? We are experiencing a much admired salvation.

To the Elect Exiles scattered around North Wales in 2021 do not resent the world. Tara Palmer Thompkins tragically died aged 45 of a £400.00 a day cocaine habit. How much the world needs our compassion and prayers. They need the gospel and not our jealousy. Remember there will be times when you feel your loss and pain is the whole story but that's not true. One day you will come out of the refiner's fire, purer and brighter, transformed and dazzling, to the praise of the Lord Jesus forever. Let this living hope sustain you.