

PRAISE GOD FOR SALVATION!
1 Peter 1:3-5

Peter is writing to troubled Christians. The intended audience of the letter is identified in verses 1-2: "To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood." These elect exiles faced growing religious intolerance because of their faith in Christ. It will soon become genocidal persecution, when the Emperor NERO determined to rid the Roman Empire of Christianity. These persecuted believers needed real hope for difficult times. 1 Peter 1:3-5 records the apostle's initial word of comfort to these troubled Christians. It begins with an exclamation of praise: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

To bless God is to speak well of him. It is to praise God. God blesses us by what he does for us. We bless God by what we say about him. The word "blessed" translates a Greek term from which we get our English word "eulogy." A eulogy is when a person speaks in a funeral to honor the deceased. In the New Testament, the word was is as a call to worship. This is Peter's prescription for his readers' pain: a steady diet of grateful praise. Who should we praise? Verse 3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This description of God is uniquely Christian. It is a subtle affirmation of the Trinity that focuses on the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. Peter calls God "the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ." R.C.H. Lenski comments: "For Jesus, according to His human nature, God is His God, and for Jesus in His deity God is His Father; His God since the incarnation, His Father from all eternity." Indeed, Jesus is fully human and fully divine at the same time. And it is only by the revelation of God in Christ that we can truly know who God is. Yet it is only because of God the Father that we can call his Son "our Lord Jesus Christ." This God is worthy of our highest praise.

Why should we praise God? The answer to this question is imbedded in the title "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We should praise God because the Father has given us the Son and the Son has given us the Father. But in verses 3b-5, Peter explains why we should praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. William Barclay began his comments on these verses by observing: "It will take us a long time to appropriate the riches of this passage, for there are few passages in the New Testament were more of the great fundamental Christian ideas come together." I fully agree. But let me risk a summary of this pregnant text. These verses simply teach us that we should praise God the Father for saving us by the Lord Jesus Christ This is how you should respond to the dangers, toils, and snares of life. Praise God for salvation. There are three benefits of salvation that give blessed assurance when life gets hard.

I. WE HAVE EXPERIENCED A NEW BIRTH.

Verse 3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The central statement of this verse is that God has "caused us to be born again." A religious scholar named Nicodemus came to meet Jesus one night. We do not know why he came to talk to Jesus. But Jesus did. And Jesus addressed what he knew Nicodemus needed the most. In John 3:5-7 Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus was talking about. Neither do we. The new birth is a great mystery. But fundamentally the doctrine of regeneration means that when a person becomes of Christian a radical change takes place in his or her life that can only be described as a new birth or new beginning. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." This is the good news of salvation for which we should praise God. We have experienced a new birth. Notice three dynamics of our new birth this verse affirms.

A. WE ARE BORN AGAIN BY THE MERCY OF GOD.

Verse 3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again." "Mercy" states the source of our new life in Christ. It means that our salvation is completely of God. We need salvation because God is holy. But we receive salvation because God is merciful. What God demands, God provides. Titus 3:5-6 says "he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." We have been born again by the great, abundant, and overflowing mercy of God. ST. BERNARD said it well: "Great sins and great miseries need great mercy, and many sins and miseries need many mercies." This is what God has done for us. Ephesians 2:4-5 says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved."

We have been born again by the mercy of God. Mercy is the manifestation of pity on the undeserving. It assumes the desperate need of the recipient and sufficient resources of the benefactor. This is how our new birth came to pass. We were guilty sinners who deserved the holy wrath of God. There was nothing we could do about our situation. But the mercy of God intervened and held back the judgment we deserved. So great was this mercy that it was as if we were born all over again. Think about that. I was born H.B. Charles, Jr. to H.B. Charles and Ellen Charles. I was born at Los Angeles Hospital in Los Angeles on February 11, 1973. I was born 2 hours and 36 minutes from being born on the same day as my mother. These are the basic facts of my birth. I can recite them to you. But I had nothing to do with them. I did not choose H.B. and Ellen to be my parents. I did not decide to be

born in Los Angeles. I did not determine that I would be a short, dark-skinned male. These are the result of my birth that I experienced but did not participate in. So it is with our new birth in Christ, no one takes credit for being born. It is something that happens to us. And no one should take credit for being born again. We are born again by the mercy of God.

B. WE ARE BORN AGAIN TO A LIVING HOPE.

Verse 3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope.” Mercy states the source of our salvation. Hope states the nature of our salvation. We are born again to a living hope. On one hand, Christian hope is subjective. It is the real experience of the believer. WARREN WIERSBE writes: “Hope is not a sedative; it is a shot of adrenaline, a blood transfusion. Like an anchor, our hope in Christ stabilizes us in the storms of life; but unlike an anchor, our hope moves us forward, it does not hold us back.” At the same time, Christian hope is objective. It is not mere wishful thinking. It is a settled expectation that is rooted in the unwavering faithfulness and unchanging promises of God. Peter makes this point by calling it a “living hope.” Ephesians 2:12 exhorts: “remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” This is the hopeless reality of those who do not know Jesus. But those who are born again have a living hope. The hope of this world is either dead or dying. But as worldly hope eventually fades and inevitably dies, the Christian’s hope becomes deeper and greater and stronger. Romans 5:3-5 says, “More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

**MY HOPE IS BUILT ON NOTHING LESS
THAN JESUS’ BLOOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS
I DARE NOT TRUST THE SWEETEST FRAME
BUT WHOLLY LEAN ON JESUS’ NAME**

C. WE ARE BORN AGAIN THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

On the night Jesus was betrayed into wicked hands, Jesus predicted that one of his disciples would do it. Peter pleaded innocent and vowed to remain faithful to Jesus even to the point of death. But when Judas betrayed the Lord, Peter followed at a distance. And before the rooster crowed the next morning, Peter had denied the Lord three times. When the Lord was crucified, Peter’s hopes were dashed. But on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. And an angel said to the women who

discovered the empty tomb, “But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee” (Mark 16:7).

What Peter had experienced firsthand, he now conveys to the troubled Christians to whom he writes. Verse 3 says, “Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” We have a living hope because we have a risen Savior. Jesus has not only been resurrected from the dead. He himself is the resurrection. This is what Jesus said to Mary and Martha to comfort them after the death of their brother, Lazarus. They had called on Jesus to help while Lazarus was sick. But when Jesus showed up, Lazarus had been dead for four days. And both grief-stricken sisters said to Jesus, “If you would have been here my brother would not have died.” Jesus said to Martha, “Your brother will rise again.” She answered, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection.” But she did not understand what Jesus was saying. In John 11:25-26, Jesus said, “**I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believe in me, though he may die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.**” This is why we are born again to a living hope. Jesus died! Jesus rose again! Jesus is coming again!

BECAUSE HE LIVES, I CAN FACE TOMORROW.

BECAUSE HE LIVES, ALL FEAR IS GONE.

BECAUSE I KNOW WHO HOLDS THE FUTURE,

MY LIFE IS WORTH THE LIVING JUST BECAUSE HE LIVES.

II. WE HAVE RECEIVED A GUARANTEED INHERITANCE.

Verse 4 says we have been born again “to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.” The key word of this verse is “inheritance.” It was used in the Septuagint some seventy times to refer to the land of Canaan that was promised to the children of Israel. Before Israel reached the Promised Land, it was already their possession. And even though other people inhabited the land, it still belonged to them. It was their inheritance.

This word “inheritance” was also significant in the cultural world of the New Testament. It was used to speak of one’s position in the family. Every child born into the family did not receive an inheritance. For instance, girls did not receive an inheritance. It was assumed that the girls would marry. And it would be unacceptable for a daughter to take the inheritance of the family into her marriage. Likewise, not every son received an inheritance. It was given selectively as a statement of a son’s special position in the family. But here Peter says that when you are saved, you experience a new birth that comes with a guaranteed inheritance. Romans 8:16-17 says, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” We have received a guaranteed inheritance in Christ.

What is our spiritual inheritance? The text does not define it. It describes it. It describes the inheritance in terms of what it is not. Verse 4 says we received “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.” The point Peter makes here is that our inheritance in Christ is not like a human inheritance. You do know that just because your name is in a will does not mean that you are going to get anything? A will can be contested. And you can spend all of the bequeathed inheritance fighting over who is going to get it. Not so with our spiritual inheritance. Our inheritance in Christ is “imperishable,” meaning it is death-proof. It is also “undefiled,” meaning it is sin-proof. And it is “unfading,” meaning it is time-proof.

This is the hope Peter offers these troubled Christians. We have received a guaranteed inheritance. You have not received the full manifestation of every promise associated with your salvation in Christ. And you may be facing circumstances that contradict the new birth you have experienced. But praise God for the fact that you have an inheritance. It is yours, even though you have not received it yet. You are in the will. God has written his will and testament. It has been activated by his substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross. And everyone who is born again has received a guaranteed inheritance. You are will the will. Before you start your day in the morning, you should get out your Bible and read the will to know what resources are available to you through Christ. And when the Lord’s Day comes, you should be marked present with the family, so that you can hear the will read and explained. And do not go to any church that where the will interpreter will tell you that you can have your best life now. That is someone who does not know how to read the will. 1 Corinthians 15:19 says, “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.” We do not praise God because we presently experience life at its best. We praise God because we know that the best is yet to come.

Where is our spiritual inheritance? Verse 4 says that we have received “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.” Our inheritance in Christ is guaranteed because of what it is and where it is. It is in heaven. In Matthew 6:19-20, Jesus says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rusts destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” No treasure stored in heaven can be lost, stolen, or damaged. Your inheritance in Christ is absolutely safe because it is “kept in heaven for you.” It means that God himself is keeping a watchful eye on it to guard against loss, theft, or injury. It is kept by God in heaven for you. The NKJV says it is “reserved in heaven for you.” We live in world where reservations do not matter. You can buy a plane ticket and not get a seat because the airlines overbooked the flight. Or you can have a hotel room reservation, credit card, and confirmation number, only to be told that there are no rooms available. But when you are born again, you receive a guaranteed inheritance that is kept in heaven for you.

III. WE HAVE OBTAINED AN ETERNAL SECURITY.

Verse 4 teaches that we who are born again have received a guaranteed inheritance that has been reserved for us at a secure location. But there is still a concern to be addressed. Our inheritance is safe in heaven. But what if something happens to prevent us from getting to heaven to receive our inheritance? Verse 5 addresses this concern by teaching that we are people “who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Verse 4 tells us that the inheritance is secure. But verse 5 tells us that the inheritors are also secure. We who are saved have obtained an eternal security. Can a person who is saved ever lose his salvation? Absolutely not! In John 10:28-30, Jesus says, “I give eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” We have obtained an eternal security.

Verse 5 says Christians are those “who by God’s power are being guarded.” This word “guarded” simply means “to watch over.” It was a military term that described a soldier who was assigned to watch over an important figure or a garrison that was assigned to watch over an important place. Peter uses the word here to say that the Christian can live with the assurance that there is someone watching over us no matter where we are. The believer’s security detail only consists of one person. Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” God is watching over us by his sovereign power. And the grammar of the text indicates that we are watched over by God’s ongoing, never-ending surveillance. KENNETH WUEST wrote: “The guard is never changed. It is on duty twenty-four hours a day, year in and year out until we arrive safe in heaven.”

In Acts 12, Peter was arrested and sentenced to die. Herod had already put James the brother of John to death with the sword. And when he saw it pleased the Jews, he planned to do the same thing to Peter. But he had to wait until the Passover was over. In the meantime, Herod put Peter in a maximum security prison. This was smart, seeing that Peter and the other apostles had a reputation for escaping prison. He even assigned a quadrant of sixteen soldiers to guard Peter. Peter was guarded by Herod’s power. But he was also guarded by the power of God. The Lord sent an angel to miraculously set Peter free. And Peter immediately went to Mary’s house, where the church was praying for him. As they prayed for an answer, the answer to their pray started knocking at the door. Now Peter says to these troubled Christians that God is able to do for them what God did for him. And God can do it for you, too. He has the power to guard you against the flesh, the world, and the devil.

How do we access God’s power to guard us? Verse 5 says we are those “who by God’s power are being guarded through faith.” It is through faith that we experience the power of God to keep us eternally secure. Hebrews 10:39 says, “But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.” A faith that fizzles had a fettle flaw from the first. But those who have truly been born again to a living hope and guaranteed inheritance will persevere in faith to the end. What is waiting for us at the end? Verse 5 says Christians are people “who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” The one who trusts in the blood and righteousness of Christ have salvation in three different time tenses. We have been

saved from the penalty of sin. We are being saved from the power of sin. And we will be saved from the presence of sin. Peter speaks here of our salvation in the future tense. It will be revealed in the last time. Yet it is ready now even though it will not be revealed until the last time. Romans 8:30 says: "And those who he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

The reality of your hope, the possession of your inheritance, and the revelation of your salvation have already been accomplished by God in Christ. It is ready for you. But the Lord is still getting you ready for it. And the Lord uses trials, troubles, and tribulations to get you ready for the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. The question is what do you do in the meantime? Verses 6-7 says, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Continue to praise God, even when you are grieved by various trials, because your trial is a means to an end, not an end of your means. It is like a baby in its mother's womb. It has eyes but nothing to see. It has ears but nothing to hear. It has feet but nowhere to go. But it has these things because it is getting ready to enter a brand new world!

JESUS IS GETTING US READY FOR THAT GREAT DAY!

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WHO SHALL BE ABLE TO STAND?