

THE JOYFUL ANTICIPATION OF A LIVING HOPE

1 Peter 1:3-5

Intro: In the NT there are three epistles which begin with special praise to God where the word “blessed” is used. I am referring to 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and 1 Peter. The word “blessed” speaks of praising God, and that is the way it is used in each one of these verses. More than that, it is *a word of adoration*. When the Apostles Paul and Peter began their epistle with these words, they were not only praising the Lord, but they were worshiping Him. Let me read the verses to you that I have in mind so you will all know what we are concerned with today in our text in 1 Peter.

First of all, this is what we find in 2 Cor. 1:3-4:

- 3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;
4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be
able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort
wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

The second verse is in Eph. 1:3:

- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath
blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

And then the third comes in our text here in 1 Peter 1. Actually, as we have it in our text, verses 3 through 5 make up just one sentence. You follow in your Bible as I read:

- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto
a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that
fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto
salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

Usually when we praise the Lord as the apostles were doing in these verses, it means that they are happy about what the Lord is doing, or has done, or will do, or all three! And that certainly is the case with all three of these passages. And, coming as they do at the first of each of these three epistles, these verses set the tone for each of the epistles. They were not only praising God, but they were adoring Him, and what they said was the expression of the joy they felt in their hearts as they thought about the works of God.

Yesterday in our men's prayer meeting, I read Psalm 105 to the men. And I pointed out to them that the Psalmist began this Psalm with a series of short commandments which we as the people of God are to observe. Now one of those commandments was this (you will find it in verse 2: "Talk ye of all His [God's] wondrous works." And then farther down in the Psalm, in verse 5, we read this:

Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders,
and the judgments of his mouth (Psa. 105:5).

God's works are manifold. We look all around us and we see His work of creation. History is one long story of the amazing works of God. But the work that surpasses all others is the work of salvation which all of the Lord's people have experienced, and continue to experience, and will yet experience in the glory that is to come. This is the Lord's crowning work. And it is this work with which these doxologies are concerned.

Today we are looking at Peter's doxology in his first epistle, and like the other two which the Apostle Paul has given us,

I. THE DOXOLOGY BEGINS WITH GOD (1 Pet. 1:3a).

The Apostles were always thinking about God, and in their writings they were directing their readers to God. They were conscious of how greatly God had blessed them, had blessed all of His people, and so they were not only expressing their own joy in God, but they were inviting their readers to join with them in praising God.

But different people reading this epistle would have different gods in mind when they see that term "God," and so the Apostle Peter, like the Apostle Paul, to do away with any doubt as to Whom he was praising, added, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, had this to say about God as compared with others who are worshiped as gods in this world. Listen to Paul's words:

4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

So Peter was speaking of the only God, the one true God, "the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And it is only because of and through the Lord Jesus Christ that God will have anything to do with us. And there is no other one through whom we can come to God except the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only through Christ that we can know God, and, as Calvin mentioned so long ago, “they who form their ideas of God ... apart from Christ, have an idol instead of the true God” (*Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, p. 28).

So there is really only one God, and He is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He is the One we praise; He is the God we adore! No one else is worthy of our praise. In fact, it is blasphemous to offer praise to any who therefore falsely bears the name of god (with a small G). This is the God of the Bible. He is the God of creation. He is the God of the OT and of the NT.

But as Peter thought about God, what characteristic of God was he the most grateful for in this passage? It was what we can well call,

II. A MOST GLORIOUS ATTRIBUTE (1 Pet. 1:3m).

Peter called it “his abundant mercy.” “Mercy” belongs to that group of God’s glorious attributes which include His love, His grace, His goodness, His longsuffering and compassion. This means that God did not deal with us as Peter was about to describe, because He had to, nor because we deserved such blessings as He has given us, but because of His abundant supply of mercy.

When Paul was speaking of his own salvation from sin, remembering that he had been a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the people of God, and how he had injured many of them, he went on to say, “but I obtained mercy” (1 Tim. 1:13). He should have been condemned forever and banished from the presence of God, but instead he “obtained mercy.”

We had this same truth not too long ago in our Tuesday Class studies in Ephesians. Paul was reviewing for the Gentile believers how grievously they had formerly grieved God and just lived to satisfy their own lusts. But then as he began to speak about what God had done for them, he wrote, “But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins ...” (Eph. 2:4-5a).

The same is true of all of us. We deserved the judgment of hell, but God extended His mercy to us. This ought to make us love the Lord forever with all of our hearts, or as King David wrote in Psalm 103:1-2,

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless

his holy name.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits
(Psa. 103:1-2).

As I have said many times before, God's mercy is His answer to our miseries. It is sin that makes life miserable, and God has extended His mercy to us to take away our miseries.

But how does He do that?

Now I want you to notice in the remainder of our text that the Apostle Peter spoke of what God has done for His people in the past, they what we can expect in the future, and finally what He is doing for us in the present. Let me point out how he did this.

He was speaking of:

III. GOD'S WORK OF SALVATION (1 Pet. 1:3b-5).

Note that in verses 9 and 10, after speaking of what God has done for His people, he said that the end of their faith was "the salvation of your souls." And then he continued, "Of which salvation..." So Peter was speaking here of salvation, and this is what caused him to praise and adore God Who was the One Who planned and ordained His salvation.

Now let us look first at what Peter said about *the past*. He was not speaking about everybody, but about everyone who was trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation. And so speaking of them, he pointed first to the past.

A. The past (1 Pet. 1:3b).

Here are the words to which I am referring when I speak of the past. God is the subject, and so we say "God ... hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

What a lot of wonderful truth is contained in these words! But be sure to notice that Peter did not say that they had changed themselves. Instead he said that they had been born again, they had received new life, eternal life, divine life as a work of God which gave promise of "a lively hope," and this life and hope became theirs through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Salvation is a free gift to us from God, but it was purchased for us at the infinite price paid by our Lord Jesus Christ when by His death He took the penalty for our sins, and was raised back to life again as proof that He had completely satisfied God's righteous demands.

What is “a lively hope”? Well, we would say today that it is *a living hope, a real hope, a glorious prospect for the future that is guaranteed to us by God Himself.*

The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of this hope with these words:

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 6: 17-20).

What is our hope? It is twofold: that some day we are going to be in heaven *with the Lord*, but also that we are going to be in heaven *made like the Lord*. And I can assure you that no one but a real Christian could possibly be interested in either one of these.

Now the mention of “a lively,” or living “hope,” let Peter to go on to speak of:

B. The future (1 Pet. 1:4a).

Peter called this hope, “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” He used three adjectives to show that it cannot decay, nor can it be spoiled by anything else, and that it is eternal. The certainty of our hope could not be stated in any stronger way.

But how can we be sure of this, sure that it will be safeguarded for us, and even sure that we will get there some day?

This takes us to:

C. The present (1 Pet. 1:4b-5).

Notice the word “reserved” in verse 4, and then the word “kept” in verse 5. They are two different words in the Greek, but both convey to us the idea of being guarded, protected. The second word was commonly used of a military guard. But when you take both of them together, you can see that our inheritance is being guarded safely for us, and that the same is

true for us. We are under heavy guard to make sure that nothing will ever happen to our salvation. There is no such truth in Scripture that we can be saved, and then later become unsaved. How can we be sure that our salvation is absolutely secure? Is it because we can guarantee that we will never again sin nor displease God in any way? No! How then can we be sure? Because we “are kept by the power of God unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” *The reason we know that salvation is eternal is because, from start to finish, it is a work of God.* God saves us through Christ, and God keeps us saved. If a person professes faith in Christ, and then goes back into the world, it is not because he was saved and has lost his salvation, but it is because he never was saved! May God forbid that we should ever dishonor Him by saying that He is not capable of finishing the work which He has begun in His people. Cf. Phil. 1:6; Jude 24-25; John 10:27-30.

Concl: Now why was it that the Apostle Peter went into all of this truth about salvation in writing to those who had been scattered throughout the Roman Empire?

There are at least three reasons, and there may have been more than three. But let me point out three which also apply to us today as they have to the Lord’s people in all past generations, and will apply to them in all future generations.

First, we can see from this epistle that Peter was assuring them of God’s care for them. They were going through hard times. They were suffering persecution. He want to assure them that the Lord would keep them and bless them, that He would never leave them nor forsake them. And so he sought to focus their attention upon God and the work that He had done, was doing, and would finally do, as their God and heavenly Father.

Second, we can see from our text for today that the Apostle was seeking to get their attention focused not only upon God, but upon the blessings that await us in heaven. This is one of the purposes of our trials. It makes us look forward longingly to the time when we will be with the Lord, and like the Lord. Most of us don’t think enough about that. We are too earth-bound! Their sufferings made them realize that they were strangers and pilgrims on this earth. The earthly hopes that the world offers are corruptible, and defiled, and they do fade away. If our hopes are centered in this world and this life, we are going to be disappointed, and we will end in despair. Our hope in God is altogether different, and we need to look longingly for that day when it will be fully “revealed in the last time” just what salvation is, and how glorious it is. We know, as the Apostle John said, that “we shall be like Him,” but we also have to confess that as far as

the complete picture of heaven and eternity for us is concerned, “it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” But let’s get ready, and keep looking for the Lord.

Finally, in the light of the truth that the Apostle Peter presented here, and what he would go on to say in the remainder of this epistle, we need to be living in this ungodly, wicked world, and those who have been born again. By the new birth God has made us forever different from what we were before. We are His children. We are to do His will. We are to be a holy people. Peter was not long in getting to this subject. Read what he had to say here in chapter 1, verses 13-16.

We are seeing in our world today how wicked the world is, and how vile people can get when they turn away from God and from Christ. But the commandments of the Lord do not change. The darker conditions get, the brighter our lights should shine. Let us be praying that the Lord will give us the kind of boldness the early Christians had so that we may have the joy of seeing others recognize their spiritual needs as God draws them to Himself. And let us never forget that we have a continuing debt of gratitude that we owe to the Lord to praise and adore Him for all that He has done for us in Christ, all that He is doing this very day, and for all that He will continue to do.