

1 Peter 1:3-5 | “Praise be to God!”

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 1, verses 3 through 5.

Last week, we started the book of 1 Peter, as we looked at Peter’s greeting.

He showed us that we are chosen sojourners, who need grace and peace, as we live in this strange land. *[pause]*

Now, starting this week, we will begin to get into the content of the letter.

READ PASSAGE.

Have you ever seen someone amazed?

I’m not talking about someone slightly amazed by something, but someone totally enthralled with something or someone.

Let’s say it’s a teenage girl with a new boyfriend.

She is totally captivated by him, it’s like he could do no wrong.

In her amazement, he just has the perfect smile, the best personality, everything.

Everything he does is just the greatest thing ever - he could simply hold the door, and it’s like he’s ‘Prince Charming’ in her mind.

She could speak about him all day long, if you let her. *[pause]*

Or maybe it’s a person amazed by an event or a place they went to.

They are just so excited to talk about all the little details of what they saw and experienced, that they chat your ear off. *[pause]*

Or maybe it’s someone talking about a cool new product that they bought.

They just keep telling you about all the different features that it has, and how it can do this and do that. *[pauseeee]*

All of these examples are really examples of people *praising* something or someone.

They can’t help but express admiration for that boyfriend, place, event, or product. *[pause]*

Well in our text this morning, we find someone truly amazed over someone that they can’t help but praise him.

But it’s not praise that is inflated by feelings, like that teenage girl, who will soon realize the guy isn’t perfect, but has many sins and flaws.

And it's not praise as small and insignificant as a product or place, but praise based on truth about the God of the universe. *[pause]*

This morning, we hear Peter praise God, as he can't help but start his letter this way, praising God for what he has done.

And that's where our main point for this morning comes from, and I'll give it to you up front this week...

God deserves all the praise for our salvation!

In verse 3, Peter says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" *[pause]*

What Peter is basically saying is that God is worthy of praise.

He can't help but lift high the name of God Almighty because of what he has done in our lives. *[pause]*

There's no better way to start a letter written to Christians, is there? *[pause]*

This made me wonder how many believers actually praise and worship God like this.

Do you ever burst out in praise to God? *[pause]*

I'm afraid that many seem bored with God.

Many seem indifferent to what He has done in their lives.

Many seem way more interested and excited about other things in their lives.

They could praise a product, sports team, friend, or celebrity at the drop of a hat, but when it comes to God, they are quiet.

You ask them about what they have done recently in regards to their hobby, and get ready for an excited look on their face, and lots of exciting information about what happened recently.

But ask them what God has been doing in their lives recently, and you hear crickets. *[pause]*

Isn't that sad?

What does that demonstrate about us?

It shows that our hearts and minds aren't where they should be.

We delight in things over God.

We act as though those things are more important than God.

And it shows that we haven't really been enraptured by what God has done for us. *[pause]*

Notice that I didn't say that we don't *know* what God has done for us, but we haven't been *enraptured* by what he has done for us.

Being enraptured by something means that I'm filled with delight in it.

I not only know about it, but I delight in it.

That's exactly where Peter is at - he's praising God because he delights in Him for his work of salvation. *[pauseeee]*

Peter will go on to explain *why* God is worthy of praise, and he does so by expounding upon all-important doctrinal truths. *[pauseeee]*

So often people think that doctrine is boring.

They think that theology is for the book worms and intellectual nerds.

But Peter shows us that that's the farthest thing from the truth.

Doctrine is important and exciting because it's simply the truth about God and his work of salvation.

Doctrine isn't simply terms on a paper, but ultimate truths of reality that have eternal implications. *[pause]*

By Peter's praise of God, he also shows us that doctrine isn't supposed to *only* go into our mind, but it should lead to worship. *[pauseeee]*

I just love how Peter doesn't sit down and simply give a boring lecture, kinda like, 'here are the facts, okay, have a good day.'

Instead, he gives a praise-filled description of what God has done for us.

He is rejoicing, praising, and worshiping God while he recounts the amazing works of the Lord in our salvation. *[pauseeee]*

Oh, how our hearts need to be changed!

How little we delight in what God has done in our lives.

How little we praise the One worthy of all praise. *[pauseeee]*

So my desire this morning is that we all would join with Peter in praising God for his work of salvation, for he deserves all the praise.

And to get to that point, we need to see the reason for Peter's praise.

That is, what leads Peter to burst forth with saying, "Blessed be God!" ? *[pause]*

Well he shows us as he continues writing...

I. He caused us to be born again!

I'm a father of three, and I was able to witness all three births of my children.

Now with Lacy, we were nervous because we thought that I might miss her birth because of having COVID right before it, but thankfully it worked out. *[pauseeee]*

But watching a birth is amazing.

Everytime is exciting as you are able to witness new life first-hand.

That's key - birth demonstrates *new life*.

And just like physical birth displays new life, so spiritual birth does the same thing. *[pause]*

Being born again means that we are a new creation in Christ, we have eternal life in Him.

[pause]

Back when Jesus is talking to Nicodemus in John 3, he says, "That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." *[pause]*

Physical birth creates a physical body and places you into a physical family, but spiritual birth creates spiritual life and places you into the family of God.

Everyone is born at least once, but only those who are born a second, spiritual time can see the Kingdom.

So if you are a Christian, did you know that you have two birthdays?

One for your physical birth, and a second for when you were born again by God.

This is why the Bible can say that before Christ we were dead in our sins, because spiritually we were dead.

But it is God who made us alive in Christ at the moment of salvation. *[pauseeee]*

Imagine if one of my children told me that they caused their own birth.

I would emphatically tell them that that's not true, for birth is something that happens to you.

You can't make your own birth happen by yourself - you can't take credit for your own birth.

So also, that's the same with being born again - you don't cause your own spiritual birth.

Jesus in John 3 tells us that it's the Spirit who does the work.

Here in 1 Peter, it tells us that God caused us to be born again. *[pause]*

So do you see the emphasis on how it is a work of God, not a work of us. *[pause]*

New birth is a spiritual, transformational work done by God.

It is not enough to be born into a religious family - that doesn't cause your second birth.

It is not enough to go to church or do numerous religious activities - that doesn't *cause* you to be born again.

Your works can't merit this spiritual birth. *[pauseeeee]*

Spiritual birth is necessary, but the most relieving thing is to remember that it's only by the Spirit's power that you can be saved.

It's not based on your power, but it's done through the Spirit's.

God is the ultimate cause of you being born again. *[pause]*

This is important: if there is any sort of self-boasting in your salvation, you have either completely misunderstood what happened at salvation *or* you are not saved at all.

You can't say, "I was just so amazing that I understood all of these spiritual truths and then I chose to believe."

Well who do you think opened up your eyes to see those spiritual truths? God!

Who do you think drew you to Himself in grace? God! *[pauseeee]*

You can't say, "I did all of these good works, and God deemed me good enough."

No, that's not how it works at all, it is by grace through faith, not of works.

New birth *has* to be caused by God, or else we could say that we saved ourselves, which is impossible, since the Bible tells us that "no one seeks after God" in their own power. *[pause]*

God caused our new birth, and what's the reason we can have this new birth?...

A. Reason we can have new birth: God's mercy through Christ

Peter says, "According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again."

This is his reason for causing our new birth.

This is the source or the fountain for why he did what he did - his mercy.

It's kind of like if a person helped someone in need, you could say, "According to their love for others, they helped someone in need."

It was their love that drove them to help.

So it was God's mercy that drove him to save.

It is *only* because He is merciful that we are able to have new life!

If it wasn't for God's mercy, no one would be saved.

Because we not only couldn't save ourselves, but we didn't deserve to be saved. *[pause]*

Mercy means that someone shows compassion and forgiveness to someone whom it is within their power to punish.

It is totally within God's right and power to punish us for our sins.

We have sinned against Him, the holy God.

We are deserving of death and punishment forever.

But because he has *great* mercy, he doesn't give us what we deserve. *[pause]*

He had to have great mercy because the sin was so great, and he had to have great mercy because the punishment was so great.

Kinda like, if someone sins against us in a small way, we find it easier to show mercy to them.

But if someone sins against us in a big way, then it's harder to have mercy. *[pause]*

So we sinned against God in a big way because of his holiness, and therefore, he had to show great mercy towards us. *[pauseeeee]*

Aren't you thankful for a God of *great* mercy?

That's who He is!

In Exodus 34:6, the Lord passes before Moses and proclaims who He is, and what does he say?...

"The Lord, the Lord, a God *merciful* and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness," *[pause]*

Our eternal life and hope is founded upon the mercy of God!

That's exactly why Peter says that we are "born again to a living hope."

You see, God's mercy is the spring of all good in the Christian's life.

His mercy is like this water spring that is the source of good and life.

Without the spring supplying water, there is no life.

But if the spring shoots forth water, then it makes rivers, waters the land, and brings life.

That's how God's mercy works, it is the source of life of our new birth and as a result, our new hope. *[pause]*

God's mercy means great good. *[pause]*

Do you see how Peter could burst out in praise to God now?

We, who didn't deserve anything good, have been born again by God because of his great mercy.

What else can you do but praise His name for his great mercy? *[pauseeee]*

Now the question remains, how did God the Father demonstrate this mercy? *Through Christ.*

God has great mercy, and he showed that great mercy by sending His only Son to come to this earth, die in our place, and then rise from the grave.

That's why I said the reason for our new birth is God's mercy through Christ.

Peter makes this clear when he says, "he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." *[pause]*

Christ died on the Cross for our sins, but he didn't remain in that tomb, but came out.

Christ didn't succumb to death forever, for he showed it had no power over him.

And since we are united with him through faith, we have new life.

He arose and lives forevermore, and so it's like we arose with him and have life forevermore, since we are in union with him. *[pauseeee]*

His resurrection not only secured our new birth, but it secured our hope, and that's where we find our next point...

B. Result of having new birth: Living hope

As I was researching an illustration for hope, I came across a website and article that shows the lack of hope that humanity has without God.

The website is called, "Collective Evolution," and it determines to figure out the deep questions of life, like...

"The questions of who we are, why we are here and what world we truly wish to create." *[pause]*

But how does this website seek to answer those deep questions?

They "examine how humanity can shift our consciousness and way of being to evolve beyond the personal and global challenges we face." *[pause]*

So for them, the answer to the biggest questions of life is to look inward and simply change how we think.

And an article on their website written by a guy named, Mark DeNicola, demonstrates how their hope for the future isn't really hopeful at all.

It's called, "5 reasons to have hope for humanity in 2021 and beyond."

OK, this should be interesting right? So what are the writer's reasons for hope?

People are inherently good.

Also, he has hope because we are still here after all that has happened.

He has hope because of the power of our mind's desire to get beyond this.

And he's hopeful because we all want to be happy, healthy, and free.

Now at first hearing, these things may sound OK, but really think about these reasons.

Are people really inherently good? If that's true, how come there is constantly divorce, fighting, and abuse in families?

If that's true, how come throughout all of history there has been wars and extreme suffering at the hands of other people?

If people are inherently good, wouldn't we have solved the whole war, fighting, lying, and stealing thing by now? *[pause]*

What about his other reasons, how do they stand up to some critical thinking?

If part of your hope for the future is because we desire to be happy, healthy, and free, that isn't a confident hope, is it?

Just because you desire to be happy and healthy doesn't mean that you will get those things.

Many people desire things that they never get.

Tell that to the person who desires to be healthy all of their life, and they get cancer. *[pause]*

What about our mind's desire to get beyond this?

How has that worked out in your life?

Our mind may powerfully want to get beyond suffering, but that doesn't mean it will happen. *[pause]*

And lastly, if part of your hope for the future is because, “Well guys, we made it this far.” That isn’t really a sure hope, is it?

Just because you made it this far doesn’t mean you won’t fail. *[pause]*

This is the quote-on-quote hope that the world tries to give, and as you can see, it’s not truly something to hope in.

These reasons may be plastered on a motivational posture and garner glances from many people, but when you actually think deeply about them, they fall short of truly giving hope. *[pause]*

So then where is hope found? In Christ’s resurrection.

You see, if Jesus never rose from the dead, would we have life or hope? Hardly.

Where could we place our hope if we had a dead Savior, who never lived again?

Even Paul says, “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.” *[pause]*

We have an unshakable hope in the future because we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection.

His resurrection is a pledge of our new life and our future bodily resurrection.

We have life and hope because we have a living Savior. *[pause]*

The Lord Jesus rose from the grave securing for us our new life and hope once and for all.

We don’t have a wavering hope, or a doubting hope, or a dead hope - we have a living hope, and that means we have a *confident hope*.

We don’t have a dead hope that will crash and burn, but a living hope that is as sure as Christ’s resurrection. *[pause]*

You see, everything hinges on God’s mercy in Christ.

If God didn’t have mercy, we wouldn’t have life or hope.

If Christ didn’t rise from the dead, we wouldn’t have life or hope. *[pause]*

Our hope isn’t found by looking inward, but by looking outward to what Christ did.

We look back and see what he did for us on the Cross, we look now to what God has done in giving us new life in Him, and because of those things, we can look forward to a glorious future. *[pauseeee]*

Peter expands on this living hope by saying, “to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,” *[pauseeee]*

The Bible talks about how we are co-heirs with Christ.

What’s great is that this inheritance is sure, we are entitled to it now that we have been born again.

You don’t have to doubt whether you will get it, for it’s yours, if you are a child of God. *[pause]*

God causes us to be born again, and that would be beyond anything that we deserve, but he also gives us an inheritance.

He not only saves us, but he calls us a beloved child. *[pauseeeee]*

What is this inheritance? Salvation finally completed and all the blessings that will come in Heaven.

The Bible doesn’t give us every little detail of the inheritance, but we know that it will be good and that it will be better than we can imagine.

The way Peter describes this inheritance is by using terms to describe what *won’t* happen to our inheritance. *[pause]*

It is imperishable, meaning, it can’t and won’t ever be destroyed.

It’s not like anyone can get to it and destroy it, but it endures forever - no person will touch it, no damage will come upon it. *[pause]*

It’s also undefiled or not able to be polluted.

No sin or stain can mar it, but it’s ever and always pure. *[pause]*

Think how easily your possessions become defiled, especially if you have young kids.

You buy something new and all of a sudden water is spilled on it, it’s dropped on the ground, or has smudges all over it - it has become defiled.

Not so with your inheritance! Nothing will pollute it’s purity. *[pause]*

And the last term used is that our inheritance is unfading. *[pause]*

A lot of our possessions fade over time.

Their beauty slowly goes away. Their once stunning shine dulls. Their parts disintegrate.

Over time, things rust or decay.

Yet our inheritance doesn't do this, for it's unfading, it won't wear or waste away. *[pause]*

Your inheritance in heaven is better than anything on this earth, nothing compares.

But like any inheritance, you have to wait for it until the proper time.

It's still in the future, but it's awaiting your arrival.

Yet don't worry or fret for it's not going anywhere.

It's not going to lose its value, it won't be stolen or misplaced because it's kept in heaven for you.

It won't even be given to someone else, for it kept for *you*. *[pause]*

You can have reliance upon your coming inheritance because you not only know where it's at, but also, you know that the place it's stored at is secure.

What a better place to keep our inheritance than heaven!

A place where there is no sin, but utter perfection. *[pause]*

Your inheritance in heaven is more secure than your mom's attic, it's more secure than a locked safe in your closet...

...And it's more secure than a bunker defended by the whole military might of America.

Now that's a living hope that you can count on. *[pauseeee]*

Yet Peter doesn't stop there when describing our living hope, for he also talks about how we are guarded by God "for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." *[pause]*

Now you may be thinking... 'Wait a second, I thought I was saved? What's this salvation to be revealed?'

Well the Bible talks about salvation in different senses.

In one sense, we are saved when we believe in Jesus Christ, but in another sense, there is a final salvation.

A better way to put it is that our salvation will be finally manifested, revealed, or completed. *[pause]*

A verse that makes this clear is Romans 5:9, "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God."

Paul also says, "salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed."

Or 1 Thessalonians 5:9, “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,” *[pauseeee]*

This salvation is ready to be revealed, it’s primed and ready - it’s sure and it’s coming.

It will be revealed when Christ is revealed in the last time. *[pause]*

That’s our living hope - final salvation, final deliverance from this world of trouble.

That’s why John can conclude the book of Revelation by saying, “Come, Lord Jesus!” *[pause]*

One day, we will be eventually delivered from this sin-cursed world and sin-cursed body, and all will be made right.

God’s wrath will be poured out on the world, but we won’t face God’s wrath, for we are guarded by God’s power. *[pause]*

If you remember, Peter talked about how our inheritance is guarded, and now he says, we are guarded.

If our inheritance was guarded, but we weren’t guarded for it - that wouldn’t be encouraging.

And if we were guarded, but our inheritance wasn’t - that wouldn’t be encouraging, either.

Our inheritance is guarded for us, and we are guarded until God finally delivers us. *[pauseeee]*

And look at what’s guarding us - God power! *[pause]*

God has supreme power, just look at the world around you.

He created this world just by his word, that’s powerful.

He brings up nations and smashes them to pieces when he wants - that’s power.

He brings new life to dead souls, and delivers when he pleases - that’s power.

At the end, we are told that Satan will deceive the nations, gather them together, and fire will come down and devour them - that’s our powerful God!

And it’s by the power of this God that we are guarded - think about that!

What great confidence we can have! What great security!

God is the impenetrable defense around your eternal life. *[pauseeee]*

This is all good, yet he also adds something interesting in this guarding - this guarding is “through faith.” *[pause]*

Ultimately, God's power is what guards us, but he uses our faith, which he sustains. *[pause]*

Faith in Christ has to persevere, or else it demonstrates that you haven't truly believed in Jesus Christ.

Just read Hebrews and a lot of it is about that very point.

Those who persevere in the faith demonstrate that they are saved. *[pause]*

Faith in the Bible is *never*, "OK, I believed, I'm done. Check that off my list. Where was I? I'll go live for myself."

Instead, faith is believing in Christ, following Him, trusting him - persistent and persevering faith.

I don't stop believing in Christ's work on my behalf.

I don't say, "I used to believe that Jesus and Cross thing, but no longer." If so, then you never truly believed.

Paul says, "the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God."

We don't sit back and do nothing, but the true Christian lives by faith. *[pause]*

And here's the encouraging thing, though - our perseverance in the faith doesn't rest solely on our shoulders, but it's by God's power.

His power is the very means by which our faith is sustained.

His power energizes and sustains our faith. *[pauseeee]*

If you have placed your faith in Jesus, you are protected by God's power until Heaven.

He's guarding you every single year, every single month, every single moment of your life until the end.

You can't lose your salvation, no one can disqualify you, or condemn you.

No hardship or trial can take away the final deliverance of your soul, not even physical death. *[pause]*

We have a guarded inheritance waiting for us in Heaven, and we are guarded for Heaven.

What a glorious, living hope!

As Christians, we can most assuredly say, "The best is yet to come." *[pauseeee]*

A pastor named James DeLoach gave this story...

“Some time ago I saw a picture of an old burned-out mountain shack.

All that remained was the chimney...the charred debris of what had been that family's sole possession. *[pause]*

In front of this destroyed home stood an old grandfather-looking man dressed only in his underclothes with a small boy clutching a pair of patched overalls.

It was evident that the child was crying. *[pause]*

Beneath the picture were the words which the artist felt the old man was speaking to the boy.

They were simple words, yet they presented a profound theology and philosophy of life. Those words were, ‘Hush child, God ain't dead!’” *[pause]*

In the midst of a harsh world, we have a living hope because our God isn't dead.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, died for our sins on the Cross and yet he didn't remain dead, but rose from the grave.

And through his work, he has opened up the way for us to be born again, and is continuing to cause others to be born again even now. *[pauseeee]*

Have you been born again? That is, have you placed your faith in what Jesus did on the Cross for you?

Turn from your sins and turn to Christ, who is able to save you, give you eternal life, and give you a secure future in Heaven. *[pauseeeee]*

Through Jesus' work on the Cross and victory over the grave, God's great mercy was showered upon us.

We have eternal life now, but we also have a living hope, a secure inheritance, and a future salvation ready to be revealed...

...All the while, we are guarded by God's power until that day.

What else can we do, but praise the Lord? For he deserves all the praise for our salvation.