

Chain Reaction of Praise

Profiling Christians, Part 4

1 Peter 1:3-5

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

Every believer has cause to praise God on account of the great salvation He has accomplished on our behalf.

Discussion Points:

In verse 3 the text tells us that “according to His great mercy [He] has caused us to be born again.” Every believer was born again based on God’s great mercy. Not only has God given us what we do not deserve in His grace, He has also not given us what we do deserve in His great mercy.

- In your own words, what do you deserve for your sin against God? Give at least two scriptural references that support this.
- When considering the concept of eternal punishment for sin, do you struggle with the teaching that sinners will be punished for all of eternity? Why is eternal punishment fitting for our sin?
- If the punishment for our sin should be eternal than how long should our thankfulness for mercy last? Why in your mind is it so hard to remain thankful even for a day?

Verse 3 also tells us that we are “born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” As a believer in Christ we have a hope that the world does not. This hope isn’t a vague wish or positive thinking. Instead, it is a certain expectation founded on the truth of Christ’s resurrection.

- List out the things that someone your age without Christ might “hope” for in this world. What does it say about a believer’s perspective when we “hope” for the same things?
- What is our confident expectation as a believer in Christ? What scriptures do you find helpful in reminding you of this truth?
- Explain why the resurrection is absolutely essential for our hope. In your mind, is there any truth/doctrine that would be more important than the resurrection of Christ? What might it be?

We learn in verse 4 that those of us who are born again have an inheritance reserved in heaven that is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away. This is a glorious promise made by God concerning our identity in Christ. We are joint heirs with Christ and have the assurance of obtaining an eternal inheritance.

- Considering the three descriptive terms Peter gives to our inheritance, is there anything on earth that we possess that could compare? In other words, think of everything you own. Does any of it even fit one of these descriptions?
- In one word, sum up the life of one who lives for all the stuff that is perishable, defiled, and constantly fading away instead of that which is imperishable, undefiled, and never fading away.
- In what concrete ways should our identity as joint heirs with Christ change the way we live in this present world?

Gospel Connection:

At the heart of this passage is the precious truth that we have been born again. This reality is not based upon anything that we have done but according to His great mercy. Praise God! We now have a living hope founded upon the resurrection of Jesus. We have a confident expectation because He is alive. Praise God! We are now due to collect an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and will never fade away. Praise God! We also have the unalterable promise in verse 5 that God in His power is guarding us through faith unto that day when our salvation will ultimately be revealed. He will accomplish what He has promised. Praise God! These truths should change the way we take on life. Consider who we are in Christ and what our future holds and...praise God!

Practical Implications:

- Think:** The truth of the resurrection should change the way we view life. If you need a reminder of all that is at stake in the resurrection spend time meditating on I Corinthians 15 this week.
- Pray:** Confess how much you live for the perishable, defiled, fading treasure of this earth and ask God to give you a heart for your true identity as a joint heir with Christ.
- Do:** Every day this week articulate at least one reality regarding your identity in Christ for which you can praise God. Write it down and share it with someone who needs the encouragement.

A Chain Reaction of Praise

Profiling Christians, Part 4

I Peter 1:3-5

J. Allen Blair, a former pastor and author in the early and mid-1900's told the story of a pastor he knew of who always seemed to be overflowing in gratitude about something.

He pastored a small church in a farming community and everyone knew him for his thankful spirit. Every time the congregation met, they knew their pastor would thank God for something – and he rarely repeated himself. In fact, his specific thanks to God had become something they anticipated hearing.

No matter what the circumstances, he found something specific to thank God for in his public prayer.

One particular weekend brought an unexpected snow storm along with sharp bitter winds that blew in from the north. As the little flock rode their horse drawn carts or trudged through the snow to church, they wondered what the pastor could possibly be thankful for on such a day.

As the service opened and he stood to pray, they couldn't help but smile when they heard him pray – “Heavenly Father, we thank You that not every day is as bad as this one!”ⁱ

Peter is writing a letter to people in the First Century who really couldn't imagine much in life worth thanking God about.

They were facing a snowstorm of trouble and drifts of trials that threatened to bury them; they were effectively homeless – scattered throughout Pontus and Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

They were trudging through life with the bitter winds of isolation and sorrow. This wasn't what they had expected.

And Peter picks up his quill and after some opening comments, he begins to remind them of so many things for which they can give thanks.

In fact, his opening statement in *verse 3 of chapter 1* is nothing less than a doxology. Notice – ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

In other words, blessed by God. You could well read this as an exclamation that simply says, “Thank God!”ⁱⁱ

We bless you God! The word here for blessed is from the word eulogetos which gives us our word eulogy. A eulogy is when you say nice things about people.

Now in one sense, God doesn't need our blessing – He doesn't need to hear nice things from us in order to feel better about Himself or to stay motivated on the job.ⁱⁱⁱ

Peter is simply setting an example that is good for us – it is good for us to give thanks to God . . . about something!

Even if it's something like, “Lord, I'm so glad every season of life isn't as bad as this one!” Especially when the bitter winds blow and the trials pile up like drifts of snow.

What Peter does here is set off a chain reaction of truths that lead him to praise God and he wants us to follow his example.

But before we do, let me address one particular issue that might trouble you. It's this reference to God the Father as Jesus' God.

If Jesus has a God, He obviously isn't one, right? Whenever you see this kind of phrase, the Apostles are providing both the human perspective and the divine perspective of Jesus Christ.

From the Lord's human nature, or perspective, God the Father is His God. From the Lord's divine perspective as God the Son – God is His Father.

That is, He has the very divine nature with God the Father, as equally deity with God the Father and God the Spirit.

So the word “God” expresses the Lord’s relationship as the Son of Man; the word “Father” expresses the Lord’s relationship as the Son of God.

Both our Lord’s humanity and deity are carried forward in this doxology. And listen, without both being true, our salvation would be impossible.

He had to be the Son of Man in order to die. He had to be the Son of God in order to die for us.

Now with that doxology expressed, Peter basically sets off a chain reaction of praise.^{iv}

And he’s going to point out several truths that lead us to thank God – each word is nuanced to bring us to thanksgiving.

1. The first is simply, God’s great mercy gives us new life.

Notice *verse 3 again – Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again . . . stop there.*

His great mercy . . . saved us!

I found it interesting that Peter could have mentioned any number of great things about God that brought us to life.

His great gift

His great grace

His great love

His great sacrifice

But here – Peter writes about God’s great mercy.

And maybe Peter refers to God’s mercy because the world around these scattered believers wasn’t giving them any. Their world was turning merciless toward them!

But it also draws out a wonderful theological truth. The mercy of God saved us – not just giving us what we don’t deserve – that’s grace; but in not giving us what we deserve – that’s mercy.

We are saved because God isn’t going to give us what we deserve! We deserve the judgment and punishment of Hell . . . we don’t deserve Heaven and forgiveness and a kingdom forever?

We don’t deserve any of that. The older I grow in the Lord the more aware I am of what I really deserve.

And it wasn’t to be born again – to be given a new life . . . and every day a fresh start with the promise that even now, the blood of Christ is still cleansing me from every sin – because we keep sinning (1 John 1:7). And God continues to keep showing us mercy.

Max Lucado wrote a story, a true story, he retold it, about something that happened recently in a small, poor village in Brazil. In a little hut with a dirt floor and a red tile roof lived Maria, the mother, and her daughter, Christina. Maria’s husband had died when Christina was just an infant and she had done her best to raise her daughter. Christina was now an older, pretty, teenage girl.

And the time came for her to seek out employment to help Maria’s job as a cleaner, a custodial type job. It was enough to get food and clothing and shelter and they eked out a simple existence. So now it was time for her to find a job too.

And Christina had this streak of independence in her. She often talked to her mother about fleeing this dusty little village; she was above being a cleaner; she wanted more in life. And, she often said, “I’m going to leave all this behind and go to Rio de Janeiro, and the exciting city life there. And her mother would always react in fear and warn her daughter, “The streets are cruel in that city for a young girl.”

Her mother was fully aware that if her daughter ever went there on her own, she would not be able to support herself; Maria knew where her daughter might end up in order to survive; which is why that morning when Maria found her daughter’s pallet empty, her heart was filled with fear for what it might mean.

After some time, when it was clear Christina was no longer anywhere in the village, Maria packed their old suitcase and headed for the bus depot. She stopped first, on her way, at a little drug store where she took all the money she

could possibly spare, stepped into one of those photograph booths, closed the curtain and took all the pictures that she could afford. Then, armed with her bag of clothing and a purse full of little black and white photographs, she headed for Rio de Janeiro.

When she arrived, she looked in public places – restaurants and malls and even some bars. Maria was nowhere to be found. She looked for days – that turned into weeks.

She eventually found out some of the parts of this city where there was a reputation for prostitutes. She knew that Christina had no way of earning money . . . and when hunger and pride combine, she would do anything but return home.

So Maria began to comb through the bars and hotels and nightclubs. And wherever she went, she would tape her picture to the wall or a bathroom mirror or to some kind of bulletin board. She went everywhere she possibly could go.

And on the back of each photograph was written the same message.

Finally, out of money and photographs, tired and heart broken, Maria went home.

It was some time later that Christina was descending the steps of a hotel that she looked across the lobby and she saw a familiar face taped to a mirror. She recognized it. Her eyes filling with tears and her throat burning, she ran across the lobby floor and she pulled the picture off and, sure enough, it was a picture of her mother. She touched it as she wept and then turned it over and when she did, she read the note on the back of the photograph. It read, “Wherever you are, whatever you have become, it doesn’t matter. Come home.” And she did.

This is nothing less than the mercy of a mother who refused to give her daughter what she deserved. A life of wandering and emptiness and sorrow all alone.

Instead, she gave her a fresh start – nothing less than – a fresh and new life!

The Christian upon conversion to Christ becomes created in Christ Jesus – brought from spiritual death unto spiritual life (Ephesians

2:10); we become new creatures and a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15). We actually begin to participate in a new God-given life.^v

And we did nothing to deserve it . . . God in His great mercy saves hopeless and miserable and sinful creatures and the least we miserable, hopeless, sinful creatures can do now that we’ve been given a new life is turn around and thank Him for that!

2. The second truth that leads us to thank God – not only for our new life, but our living hope.

Notice next in *verse 3 – according to His great mercy – God – has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

In other words, we have a hope that is alive because Jesus Christ is alive.

Keep in mind that this word – even the concept of hope – is uniquely a Christian concept. The world knows nothing of hope – certainly hope beyond the grave.

The Apostle Paul describes the unbelieving world in *Ephesians 2:12 as having no hope and without God in the world.*

To the Thessalonians, Paul said that we grieve upon the death of our Christian loved ones – but we don’t grieve – he writes, *as those who no hope*. In other words, they have no Savior.

Sophocles, the Greek playwright who died 400 years before the birth of Christ, was on top of the world and effectively, we would say, living the dream. Yet he wrote with cynicism before he died, “Not to be born at all – that is by far the best fortune; the second best is as soon as one is born, with all speed to return from whence one has come.” In other words, if you have the misfortune of being born, it’s best to die early.^{vi}

But when you hear the gospel – it gives life meaning and it gives life hope. Now you need to understand that *hope* in the Bible is more than a

vague wish – like, “I hope we have pizza for lunch today.”^{vii}

Or I hope that Tom Brady and the Patriots get smeared today. Those are vague wishes that we’re probably not supposed to pray about.

A vague wish isn’t biblical hope. And let me add to that – our hope, described in the Bible, is more than positive thinking.

Like the little engine you read about in grammar school that chugged up a hill repeating, I think I can I think I can . . .^{viii} And you really hoped it would make it – and you turned the pages as quick as you could and, it made it.

Hope isn’t vague wishes and positive thinking. Hope, in the Bible, is defined as *a certain expectation*. And with it is a sense of anticipation. Our hope isn’t dependent on positive thinking or lots of pizza and certain football teams experiencing the wrath of God.

Our hope is grounded in truth . . . it’s not a wish and it isn’t based on how we’re feeling today. In fact, notice how our living hope in *verse 3* is tied to what – ***the resurrection of Jesus Christ***.

If Christ didn’t rise from the death, our faith – and all our hopes with it – ***is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:14) and our faith is worthless (verse 15) and we are still in our sins (verse 17) and if we have hoped in Christ in this life only – in other words, there’s nothing beyond this life after all – Paul writes in verse 19 – we are of all men to be pitied.***

The resurrection is the foundation of our hope – our certain expectation. Our hope isn’t dead because Jesus isn’t dead; our hope is not empty because the tomb is empty!

So our hope is a ***living hope***, Peter writes, because Jesus is our Living Lord.

3. The third truth that leads us to thanksgiving is our eternal inheritance

Now notice ***verse 4. To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and***

undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

In other words, we don’t just have a certain expectation, we have an eternal inheritance.

Throughout the New Testament, the believer is called an heir and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. In Acts 20 and Galatians 3 and Ephesians 1, the idea of the believer inheriting from God the Father, as a joint heir of Christ, is a rather stunning promise.

In the Old Testament, the Jewish follower of God was expecting to inherit what we call the Promised Land. And we call it the Promised Land because God promised it to the nation Israel – and the New Testament clearly declares that Israel will be one day repentant and restored as Christ comes to establish His kingdom and reestablish Israel in her land. The land is their inheritance.

But in the New Testament, the inheritance of the believer is described in fuller detail. We’re told that our inheritance includes:

- Eternal life – Titus 3:7
- The Kingdom of God – Matthew 25:34
- The sealing of the Spirit of God – Ephesians 1:14
- We’re told our inheritance includes rewards in Colossians 3:24
- Salvation is referred to as our final inheritance – Hebrews 1:14
- We’re even told that we will inherit the earth – Matthew 5:5.

All the liberals and all the atheists and all the evolutionists and all those who deny our Creator God, who are scrambling to save the earth – guess what? They’re not going to save the earth, God is actually saving it for you.

He will recreate it brand new, as heaven and earth become our inheritance and earth, one day, will be a part of your inheritance as a child of God. So the earth, never did belong to them, but one day it will belong to you.

Now Peter here describes your inheritance; notice, he writes here that it is: ***Imperishable*** (aphtharton) – meaning it is impossible to experience decay.^{ix}

It isn't going toperish – or pass away; you can understand it to mean that it won't come to ruin – it won't be destroyed ever; it's indestructible.

The word is used of what an invading army can leave behind in its destructive wake.

The scattered believers who are now surrounded by enemies of the gospel – whose lives have been invaded and disrupted – their homes and lands have been taken away from them . . . imagine how encouraging this was to read – their inheritance will never be taken away from them.

Peter also calls our inheritance *undefiled* (amianton) and it carries the idea of being unstained or unpolluted. It speaks of a coming life that will never be stained with pollution. Imagine the pristine air and crystal clean water of your newly created earth/inheritance.

The word also speaks of a life without the stain of sin and crime and fear. Imagine a life without locks or alarms. Keys are no longer necessary. Everyone enjoys life without fear. There are no prisons in heaven – no need of police – no radar guns either.^x

Peter is informing these scattered believers – and us – that our inheritance will be without any lingering stains or blemishes – on our bodies, certainly, but imagine – no stain or blemish on our hearts or minds – everything about us as well as our inheritance will be undefiled.

Peter adds that our inheritance – notice – *will not fade away* (amarontos). This is most interesting to me. You could render it – it will not grow dim. The word is used to refer to the fading beauty of flowers.^{xi} Their color fades and they wilt and then dry up.

It also can convey the nuance of losing freshness or excitement. Part of our fallen nature is that we get used to people, we get used to special blessings, and we simply get used to things. The first time down the roller coaster was the scariest. The first time you saw the ocean was the most amazing. The first time off the high dive was the most thrilling.

My lease ran out on my pickup truck and instead of buying it out, I decided to get a lease

on this year's model – and for one reason. They finally figured out how to build Wi-Fi into a pickup truck. I even have an electrical outlet in the front of my truck and I can charge my laptop. But the best part of it all was the integration of my cell phone to the built in, voice activated system. I hook up my phone to a USB port, and the screen becomes the screen of my phone. I can hop in the truck and ask Siri to give me the weather report and it shows up on the truck screen. I can ask her to read my emails and she will begin reading them to me – and I can respond. I can ask her to read my texts and she will . . . I can ask her now long we'll be in 1 Peter . . . and she's quiet – even the all-knowing Siri doesn't know that one.

But after having that truck now for 6 months, I find myself skipping that and just talking into my phone. It doesn't excite me as much anymore.

You ever wonder if you'll get tired of gold pavement? You ever wonder if the glory of the new earth and the splendor of your heavenly estate in the Father's House will become, you know . . . just a little less exciting than it was a million years earlier?

Listen, if the believer entered heaven without being glorified and perfected, it would. But Peter writes here that it will not fade in beauty – it will not lose its glory or its freshness. The flowers will never wilt and the colors will never lose their vibrancy.

Which has as much to say about our glorified state as it does the glory of our inheritance.

Think of it – the new Heaven and the new Earth will never lose their wonder. The glory of God and the throne of Christ and the royalty of the saints and the clothing of the beloved and even the gems in the father's house and the gold in the streets will never fade or diminish in our delight. We will never get used to it – and we will never get over it! Never!

Peter writes – at the end of *verse 4* – that this inheritance is *reserved in heaven for you*. That's one reservation you never need to fear getting lost in the mail or on someone's computer.

Chuck Swindoll wrote in his commentary on this text that when you arrive, some celestial receptionist won't look at you and say, "Now, what was your last name again? Can I see your credit card just one more time? No, after your long journey through life, the living God will welcome you home without one inch of red tape. Your reservation will never get lost."^{xii}

I dug around this week to find some of the more interesting, surprising, bizarre inheritances left by some very rich people.

Two homeless brothers in Eastern Europe inherited more than a billion dollars from a grandmother they never knew; a woman left her pet dog 10 million dollars; even Napoleon left everything behind – in fact, instead of his fortune, he left some of his hair to his friends – which I'm sure they really appreciated.

I found the story of one of the richest women in Asia leaving her vast fortune to her mystic guru because he promised her that he could guarantee her eternal life.

The only person who can guarantee someone eternal life is someone who is eternal. And that's exactly what Peter wants us to thank God about in this fourth and final truth that leads us to praising God!

4. Not only can we praise God for our new life and our living hope and our eternal inheritance, but – fourthly – God's personal guarantee

Peter writes in *verse 5, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Not only is our inheritance reserved in heaven – Peter tells us that we also are protected by the power of God for this future salvation that God is going to roll out at the last time.

The final day of consummation when God ushers us into that new heaven and new earth.

Salvation in the New Testament has three aspects to it:

- A past tense aspect – you were saved from the penalty of sin when you placed

your faith in Christ – we call that justification.

- There is a present tense aspect – where you are delivered from the power of sin as you submit to the Spirit – we call that sanctification.
- And there is a future aspect to your salvation – where in heaven you will be delivered from the very presence of sin – we call that glorification.^{xiii}

How can you be sure you'll make it all the way from justification to glorification? You have God's guarantee!

Peter writes that you are even now (present tense) being *protected by the power of God* – that word *protected* is a military term for someone setting a guard to watch over something important or valuable.

Who is doing the guarding here – who is guarding not you're your inheritance, but who is guarding you, the heir? God is! You have His personal guarantee. And your inheritance is coming.

A couple in our Greenhouse class told me recently that a church they left was a church that got a new pastor. And this couple told me that in one of his sermons, the pastor told the congregation that it's been 2,000 years since Jesus promised to return and it's been so long and He hasn't come back, I don't see any reason to believe He will."

Peter says, "It'll happen . . . everything's ready" . . . ready to be revealed at the last time – literally, the appropriate time. Listen, if everything was ready 2,000 years ago, it's really ready . . . and you'd better be ready . . . now.

Here's the message from God through the inspired pen of Peter to wandering, scattered people who wondered if God had lost interest in them; they had no market value . . . they were scorned now by their world. And they certainly knew they were sinners – but they were sinners who believed in their personal, resurrected Savior.

God is effectively telling them and us through Peter:

- You are ever wandering and ever sinful – but I am great with mercy, which I am giving to you;
- You don't deserve to live – but I have given you a new birth and a new life – and, every day, a fresh start.
- You are bankrupt and penniless – but I have given you an incredible, eternal inheritance.
- You are homeless and wandering, scattered throughout the kingdoms of

earth – but I am guaranteeing that I will bring you home.

God has given us a photograph of Himself here – and He has effectively written on the back of it to those who will believe; here's what it says: It doesn't matter where you are, or what you've done . . . I will bring you home . . . you belong to Me.

No wonder we can and should – even when some days are much worse than others - join the Apostle Peter in singing this doxology – ***Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 10/09/2016 by Stephen Davey.

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