

1 Peter 1:3-5 The Blessings of Being Born Again, part 1

We recently began a study of the book of First Peter. Peter wrote this letter to encourage the churches in Asia Minor in light of the persecution they were enduring. They were suffering, but Peter encourages them with the promises of salvation and eternal life.

We don't face the same kind of trials as Peter's original readers faced, but we all face various kinds of trials and temptations. And in times like that, we need to keep in mind what Peter wrote in this letter.

Peter begins his letter with some profound ideas about the sovereignty of God in salvation. Believers are God's chosen people, even if this world rejects and persecutes them.

Vss. 1-2 show that believers are elect by God the Father, sanctified by the HSp, and purified by the blood of Christ. In vss. 3-5, he describes the blessings of being born again.

.3a When Peter ascribes blessing to God, he's saying that God is worthy of praise. Peter's focus here is that God is worthy to be praised because of the greatness of our salvation. That's what we need to keep in mind when we are suffering adversity. Because of God's mercy, we have a living hope, a permanent inheritance, and a salvation that cannot be lost. When we understand such things, we should be joyful even in the midst of suffering. For Christians, even if their physical conditions are very bad, their spiritual conditions are very good. And for that they should praise the Lord.

Notice several things about the blessings of being born again.

I. The blessings come from God the Father and from Jesus the Son.

A. God's mercy (ἔλεος) causes these blessings.

Peter describes salvation in terms of mercy. What is mercy?

1. Mercy is not receiving the punishment/penalty that you deserve.
 - a) Grace is God's positive favor/kindness toward those who do not deserve it.
 - b) Mercy is when God does not give us the punishment that we deserve for our sins. We deserve God's wrath because of our sins, but God extends his mercy towards us.
2. Mercy is "abundant," (πολὺ) i.e., great, much.

- a) Much mercy is required for our salvation. We have sinned much, and much mercy is required for God to forgive it. It's a great blessing to know that God's mercy is far greater than all our sins.

E.g., "Grace that is greater than all our sins."

- b) The Bible assures us repeatedly that God is abundant in mercy; he delights in showing mercy to people who repent of their sin.

Nu 14:18 *The LORD [is] longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, ...*

Ps 57:10 *For thy mercy [is] great unto the heavens ...*

Ps 103:11 *For as the heaven is high above the earth, [so] great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*

Ps 145:8 *The LORD [is] gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.*

We should assure sinners that God is abundant in mercy; he is more than willing to forgive even the worst of sins. This mercy is always available to us. But we have to repent of our sins to experience this mercy.

God's great/abundant mercy is not an excuse to continue in sin (cf. Rom 6:1f). God's mercy should inspire us to obedience and holiness.

Along with God's *mercy* as the source/cause of these blessings, Peter states that ...

B. .3end Jesus' resurrection causes these blessings.

1. God can show mercy toward us because Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose again from the dead. Jesus' death on the cross satisfied God's justice against us, and that allows God to extend mercy toward us.
2. Jesus' resurrection is the fundamental, primary doctrine of Christianity. Paul tells us in 1 Cor 15 that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then our faith is empty and we are of all people most miserable.
3. But Jesus did rise from the dead, and that fact grants mercy to those who believe in Jesus.

God is merciful to everyone, even to unbelievers—common grace. But God’s *saving* mercy is available only to those who believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

I trust that you have experienced God’s abundant mercy through personal faith in Christ. You can experience God’s mercy if you repent and believe in Jesus.

II. The blessings are great.

In the remainder of vss. 3-5, Peter gives us a list of blessings that we enjoy because God is merciful and because Jesus died for our sins and rose again.

A. .3b He gives us the new birth; causes us to be born again.

1. God is worthy to be praised because he has born us again.

The root word (γεννάω) means “to bear/beget,” as in giving birth. When you give birth, you “beget/bear” the baby.

This word (ἀναγεννήσας -- aor act ptc—attributive) means, literally, “to be born anew/again.” It refers to the new life a sinner receives when he believes in Jesus.

He uses the same word in 1 Peter 1:23 (read).

Being saved is being given a new life. At the point of conversion, the believer passes from death unto life (Mt 5:24).

2. Peter did not come up with this concept himself. Where does this expression “born/begotten again” come from? You may recall that Jesus told Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again” (John 3). Ever since he said that, there has been a lot of discussion regarding the meaning of that expression, “born again.”

- a) Some people think being born again is being baptized. That idea is called baptismal regeneration. We strongly disagree with that view. Peter is not talking about being baptized.
- b) Some think of being born again as turning over a new leaf or changing your behavior or attitude. That’s not biblical regeneration either.
- c) Jesus defines the idea in John 3 when he tells Nicodemus that he’s referring to a new birth through the work of the HSp.

John 3:7–8 *Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.*

The new birth is a work of the HSp; the Spirit grants spiritual life to those who believe in Jesus.

- d) You are born again by the Spirit of God when you repent of your sins and trust in Jesus as your savior. That’s the point of regeneration—the HSp gives spiritual life to us when we put our faith in Christ.

Titus 3:5 *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

- 3. Peter tells us that God causes that to happen to believers.

- a) The Greek says, literally, “who begot us again.” God begets us again; he grants regeneration to those who believe in Jesus.
- b) Regeneration is the granting of spiritual life. We were dead in sin; but when we put our faith in Christ, he gives us spiritual life.

Ephesians 2:1 *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,*

- c) We don’t born ourselves again; God causes us to be born again, and it happens by faith in Christ. It’s the work of the HSp, not something we do ourselves. It’s not a ritual that we submit to; it’s something God does.

John 1:13 *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Quote: The focus therefore is on God's initiative in producing new life. No one takes any credit for being born. It is something that happens to us.¹

God causes our regeneration when we believe in Jesus. We don't regenerate ourselves; we don't work for it or gain it through religious rituals. The new birth is a work of God's Spirit when we repent of sin and put our faith in Jesus.

Acts 11:18 ... *God [has] granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life.*

Being born again is a work of the Holy Spirit; he causes it to happen when we turn from our sin and trust in Christ.

App: I wonder if you have been born again? Has God caused you to be regenerated? Jesus said that unless you have been born again, you will not enter into or see the kingdom of God.

Trans: That's the first blessing here—God is worthy to be praised because he has caused us to be born again; he has given us new life. Secondly, ...

B. .3b He gives us a living hope (ἐλπίδα ζῶσαν).

1. Eph 2:12 tells us that unbelievers are “without hope and without God.” We refer to unbelievers as “unregenerate.” They have no spiritual life; the HSp does not indwell them. They have not experienced the new birth because they have not believed in Jesus. And thus they have no hope of eternal life.

For unbelievers, this world is full of trials and adversity, and there is no hope for anything better in the future. We will no doubt experience adversity, but we have a living hope.
2. The grammar here (εἰς) indicates purpose/goal—“unto a living hope.” God's intention in causing us to be born again is to grant us a “living hope.”
3. Hope in the Bible usually refers to a confident expectation. This hope is not “I sure hope so.” “I hope the Brewers win the World Series; I hope the Packers beat the Cowboys.”

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 61.

Biblical hope is confidence in the promises of God. We can be confident that we have a home in heaven.

4. .3end The living hope is based on our living savior.
 - a) “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” We have this hope because Jesus rose from the dead. Our status of being born again depends on the resurrection of Christ.
 - b) If Jesus did not rise again, our hope is dead; our faith is empty.
 - c) But Jesus came out of the tomb, and thus our hope is “living.” Our confidence is in a living Savior. Because Jesus is living, our hope is living.

1 Peter 1:21 *who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

Quote: Here “living” means that the believer’s hope is sure, certain, and real, as opposed to the deceptive, empty, false hope the world offers.²

5. And it’s a “living” hope because it is *active* right now; we have confidence that Jesus is the savior and he is preparing us a home in heaven.
6. And it’s a living hope in that it *endures*. The emphasis here is on the permanency of salvation and everything associated with it.

Quote: [This living hope] is both an attitude of expectancy as the Christian looks forward to the inheritance awaiting him in heaven, and a hopefulness of present blessing from God in this life As the object of God’s care and love, [a child of God] has the right to look for the best to come to him and to look on the bright side of things.³

² Roger M. Raymer, “1 Peter,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 841.

³ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 20–21.

App: In times of trial, we look to the future with confidence. We believe that God can and will bless us now and that, when this life is over, we'll enjoy the blessings of heaven.

We may have to endure some trials and tribulations throughout our earthly lives, but our confidence of eternal life is grounded in the resurrection of Christ. We may not have much hope that things will improve for us here and now, but we can have hope for the future if we believe in Jesus. Ours is a living, active, enduring, permanent hope.

And that's what we must keep in mind as we experience the difficulties of this world. If you are born again, you have good reasons to bless God. He has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. We can praise God because of that and look to the future with optimism and hope because of the promises of God.