

SERIES: "THE RICHES OF SALVATION"**MESSAGE 2 "PRAISE FOR SALVATION"**

The opening words of Peter's first Epistle are quite different from the introductions to the preceding Pauline Epistles. The status of those to whom the letter is written is unique and for that reason Peter's opening words are framed to grab the reader's attention and let them know that he understands their predicament.

He tells them that although they have been rejected by government on earth (v.1) they have been elected by God in heaven (v.2). Peter is writing to persecuted people who have been denied any show of favor (grace) or relief (peace) by the Roman Emperor Nero and in his opening salutation bestows both upon them saying "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." (v.2b) God has multiple forms of both grace and peace and the scattered saints to whom Peter was writing needed various forms of each.

Peter's Salutation – v.2b "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

This salutation phrase that Peter employs represents two different cultures: one is a Western greeting, "grace" and it was the greeting the Greeks used; the other, "peace" was the Eastern greeting which the Jews used.

Interestingly, this is not only a greeting but this statement reveals God's process of salvation. The process of salvation is this: it is God's grace which produces God's peace. It is always that order wherever we read the statement *and* that is the order in which we experience God's salvation. Salvation by grace, that is God's way; works religions say, "obtain peace and win God's grace." But that is impossible. Grace is the root, peace is the fruit.

PETER'S PRAISE FOR SALVATION

After Peter's opening remarks in verses 1 and 2, he breaks into a melody and medley of praise. His Song of Praise is in verse three:

"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...."

Peter has written about The Plan Of Salvation, in verse 2: The Selecting By The Father, The Sanctifying By The Spirit and The Sacrificing By The Son and now he breaks out in a peon of praise in verse 3. This verse is a basic primer on praise. There are three stanzas to Peter's song of praise: stanza one: The Response Of Praise; stanza two: The Recipient Of Praise and stanza three: The Reasons For Praise. Let us harmonize each in order.

I. THE RESPONSE OF PRAISE. "Blessed"

The word, "blessed" used here, in the Greek is "eulogeetos" and in the New Testament is restricted to God. It is different from the word "blessed" which is used in reference to humans. That word in the Greek is "Eulogeemenos. Clearly, Peter is blessing or praising God.

The word “blessed”, “eulogeetos” in Greek, is comprised of “eu” meaning “well” and “logeos” which means “to speak well of worth with words.” The English words eulogy and eulogize come from this word.

II. THE RECEIPT OF PRAISE.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...” v.3

Peter is not bestowing blessing upon God, or adding blessing to the blessedness which God already is, for God is in His Person the ultimate source and perfection of blessing and nothing can be added to His blessedness. What Peter is doing here is eulogizing God, praising God. Praise to God is “speaking well of worth with words”!

The best definition that I have heard, and I do not remember where I heard it, is this: “Praise is inner health made audible.” How often and how much do we make audible our praise to God?

One of my favorite audible expressions of praise is in Psalm 103:1-2 “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits” and then the Psalmist lists some of the benefits.

Psalm 150 is a great praise Psalm to God. It instructs us about Whom we are to praise, where, why and how to praise. Read it below:

“Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.”

Did you see that last verse: “Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.” Do you have breath? We can praise God silently in our thoughts but there is a time when we are instructed to use our breath and make “inner praise audible”! That is what Peter does here in verse three.

Then we come to a list of blessings for which to praise God in the last part of verse three. Let us consider:

III. THE REASONS FOR PRAISE.

“according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead....”

There are four reasons for praise in verse 3. They are as follows:

A. “Abundant mercy.”

The publican cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13) Those of us who have been forgiven can say, "Praise God for His mercy!"

- Consider the *height* of God's mercy:
"As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him." (Psalm 103:11);
- Consider the *length* of God's mercy:
In each of the 26 verses of Psalm 136 we read, "His mercy endures forever.";
- Consider the *breadth* of God's mercy:
"The earth is full of Thy mercy." (Psalm 119:64)

Therefore, we should say in the words of Psalm 89:1 "I will sing of the mercy of the Lord forever.....!"

ILLUST. Dr. T. De Witt Talmage, gifted pastor, orator, writer and at one time pastor of the Brooklyn Presbyterian Church, N.Y., dreamed of God's mercy and later, when speaking on the subject, illustrated the message by telling of his dream. He said he dreamed that he stood before the ocean of God's mercy where four ships were anchored. He commanded the ships to sail, one North, one South, one East and one West, until they discovered the limits of God's mercy. With crowded canvass and full crew they sailed for 1,000 years and returning they announced, "There is no shore to God's mercy!"

I have heard persons say, "I want justice from God." I do not want justice, I need mercy! If we got our just deserts we would remain forever lost, I need mercy. Mercy is the hand of God that hold back the wrath of God. Praise God for His mercy.

Peter praises God for His abundant mercy and then he praises God for:

B. "The new birth" –"begotten us again."

Peter praises God for the truth that God has "begotten" or "born us again". He uses A variation of this term three times in chapters one and two:

- I Peter 1:3 "born again unto a living hope";
- I Peter 1:23 "born again by the Word of God."
- I Peter 2:2 "newborn babes."

B. "A living hope."

The people to whom Peter is writing this letter had little or no hope on the horizontal plain and they needed to be reminded that their hope was on the vertical plain, from God Himself.

- Our hope is within us: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)
- Our hope is before us: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13)

This is scriptural optimism! Sanctified optimism! And great cause for which to praise God. Peter includes one more reason for which to praise God. It is:

C. “The resurrection of Jesus.”

Off the coast of the country of Chile is a lonely island about fifty miles square called Easter Island. It was so named because it was discovered on Easter Sunday 1772. It is largely ignored by most and few consider it of much importance.

There are those who look upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ with equal disinterest, considering it an unimportant island of truth. However, it is the heart of the mainland of truth upon which our salvation is predicated.

No resurrection, no new birth; no new birth, no living hope. For “if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” (I Cor. 15:14)

Man said “no!” at Calvary. But the resurrection of Jesus Christ was God’s resounding “Yes!” The greatest ray of hope for this world does not come from the White House, the United Nations, the Vatican or Wall Street, but the one ray of hope for this dark world streams from an empty tomb near a spot called Calvary. It was there that the angel declared, “He is not here, but risen as He said.”

The French skeptic Renan sneeringly declared, “Christianity lives on the fragrance of an empty vase.” Unwittingly, he was correct!

It is of no wonder then, that Peter penned this passage of praise saying:

“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....”

Let us join him in a great concert choir of praise and “eulogize Ultimate Worth with words” praising God for our salvation!

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