



## **Bold Worship of the Blessing God**

*Series: Pursuing Christ in a Pagan World*

1 Peter 1:3-5

Jun 14, 2009

Speaker

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The goal of this sermon and Peter's teaching is the bold, unrestrained, passionate and intelligent worship of God. (v. 3a)

The goal of this sermon, and every sermon in reality, is worship and awe at the glory of God revealed to us. As Peter begins his instruction, as he begins to encourage and strengthen the people of God scattered throughout this hostile world, as he thinks about the work of God in causing His people to be born again, His raising the Son from the dead, His mercy, the living hope that is now ours, the scope of the inheritance that awaits us, and God's ongoing work to preserve us as His own, Peter cannot help but begin with worship, with proclaiming the greatness and blessedness of the God. That is what Peter believes is the greatest necessity to the trial-facing, trouble-enduring church – a vision of the face of the glorious God over all things. That is what is most needful for our souls, not our eyes set on the gathering storm but our eyes upon God.

What that means for us this morning is this. I cannot treat these words from Peter, the eternal truths, in a cold, impersonal, mechanical sort of way. To do that is to devalue these words at their very core. It is to reduce them and place them on the order of an appliance manual. Neither can you listen to these words in a distracted, deflecting, cold sort of way. These are meant to be words of hope and life. These are words meant to stir in our hearts a bold, passionate worshipful response. Tom Wells says, "Worship is a response to greatness." And these words this morning are filled with the greatness of God.

True worship, soul-stirring worship happens when the mind, made able to perceive the greatness of God and instructed by the Spirit of God through His Word, grasps soul-stirring, jaw-dropping, awe-inspiring truth about God – which really is a truth about God – and the heart responds with profound feelings of awe, wonder, amazement, brokenness, humility, gratefulness, joy and cannot contain it but it spills forth in sometimes quiet, sometimes exuberant, but always present expressions of praise, and honor, and glory, and love to God. We must worship God for who He is, not for who we imagine Him to be or who we want Him to be. He is the God of both mercy and justice, of love and wrath, of well-being and calamity, the

God who is sovereign over all things, the God who receives some into heaven and who damns the lost to hell. So Peter begins with a song of praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The words are so full and rich with meaning and implications. Each phrase can be savored for a moment now, and for the rest of your life as you grow in grace and knowledge of Christ. See with me that:

God is to be worshipped because out of His abundant mercy He has authored our new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ. (v. 3)

The God who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one true God, the Almighty God, the only God, the I AM, the God who said there's no other God beside Me, the God who is revealed in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of our eternal life. Out of God's great mercy, out of His loving kindness we have been born again by the action of God. I want us to wrap our minds around this today; we need our worship to be driven, to grow, to resound because we have grasped with Peter the greatness of what he is saying here. Out of God's great mercy, His goodness and love, shown to we who were pitiable and in desperate need, in deep distress, who deserved nothing but judgment...out of His great mercy, God has caused us to be born again. God gave us life.

We were dead in trespasses and sins. Dead to God, dead to spiritual life. We were numb to spiritual things. We knew nothing of Jesus as Savior, Sinbearer, Sacrifice, Shepherd, or Sovereign Savior King. We were under God's wrath and curse, under His just judgment. We needed to be born again. We needed new life. In his mercy, God causes to be born again, or to spiritually come alive. Now they are responsive to God's voice, able to believe, and willing to obey. When God draws us to Christ, and gives us the faith to believe in Him, there's a total transformation, when he gives us new birth, there's new life that replaces the old life. God did it without any help from us, without our agreement, our assistance or our input at all.

Do we realize the greatness of this grace? What a mercy it is that one such as Christ, who is very God of very God, the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, who upholds the universe by the word of his power; the object of God the Father's delight, rejoicing before him always, the beloved Son in whom God the Father is well pleased, that He should be given as the sacrifice that would bring us near to God in sweet fellowship. (1 Peter 3:18)

The Father is not inclined to pour mercy upon us due to any good in us but simply out of His compassion for our sin-sick condition. God pours mercy upon us not out of debt -- (Rom 11:35) -- not from some profit to be gained by God -- (Job 22:2), not because of some lack in Him -- (Acts 17:25) -- fully out of His mercy alone, out of His loving kindness, out of His kindness and goodwill toward the miserable and afflicted, and motivated with a desire to relieve us, God has caused us to be born again.

He has done it with a mercy that is sovereign – nothing and no-one can force God to extend His mercy (Rom 9:15). His mercy is specific – it is not granted to all, it is a mercy given to particular people. It is a powerful mercy – it accomplishes the purpose for which it is given, in this case regeneration. It is a holy and righteous mercy – Mercy does not sidestep but satisfies God's justice. This is why he sent Jesus Christ..., It is plenteous mercy – it involves more than forgiveness but as we will see in a moment, it involves a great inheritance. Last, it is a lasting mercy – ensuring, as we will see in a moment, that we will with certainty take possession of our inheritance by God's power. Mercy is not an ego-stroking word, but it is a worship and love inducing one.

The reason it may not bring forth the worship in us that it does from the heart of Peter is that we do not understand and cherish and dwell upon this truth as we should. I believe that one of the reasons that worship has so eroded in America, has been so corrupted in the Western nations is that there is a pervasive belief that we had something to do with our new birth, that the new birth is something that God does in people in response to what they do first. We have been taught that the new birth is something that we bring about by praying a prayer or raising our hands, or signing a commitment card, or walking down an aisle and joining a church, or by believing in Jesus. But beloved, that is not the teaching of Scripture. Our new birth does not come about by any of those methods, not even by our own faith. Faith is not the instrument of regeneration, it is the result of it.

God's mercy is not a dependant mercy as if God is helplessly waiting for our permission before he could give us the new birth and make us to live. On the contrary, the Bible describes divine mercy as sovereign and powerful, so that God is merciful to whomever He wishes, and to those whom he has chosen, he pours out his mercy in great might completing His purposes. If we are born again by God we believe the gospel because that is the only thing that someone who is born again by the Spirit of God can do.

And He did it, Peter says, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. What does that mean? He is not talking about the preaching of the resurrection of Christ, though that is a part of the gospel. No, the point Peter is making is this: By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, God has given life, not only to Christ but to all who were chosen in Him in eternity past. When Christ arose, He secured our salvation. Peter is saying what Paul also declared: when Christ rose, we rose. In giving life to Christ, God guarantees life to all those who are united to Christ. We are identified with Him. We are in Him. When Christ died we died to sin. And as Christ was raised we were raised that we too might walk in the newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Christ has not just made our salvation possible, He had made it sure. Glory be to God!

What a statement about our depravity that we would even need to be exhorted to glorify God for our salvation, to magnify and praise Him, that praise would not naturally be always upon our lips. We can never let the salvation of souls according to the mercy of God to become commonplace. The very root of our worship for all of eternity will be the praise of God in Christ for our eternal salvation. Oh how we must train our hearts NOW to value what is truly of worth. Oh Beloved, understanding the mercies of God makes a wise saint humble, overcome with the graciousness of God that can never be deserved, overcome with God's loving-kindness and his own unworthiness. Overcome with worship. Overcome that He has made a dead man or dead woman born again to a living hope.

And that is what God has done, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope, a living hope, grounded in the living word, laid hold of by a living faith, that gives life and hope and strength and encouragement. John Piper says of this hope: This confident hope gives us the encouragement and enablement we need for daily living. It does not put us in a rocking chair where we complacently await the return of Jesus Christ. Instead, it puts us in the marketplace, on the battlefield, where we keep on going when the burdens are heavy and the battles are hard. Hope is not a sedative; it is a shot of adrenaline, a spiritual blood transfusion. And beloved, that living hope is the glorious future inheritance that is awaiting us as the people of God.

God is to be worshipped for the glorious gift of our matchless inheritance (v. 4)

Peter is thinking in terms of physical Israel and applying that truth to Spiritual Israel, to the church of God. He takes what was true of Israel and shows how it is surpassed in the church of the Living God. Let me show you. The Old Testament spoke of the promised land of Canaan as Israel's inheritance. Each family, each tribe would inherit part of the Promised Land. But while Israel received the earthly foreshadowing; we receive the heavenly fulfillment. He contrasts our inheritance with Israel's.

Our inheritance – imperishable – Promised Land ravaged by enemies at times. undefiled – Promised land defiled by pagans and then by Israel's idolatry. Unfading – will not dry up – drought in Promised Land. Kept in heaven -- not a land, a city, or only a new earth -- all that God will give us with Him and in Him. Our inheritance is a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Our inheritance, he says, is the fullness of eternal salvation in its consummate form. A heavenly reward awaits the children of God.

The supreme gift of our inheritance is God Himself. In Joshua 13 we read about the apportioning of the inheritance of Israel in Canaan. Each of the tribes is given part of the land. But in verse 33 we read: But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance; the LORD God of Israel is their inheritance, just as he said to them. (Jos 13:33) The Levites received no physical

inheritance, why? Because they were priests before God. God was their inheritance. And looking at 1 Peter 2:9 we see this description of us: (1Pe 2:9)

God is our inheritance, as the Psalmist writes -- (Psa 16:5-6, 11) God in Christ is our inheritance – our incorruptible, immortal, holy, innocent, unstained, undefiled, exalted, and unfading God and Savior. (Psa 73:24-26)

Do you see it, beloved? Do you see the depth of this, the wonder of this inheritance and the heart work that it accomplishes? This matchless inheritance, rightly understood, rightly valued, makes the afflictions of this present world to fade to insignificance – (2Co 4:16-18) Rather we are able to rejoice under trial, knowing: (Rom 5:3-5). This glorious, matchless, divine inheritance rightly understood, rightly valued, causes us to despise the fleeting pleasures of sin and instead to pursue Christ and His holiness just as Moses did. The writer of Hebrews tells us: (Heb 11:24-26). What a glorious inheritance is ours if we are the children of God. It is nothing that we have earned. It is ours by sonship. (Rom 8:16-18) And here is the third reason I want us to see for the unrestrained worship of God.

God is to be worshipped for the certainty of our perseverance by His mighty power working by faith unto the possession of our inheritance. (v. 5)

This is what is called the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is that they whom God has regenerated and effectually called to salvation, can never totally nor finally fall away from salvation, but shall certainly persevere to the end by the power of God and be eternally saved. It is because God never forsakes His work that believers continue to stand to the very end.

The point is this. God's power is constantly employed, constantly poured forth from His throne enabling us to resist temptation -- (1Co 10:13) His power is active to sustain His people and support them in the midst of trials -- (Deut 33:26-27a) His power is constantly employed raising us up when we fall -- (Psa 37:23-24) And lifting us and preserving us in the midst of the most insurmountable obstacles -- (Isa 43:1-3) There is no temptation, pressure, weariness, persecution, suffering, trouble, trial or trap that can snatch us out of the hand of God. The grand and glorious promise of God is that not one of His people will ever be lost. We are held in the hand of the Father and the hand of the Son and no-one can snatch us from His hand. Not one of God's people can finally and fatally fall away or be lost. We cannot because we are held by the power of God through faith. This is key.

Example of Peter (Luke 22:31-32). Jesus prayed that Peter's faith not fail utterly. That is why Peter wept bitterly and returned from his sin. But to whom did Jesus pray? To God, his Father. And what did he ask God to do? To not let Peter's faith come to an end. God preserved and held fast to Peter and brought him back from the edge of unbelief and granted him repentance,

and then strengthened him to preach Jesus without fear before the very Jews who had crucified Him.

Here's what we must grasp. Here's what we must see. The enemy of your soul, Satan, is continually taking aim at your faith. That is his end-game. He may use means to attack your faith – attacking your physical health, your situation, your circumstances, whatever. But his end-game is your faith – your trust in God's work in Christ, your hope in the promises of the gospel. His goal is the destruction, the demolition of your faith so that your eternal soul might be damned forever. But understand what Peter is saying here. Satan's attempt to destroy the faith of one who is truly Christ's, chosen by God before the foundation of the world – it is a fool's errand. It is impossible. The omnipotent God of the universe is guarding our faith. The unrestrained King of glory is preserving us in faith. God makes us to persevere by granting unfailing measures of faith – faith to rest upon His word, He who is faithful and able to save to the uttermost – faith to keep His word, supplying more and more faith as we ask of Him. The faith of the elect can never be destroyed. Hebrews 7:25 says that Jesus "always lives to make intercession" for those who come to God through him, and this is why genuine faith will never truly and finally fail. Be sure we understand, God does not promise that we will not be sick, that we will never experience heartache. He does promise that we will not get cancer; that our children will not die before us. We are given no assurances that disease will not ravage our bodies; that we will not be killed by a terrorist, that we will not be killed in a car accident, that we will not be cast into prison for our faith, that we will not suffer the plundering of our houses, that we will not be tortured or even put to death for Christ's sake. The promise is that even in the midst of the most horrific testing our faith will not fail. Our souls shall be safe and we shall see Him face to face and see the all-satisfying glory of our God and King. Our comfort and security rest in the fact that the One guarding our souls is omnipotent. In fact, the very testing and trials that Satan hopes will crush our faith instead refines and purifies it like gold in a fire. It is with certainty that together with the Psalmist we can sing and shout: (Psa 121:1-8)

Beloved, the simple truth is this: If you belong to Christ, God was in charge of your salvation from the beginning before you ever existed and God is in charge of holding you fast and holding your future secure before you ever get there. That is the meaning of Romans 8:28-32: (Rom 8:28-32)

We are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. We are being guarded by faith for the full revelation of our salvation. Beloved, you are protected that you might be openly acknowledged as the sons and daughters of God – clothed in the righteousness of Christ, cleansed of your sin, your adoption fully revealed, you place as an heir made evident, received into heaven; completely, finally and forever free from

all sin and shame; filled with unimaginable joy; made perfectly holy in body and soul; joined with the multitude of saints from every tribe and nation and tongue, with all of the angels in festal gathering, with all of the martyrs who loved Christ more than their own lives to behold and be forever overwhelmed and awe-struck and thrilled and satisfied beyond measure with the beatific vision of God the Father in all of His resplendent majesty and the glory of Christ which he had before the foundation of the world, forever enjoying full communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You are protected that your every spiritual longing may be satisfied. You are protected that you might know the end of fasting, praying, watching, longing and waiting. You are protected that you might see God as He is and be forever enraptured by beauty, His perfection, His majesty, and His great grace toward us.

All of this is waiting for us. The work of Christ is an accomplished work, a complete work, a finished work. All we are awaiting is the ingathering of God's elect to the family of God and the return of His Christ.

## Points of Application

- 1) The first priority of the church of Jesus Christ is to worship God for His goodness and greatness -- for His character.
  
- 2) We must praise God and rejoice because our salvation is secure since from start to finish it is the work of sovereign God, a work of mercy and grace and not of human merit.
  
- 3) God is keeping us secure through our faith, so we must do all we can to grow in faith toward God.
  
- 4) As we look forward to our salvation yet to be fully revealed, let us do so with a view to personal holiness.
  
- 5) Security in the salvation God has given is the vantage point from which we must view suffering.

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