

## A Living Hope

1 Peter 1:3

I appreciate the fact that you all are used to following outlines as you listen carefully to sermons, and I wanted to give you a heads up this morning that my outline will be a little bit out of the ordinary. The outline is a tool to help you become familiar with and enable you to understand a particular passage of Scripture. So as I prepared for this sermon this week, I determined that the best outline of verse 3 would be the most simple one. Usually I have 2 or 3 points with sub-points, but this morning I have five simple points and no sub-points. In other words, we will walk through this verse in as straightforward a manner as possible, so that you can clearly see the reason that Peter writes such a glorious benediction. Actually, it's a doxology, a song of praise to God. I don't want to get so involved in the details that we miss that context. This is a song of praise!

But first, a reminder about the big picture of the whole book. Peter is writing just prior to a time of great persecution, probably just before the Roman persecution of Christians that began after the fire in Rome in AD 64. He's writing to give encouragement to Christians whom he knows will soon be facing persecution and great distress. You don't have to go any farther than verse 6 to see that point.

v.6 "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials."

That's what is coming. That's the context. And how do you prepare for such trouble? Using Peter's example, by learning to sing a doxology of praise to God, understanding the very nature of the work of God in your salvation. "In this you greatly rejoice." In this salvation. In this work of God that has brought about your eternal salvation.

Thus we will focus upon the doctrine of salvation, but the doctrine is not in a propositional form. And it certainly isn't dry or irrelevant, neither boring nor impractical. Instead, this doctrine of salvation is the basis upon which a doxology of praise is offered to God, and we join that doxology as we worship him together this morning.

v.3

There is clearly a trinitarian reference in that verse, as Peter's identification of God is specifically a reference to God the Father, with the second reference made to Jesus. So praise is given to God the Father. And praise is given to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Anytime you talk about the doctrine of salvation, these distinctions between the persons of the trinity become vitally important, because each person of the Trinity has a specific purpose and function in that great work of salvation. So the praise for our salvation is to God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Please remember last week, with that trinitarian structure as well, as Peter defined what it means to be one of God's people, one of the elect. He writes in verse 2 of that eternal purpose of election,

v.2 "...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

So Peter's whole mindset is focused upon the three persons of the Trinity as God, and he gives his blessing and doxology with great eloquence and poetic beauty. I might even wish we could have some music to sing this doxology like we do for the more familiar doxology that we so often sing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." In this case the words would be, "Blessed be

the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” And it is...

### **I. A GREAT BLESSING.**

I want you to recognize how integral such blessing is to your Christian faith and life. These sorts of phrases are not just items in an order or worship or liturgy. Instead, they are to be the very deepest expressions of faith. These words are not just a formal introduction to a letter written by an apostle, but they are the most profound expression of a godly and reverent attitude. Christianity is nothing if it is not a doxology of praise to God. Your religion, your faith is nothing, if is not founded upon this sense of the greatness of the glory of God. And no doctrine affords us more opportunity to sing that praise than the doctrine of salvation. So Peter makes mention not just of God, in general terms, but the God who is father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't miss the "our" in that phrase, "our Lord Jesus Christ." Peter identifies himself with his readers, he identifies himself as one of the elect, one God's people. And don't forget the work of the Son in our salvation, in relation to the will and purpose of the Father. In Jesus' own words,

John 6:37 "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Or as John would put it,

1 John 5:11 "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."

Praise God from whom all blessings flow...That's the song of our faith. Blessed be the Father. Blessed be the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And then we see,

### **II. A GREAT MERCY.**

When the Bible presents the subject of our salvation, the emphasis is upon God's mercy! That's the motive. That's the driving force.

So when Peter sings his praise with regard to our salvation, what stands out in his mind is mercy. Compassion. Concern for those who are in need, compassion for those in distress. And Peter calls it "his abundant mercy." "His great mercy."

God's grace addresses our guilt, but his mercy addresses our misery.

So our salvation did not come about because of our works. It did not come about because of our merits, what we have earned. It did not come about because of our good efforts, or our intentions. We didn't lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Our salvation came about because God is rich in mercy!

As for ourselves, we were dead in our trespasses and sins, we read in Ephesians 2,

Eph. 2:4 "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

Beloved, God is rich in mercy! And we? We are so sinful!

Tit. 3:3 “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

People of God, don't ever stop thinking about the mercy of God toward you. Don't ever stop thinking about how much you need his mercy. Don't ever stop thinking about just how lost you would be without his mercy. And don't ever stop thinking about the realization that mercy is not earned, it is given. You didn't do something in order receive. Mercy, by its very definition, is given from the determination and motivation of God himself. If you are a Christian, if you have eternal life, it is not because you are such a good person. It is because God is rich in mercy.

Everything spiritual blessing that you have comes to you from the mercy of God. And I declare that to you for your great encouragement! God's mercy is the subject of our songs of praise! As it was in the book of Psalms.

Ps. 103:1 “Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: 3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, 4 Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies...8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. 9 He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. 10 He has not dealt with us according

to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. 13 As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. 14 For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. 15 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. 16 For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more. 17 But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.”

We offer a great blessing to God, because we have received great mercy from God. And then, point 3 as we walk through this verse, we see God's actual work in our salvation.

### **III. A GREAT WORK.**

Our salvation is defined, defined as the work of God. God saved us, that's what I read earlier from Titus 3. In its simplest format, that is the reformed doctrine of salvation, or soteriology. That is Calvinism at its very heart, the central declaration of the reformed faith regarding salvation. It is a simple point. God saved us. In other words, we didn't save ourselves.

Notice how Peter puts it, the words are in the middle of the verse – God “has begotten us again.”

It is the Greek word well translated “born again.” God has caused us to be born again. Or to use the language of birth that we so often use today, “God delivered us.” In our experiences, the focus upon a baby being born is the work of the mother, is it not? A woman delivers a baby. A woman gives birth to a baby. And so it is with God. God gives us birth, he gives us new birth. He gives us a second birth. That's what it means to be born, again.

You have to love that conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus in John 3. Poor Nicodemus. He just couldn't understand what Jesus meant.

John 3:3 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 3:4 "Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, " Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 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."

To be born the first time is to be delivered from your mother's womb. Your mother gives birth. To be born again is to be born by the power of the Holy Spirit. To be made alive. The first birth is a physical birth, bringing physical life. The second birth is a spiritual birth, bringing spiritual life.

Peter himself goes on to define this just a little bit more in, v.23 "...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever."

That's salvation. It is not a work of man, but a work of God. God saves us. God causes us to be born again. God comes to you when you are dead in your trespasses and sins, and God makes you alive. And he does so because of his mercy.

Are you getting the sense of my emphasis on where all the

credit is due when it comes to salvation? God causes you to be born again. God causes you to be begotten again. God saves you. It is a great work of God, worthy of great praise! And you and I are left to sing his praise!

Eph. 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

v.3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again."

And then,

#### **IV. A GREAT EXPECTATION.**

The goal or purpose for our salvation, what it is that we receive. What we are saved for...

v.3 He "has caused us to be born again to a living hope..."

Hope is a very important word in the Bible, and it means something quite different than its common and ordinary usage today. For us, "hope" usually implies a great uncertainty. If you are asked about something and you answer, "I hope so," you are expressing doubt. Often just wishful thinking. It's something you want, but not something you will confidently receive.

In the Bible, the idea of hope is on that very confidence. "Hope" is a sure and certain expectation of something that you do not yet have, a confident expectation of some future blessing that has been promised. The confidence is in the promise. Thus the emphasis is not upon the uncertainty of receiving what you hope for, but rather upon the fact that it is still future. And certain!

In that context, our salvation itself is called our "hope of salvation."

1 Thes. 5:8 “But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Rom. 8:23 “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

That’s the idea of hope! Waiting. With expectant patience. Waiting, not seeing. But waiting with just as much certainty as if you were already holding it in your hands.

We were made to be born again, in order to have such a hope. How about this prayer in,

Eph. 1:18 “...having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.”

And listen to how Paul begins his personal letter to Titus.

Titus 1:1 “Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, 2 in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.”

Similarly, Titus 3:7 “...so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

So don’t forget where we are here in verse 3. We’re in the middle of a doxology, a song of praise. We sing praise to God because he has given us a sure and certain hope, the hope of

glory! And Peter calls that a “living hope.” In other words, this hope is alive! God who has promised eternal life is alive. Our hope is not a mere rational deduction. It is not an intellectual declaration. Our hope is not a doctrinal proposition. It is not a mathematical or scientific formula. Our hope is living because our hope is in Jesus.

So we are born, or delivered. We are born again, delivered into life by the power of the Holy Spirit. And then given life, the hope of life. Or, a living hope. Everything about the gospel has to do with life. God has given us life. God has promised us life. God has blessed us with a hope that is alive.

Now, how does that affect our daily lives? Or, as I will often say at this point of a sermon, “So what?” I will always let you ask that question, as long as what you mean by that question is, “What does that have to do with my life?” There is always a good answer to that good question.

Well, let me review something I said at the beginning. Why is Peter writing this letter? To give encouragement to Christians who are about to suffer great trials and persecutions. And hope is what you need to be able to survive!

So how many of you have particular trials in your life at the present time? How many of you realize that your bodies are mortal and corruptible? How many you suffer from significant physical affliction, or someone you know does? How many of you know someone who died recently, someone you cared about deeply? You need to receive from God the blessing of hope. You need the encouragement of that hope in order to live through every single day of your life. The the living hope that God gives to us enables you to enjoy such confidence.

Hebrews 6:17 “So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

A sure and steadfast anchor of the soul! That’s our living hope! Hold fast to the gospel, because God has made a promise. That’s our living hope.

It even affects our relationships with one another.

Heb. 10:23 “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Again, words of great encouragement,

Heb. 10:19 “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

People of God, draw near to God, even as you do now in worship. Draw near to God because the blood of Jesus cleanses

you of your sin. Draw near to God, because he who promised is faithful. Draw near to God because he has caused you to be born again to a living hope.

And he gives you confidence by the demonstration of,

#### **V. A GREAT POWER.**

Namely, the power that raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee of what God has promised. The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee that you who believe in Jesus will also be raised from the dead. So its all about Jesus.

v.20-21

A great blessing. A great mercy. A great work. A great expectation. And a great power.

You and I are left, then, to do two things. One, here, in worship, we come to sing his praise. And then, when you leave worship and enter again the world in which you live, when you confront all the troubles that world has to offer, have this confidence of a living hope.

Again, Rom. 8:24 “For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

That’s the practical message. Wait for the hope of eternal glory with patience, because it is sure and certain. Whatever troubles are waiting for you the moment you leave these doors, wait in the hope that all God’s promises will be shown to be true. So even in the midst of those trials, draw near to God, because he who promised is faithful. Draw near to God because he has caused you to be born again to a living hope. So great is his mercy! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.