SONGS:
CLOSE:

Chain Reaction of Praise

Profiling Christians – Part 4 of 6

TEXT: 1 Peter 1:3-5
AIM: Every believer has cause to praise God on account of the great salvation He has accomplished on our behalf.

INTRODUCTION:

In **verse 3** the text tells us *"…according to his abundant mercy* [God] *hath begotten us 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.

Verse 3 also tells us that God has *"begotten us again unto a lively hope by 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.

We learn in **verse 4** that those of us who are born again have an inheritance reserved in heaven that is undecaying, 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.

A. At the heart of this passage is the precious truth that we have been born again.

1. This reality is not based upon anything that we have done but according to His great mercy. **Praise God!**
2. We now have a living hope founded upon the resurrection of Jesus. We have a confident expectation because He is alive. **Praise God!**
3. We are now due to collect an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and will never fade away. **Praise God!**
4. 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!**!
5. These truths should change the way we take on life. Consider who we are in Christ and what our future holds and … **Praise God!**

B. J. Allen Blair…

…Pastor Blair was also author in the early and mid-1900s and he told the story of another pastor he knew of who always seemed to be overflowing in gratitude about something

This man 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 snowstorm along with sharp bitter winds that blew in from the north. As the little flock of God's people 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!"[1]

C. 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.

D. In fact, Peter's opening statement in 3:1 is nothing less than a doxology.

Notice – *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ…"*

1. Peter is expressing a desire that ALL believers everywhere should praise God.
   a. You could well read this as an exclamation that simply says, "Thank God!" or "Praise God!"
   b. ***We bless you God!*** The word here for *"blessed"* is from the Gk. word **eulogetos** which gives us our word eulogy. A eulogy means to say nice things about people, "to be well spoken of," or "to be praised."
   c. 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.
2. 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…

E. Let's address one particular issue that might trouble you. It's this reference to God the Father as Jesus' God.

1. Some would think that if Jesus has a God, He obviously isn't one—***RIGHT?***
2. Whenever you see this kind of phrase, the Apostles are providing both the **human perspective** and the **divine perspective** of Jesus Christ.
   a. 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.
   b. That is, He has the very **divine nature** with God the Father, as **equally deity** with God the Father and God the Spirit.
3. 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.
4. Both our Lord's humanity and deity are carried forward in this doxology. And listen, without both being true, our salvation would be impossible.
   a. He had to be the Son of Man in order to die.
   b. He had to be the Son of God in order to die for us.

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[1] J. Allen Blair, 1 Peter: Living Peacefully When the World Won't Leave You Alone (Kregel, 1954), p. 25

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

And he's going to point out several truths that lead us to thank God – each word has a degree of distinction to bring us to thanksgiving.

I. THE FIRST IS SIMPLY; GOD'S GREAT MERCY GIVES US NEW LIFE.

Notice verse 3 again – *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again …"* **stop there!**

A. His great mercy … saved us!

1. 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***
2. But here—Peter writes about God's **GREAT MERCY**.
   a. And maybe Peter refers to God's mercy because the world around these scattered believers wasn't giving them any.
   b. Their world was turning merciless toward them!
3. 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.***
   a. We are saved because God isn't going to give us what we deserve!
   b. We **deserve** the judgment and punishment of Hell … we **don't** deserve Heaven and forgiveness and a kingdom forever!
   c. We don't deserve any of that.
   The older I grow in the Lord the more aware I am of what I really deserve.
   d. And it wasn't that I deserved to be 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 – ***WHY?*** **–** because we keep sinning (1 John 1:7). **AND God continues to keep showing us mercy.**

I read a true story, about something that recently happened in a small, poor village in Brazil. In a little hut with a dirt floor and a red tile roof lived Maria, the mother to 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.

Time came for her to seek out employment to help her Mum with the bills. Like her Mum she sought a job as a cleaner—a custodial type job. Maria's job was enough to get food and clothing and shelter and they scraped out a simple existence, but now it was time for Christina to find a job too.

BUT 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,** and what she might do in order to survive, which is why when in the morning Maria found her daughter's pallet empty; her heart was filled with fear.

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 possible spare, stepping into a photograph booth, closed the curtain and took all the pictures that she could afford.

Then, armed with her case of clothes, 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 being all-alone.

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

The sinner upon conversion to Christ is created a new creature in Christ Jesus – brought from spiritual death unto spiritual life (Eph. 2:10); we become new creatures and a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17 and Gal. 6:15). We actually begin to participate in a new God-given life.[2]

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!

II. 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 abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead…"*

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

1. Keep in mind that this word *"hope"* – even the concept of hope – is uniquely a Christian concept. The world knows **nothing** of hope – certainly no hope beyond the grave.
2. The Apostle Paul describes the unbelieving world in **Ephesians 2:12** as *"having no hope and without God in the world."*

[2] D. Edmond Hiebert, 1 Peter (BMH Books, 1984), p. 1

3. To the Thessalonians, Paul said that we grieve upon the death of our Christian loved ones – but we don't grieve – he writes, *"…as others which have no hope"* (1Thess. 4:13). In other words, they have no Saviour.

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.[3]

B. But when you hear the gospel – it gives life meaning and it gives life hope.

1. 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."
2. Or the hope that your favourite football team gets to smeared the rival team today—those are **vague wishes** that we're probably not supposed to pray about.
3. A **vague wish** isn't biblical hope. And let me add to that – our hope, described in the Bible, is more than positive thinking.
   a. Like the little engine you read about in grammar school that chugged up a hill repeating, I think I can I think I can …
   b. And you really hoped that little engine would make it – and you turned the pages in the storybook as quick as you could to see if it made it.

4. Hope isn't vague wishes and positive thinking.

a. **Hope**, in the Bible, is defined as *a certain expectation*. And with it is a sense of anticipation.
   1) Our hope isn't dependent on positive thinking or lots of pizza and certain football teams experiencing the wrath of God.
   2) Our hope is grounded in truth … it's not a wish and it isn't based on how we're feeling today.

b. In fact, notice how our living hope in **vs. 3** is tied to what? —***the resurrection of Jesus Christ.***

c. If Christ didn't rise from the death, our faith – and all our hopes with it – ***is in vain*** and ***our faith is worthless*** (1 Cor. 15:14) and ***we are YET in our sins*** (vs. 17) and *"if in this life only we have hoped in Christ…"* – 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.

III. THE THIRD TRUTH THAT LEADS US TO THANKSGIVING IS OUR ETERNAL INHERITANCE

Now notice verse 4 – God has *"begotten us … to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you…"*

A. In other words, WE DON'T just have a certain expectation—we have an eternal inheritance.

[3] William Barclay, The Letters of James and Peter (Westminster, 1976), p. 172

1. Throughout the NT, the believer is called *"an heir"* and a joint heir with Jesus Christ (Gal. 4). In **Acts 20, 26** 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.
2. In the OT, 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 NT clearly declares that Israel will be one day repentant and restored as Christ comes to establish His kingdom and re-establish Israel in her land. The land is their inheritance.
3. 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 **– Colossians 3:24**
   - Salvation is referred to as our final inheritance **– Hebrews 1:14**
   - AND we're even told that we will inherit the earth **– Matthew 5:5**

   a. 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**.

   b. One day this earth will be destroyed and God promised to recreate it brand new.

      1) This new heaven and earth will become part of our inheritance as a child of God.

      2) BTW, the earth never did belong to man, but was given stewardship over the Lord's dominion, but one day it will belong to you.

B. Now Peter here describes your inheritance.

1. Notice, he writes here that it is: ***Incorruptible*** **– *imperishable inheritance*** (aphtharton) – meaning it is impossible to spoil or experience decay.

   a. Therefore it isn't going to perish – 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.

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

   c. 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.

2. Peter also calls our ***inheritance undefiled*** (amianton) and it carries the idea of being unstained or unpolluted—it is pure.

   a. An undefiled inheritance speaks of a coming life that will never be soiled with the discolouration of pollution. Imagine the pristine air and crystal clean water of your newly created earth/inheritance.

   b. The word also speaks of a life without the blotch of sin and crime and fear.

      1) Imagine a life without locks or alarms. Keys are no longer necessary.

2) Everyone enjoys life without fear.

3) There are no prisons in heaven –no need of police or police check points.

c. 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.

3. Peter adds that our inheritance – notice – ***will not fade away*** (amarontos).

a. This is most interesting. You could render it – it will not grow dim.

b. The word is used to refer to the fading beauty of flowers. Naturally, with time, their colour fades, and they wilt, and then dry up.

c. It also can convey the nuance of losing freshness or excitement.

1) 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.

2) The **first time** down the roller coaster was the scariest. Maybe the **first time** you saw the ocean it was the most amazing sight. The **first time** off the high dive was the most thrilling. BUT over time the thrill, the excitement and the surge of moment lost its fascination

My mobile phone has a built in, voice activated system. I can ask Siri (that is the name of the system) to give me the weather report, to read my emails and she will begin reading them to me – and I can even 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 mobile now for over a year, I find it doesn't excite me as much anymore.

You ever wonder if you would ever get tired of gold pavement walking the streets of the New Jerusalem? You ever wonder if the glory of the new earth and the splendour 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.

d. But Peter writes here that our inheritance will not fade in beauty—it will not lose its glory or its freshness. The flowers will never wilt and the colours will never lose their vibrancy.

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

f. 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!

4. Peter writes – at the end of **vs. 4** – that this inheritance is ***reserved in heaven for you.***

a. That's one reservation you never need to fear getting lost in the mail or on someone's computer.

b. When you arrive in heaven, 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.

I dug around and came up with some of 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!

Not only can we praise God for our new life and our living hope and our eternal inheritance, but –

IV. FOURTHLY – WE CAN PRAISE GOD FOR HIS PERSONAL GUARANTEE – 1:5

A. *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.*

1. *Gk.* word for *"kept"* is a military term and means "who are being guarded." Cp. **2 Cor. 11:32** where it is translated *"garrison"* and **Phil. 4:7** where we are told that *"the peace of God"* keeps the hearts and minds of the believer.
   a. **Peter's statement of protection answers this objection:** Of what use is it that salvation is *"reserved"* for us in heaven in **vs. 4**, as in a calm secure haven, when we are presently tossed in the world as on a troubled sea in the midst of a thousand wrecks? [Calvin].
   b. As the inheritance is *"kept"* i.e. *"reserved"* or guarded in **vs. 4** safely for the far distant "heirs," so must they – the heirs – be "guarded" in their persons so as to be sure of reaching it. The inheritance shall not be lacking heirs nor heirs be wanting for their inheritance. "We are *guarded in the world* as our inheritance is *kept in heaven*." This defines the *"you"* of 1 Peter 1:4.
2. Not only is the inheritance guarded, but heirs who have been born into that inheritance **are shielded by God's power.**

B. *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.

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

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

2. 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. Some believe because it's been so long since Jesus promised to return – it has been over 2,000 years and He hasn't come back – they don't see any reason to believe He ever will!
    b. Nonetheless, Peter says, "It will happen … everything's ready" … *"ready to be revealed in the last time"* – literally, at the appropriate time. Listen, if everything was ready 2,000 years ago, it's really, really ready NOW … and you'd better be ready … NOW.
3. Here's the message from God through the inspired pen of Peter to those wandering, scattered people who wondered if God had lost interest in them; people who had no market value … people who were now scorned by their world. And they certainly knew they were sinners – but they were sinners who believed in their personal, resurrected Saviour.

D. 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 graciously giving to you
- You don't deserve to live – but I have given you a new birth and a new life – and, with 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 be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ…"*

CONCLUSION:

Should not the realization and truth of the resurrection applied to our lives change the way we view life and live it? If you need a reminder of all that is at stake in the resurrection spend time meditating on 1 Corinthians 15 this week.

How much you live for the perishable, defiled, fading treasure of this earth? If you are failing to give God thanksgiving and blessings for the marvellous grace of His salvation, confess it and ask God to give you a heart for **YOUR** true identity as a joint heir with Christ.

Why not start today and vocalize 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.