

# 1 Peter 1:3

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Can you say that? Do you say that?

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Are you here this morning to praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? If that is not why you're here this morning, then it's difficult to understand why you are here. What other purpose could there be for gathering in this place? Perhaps for some, and we trust that it might be so, it could be that this morning you would be brought to appreciate that God is indeed worthy of your praise. For that is why we are here.

This is what we are about as we gather this morning. We gather to praise God. Peter begins the body of his letter in a manner that testifies to what he understands lies at the heart of his and every believer's reason for being, to praise God. Then in verse 3, the words that we've already uttered, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is why we exist. We certainly can say that to those who are believers. We could go further and say that that is the purpose for which all of us for which all of us exists. We're reminded of the words of the catechism in answer to the very first question, what is man's chief end? Man's chief end is to glorify God, to worship God, to praise God, and to enjoy Him forever. So, it is clear that Peter shares that conviction and in providing us these words of praise. He provides us with rich praise material that we can gratefully employ as we direct our praise to God. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ. In these words, Peter's praise identifies the one, the only one worthy of our praise. In answer to the question, who is this God we are to praise? Peter's reply is eloquent, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one to whom we direct our praise. The one we praise is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we can only know Him as our God and Father as we are united by faith to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. But why does Peter praise this God? Why does Peter praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Why do we as believers exist to praise and glorify God? People sometimes speak of blind faith, but I wonder if there can also be blind praise, praise that is offered in the absence of any reason or grounds to do so. Peter praises God and immediately in the letter, he immediately proceeds to give the reasons or the grounds for so doing.

And this is what we want to consider this morning. What are the reasons that Peter gives? What is the solid ground upon which Peter builds this declaration of praise to God? And as we consider the grounds that Peter establishes our desired outcome of spending the next half hour or so, considering these reasons or grounds, is that we would ourselves be brought to that place of praising God, perhaps for many of us, praising Him anew, praising Him afresh, praising Him with renewed and deeper joy. Or perhaps, for some here this morning, praising Him for the very first time. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, as we consider the grounds that Peter establishes for praising God, as we find them in verses 3 to 5, we can divide what we will say by means of four questions that are answered by Peter in these few words recorded for us in these three verses. The first question that we can pose and find an answer to in our passage is the following one. What has God done for the believer? We're considering the grounds that Peter establishes, the reasons that he gives for praising God. And the first question that we pose and will endeavor to answer is this, what has God done for the believer? But there's another related question that also finds an answer in our passage, and it is this, why has he done so? So not only what has he done, but why has he done so? Then there's a further question, a very important question, that is dealt with by Peter in these verses, and it is this, how has he done so? How has God done that which he has done? Obviously, once we've established what he has done, then the following questions flow more obviously. But then there's a final question that at this point I won't explain. It might seem a little cryptic at this point, but in due course we'll explain. The final question is this, how can we be sure? And as I say, I'll explain that one, I hope, a little bit more helpfully in due course.

[ 6 : 35 ] The first question then, what has God done for the believer? What has God done that gives us good cause to praise him? Well, let's turn to our text then in 1 Peter chapter 1, reading from verse 3.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth. He has given us new birth. This is the first thing that Peter identifies concerning what God has done for us. He has given us new birth. And in this simple declaration, we can identify two fundamental truths. There are maybe more, but there are two that we want to highlight this morning that we can detect in these words of Peter concerning what God has done for us. He has given us new birth.

And the first truth, a fundamental truth in this matter of our salvation is this. The first truth is that these words identify our desperate condition. The very fact that we stand in need of new birth reflects our condition by nature. We are, in the words of Paul to the Ephesians that we read also earlier in the service, we are dead in our transgressions and sins. Sin kills, and we are its victims.

We don't need a better life. We need a new life. Now, how many today might acknowledge that, oh, well, I could do with maybe living a better life. That's really what I need, a better life. But the message of the gospel and the message of this statement of Peter's is much more radical.

What Peter is recognizing in acknowledging that what God has done for us is give us new birth. What he is recognizing is that what we need as sinners is not a better life, not a reformed life, but a new life. We are spiritually moribund, and we have no means to revive ourselves. So, these words of Peter that speak of what God has done for us, He has given us new birth, point to our desperate condition, but of course they also preeminently point to God's radical solution.

[ 9 : 08 ] What does God do in the light of our condition? Well, He gives us new birth. The word gives that is employed in the NIV, in the version of the Bible that we are reading from, perhaps gives a little or might give a slightly misleading suggestion, where the picture that is painted might be, or that we could visualize, is of God at a safe distance giving us a present, you know, the gift of a new birth or a fresh start. But the language that Peter actually uses is much more intimate. We could literally translate what Peter says there in verse 3 as God births us, God begets us, to use slightly more old-fashioned language. This is what Peter describes God as doing. God, by His Spirit, personally and intimately, creates in us new life, spiritual life. And this is nothing less than the supernatural work of God, breathing new life into a spiritual corpse. This reality of our condition and of the need of this supernatural work of God is addressed by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, and indeed on other occasions, but we've read already as to the manner or how Paul addresses this in Ephesians in chapter 2.

And we can just quickly return to that passage that we read in Ephesians chapter 2. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. And then, jumping through to verse 4, but because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with a Christ.

So, why do we praise God? We praise God because He has given us new birth. We have been born again by the Spirit of God. And as we appreciate that, we can surely join with Peter in declaring these words, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But Peter goes on in describing what God has done for us. He goes on to speak of what we are born into. Notice the language there in verse 3 of our passage, in His great mercy, He has given us new birth into, into a living hope, into a living hope.

We are born into something. Now, what are we born into? Well, we've just read the passage, and the first thing that we see is living hope. But in actual fact, there are three connected words that Peter uses in what follows in these verses that will help us answer that question, what are we born into? We're given new birth into something. What is it that we are born into? Now, the three words, connected words that we'll see how they flow one to another are the words hope, which is the one that immediately we encounter, the word inheritance and the word salvation. Peter speaks of the believer being born into a living hope. That's what we read there in verse 3. But to speak of hope, to speak even of a living hope, is nothing more than empty words in the absence of an object for our hope.

[ 12 : 56 ] Hope of necessity requires an object. We hope in. To say we hope and leave it there really means nothing. We hope in. Hope requires an object, the object of our hope. And so, that leads us to the first question we need to pose. If Peter is saying that we're born into a living hope, the question that immediately arises is, well, what is the object of our living hope? And in answering that question, we are brought to the second word that we have suggested are three connected words that help us to understand what Peter is saying. And the second word is inheritance. There, as we continue the reading, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. As those who have been given new birth, or more intimately have been birthed by God, we are his sons and daughters. And as his sons and daughters, we are also his heirs. The new birth gives us new life in the present, in the here and now, but it also gives us an inheritance in the future as sons and daughters of God. Now, what does Peter say about our inheritance? You know, we're given new birth into this living hope. What is this hope?

What is its object? Well, it is this inheritance that Peter speaks of. Now, what does Peter say about our inheritance? Before we do notice what he says, we do have to appreciate that the language of inheritance in the mind certainly of the original readers, certainly the Jewish readers, but also Gentiles in a measure familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures, the language of inheritance would have brought to mind how in the Old Testament the inheritance of God's people was the promised land.

And there are many occasions in the Old Testament where that is very clearly stated, and we won't spend time grounding that statement. But what Peter does here is he now contrasts the glory of the believer's inheritance with the limitations of the land as an inheritance without even having to explicitly make mention of the land. It's simply understood that what we have here is Peter contrasting the greater value and worth of the believer's inheritance today compared with the promised land that was the inheritance of God's people in the Old Testament. What does Peter say about our inheritance? Well, we read there in verse 4, an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. Our inheritance is imperishable.

It's not subject to decay. Our inheritance is undefiled or unspoiled. It will never be tainted by sin. It cannot be tainted by sin. Our inheritance is unfading. It will never wither or lose its beauty and glory. And the contrast with the land or with any material inheritance, anything that you might fix your eyes on as being of great value, that you really want to have, that thing that you live for, you say, well, if only I could own that house, or if only I could have that toy, then I would be happy. That is what I want. Well, anything that you could imagine, any material blessing that you could imagine or aspire to, contrasts so dramatically with the inheritance that Peter's inheritance that Peter speaks of as the inheritance of the believer.

So, Peter encourages his readers, and he encourages us too. He says to them, yes, you may be strangers in this world, as we've noticed in the greeting he describes them as. You may be strangers. You may be scattered in this world. You may be poor. You may be powerless. But your inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, undefiled, and unfading. Well, that's all very well. But we do have a problem, or if not a problem, certainly an issue to be resolved. And it's really quite a simple one, but an important one.

[ 17 : 39 ] What is it, this inheritance? Peter describes it, or he certainly describes what it's not. It's not subject to perishing or spoiling or fading, but what is it? Remember I said that there were three words that together help us to understand what Peter is saying here concerning what God has done for us. We notice first the word hope. We recognize that hope requires an object. We identified the inheritance Peter's inheritance Peter speaks of as the object of our living hope. But what is our inheritance? And here we arrive at the third key word, salvation. Notice how the thread of Peter's argument continues there from verse 4, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade, kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power, until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. Salvation is our inheritance. Now, that generates perhaps a question, and a reasonable question. Is it the case that our salvation is an entirely future prospect? Is it something that only in the future we will receive and enjoy? Well, by no means. We are, as believers in the future, saved as we trust in our Savior, Jesus Christ. But on this occasion,

Peter is using the word salvation in its broadest and richest sense, a sense that goes beyond our own personal salvation, important though that is, to God's ultimate saving purposes for the world, and of course, our part in that as His sons and daughters. Peter, when he speaks of salvation here on the last day, he's speaking of the new heavens and the new earth. He is anticipating and pointing to God's new creation. He is speaking of our ultimate home as citizens of heaven, strangers in this world, but citizens of heaven. So, what has God done for the believer that gives us grounds for praising Him?

In the past, He gave us new life. He birthed us and gave us new life in Christ. In the present, He sustains us with a living hope. And in the future, there awaits us the object of our hope, our inheritance, our inheritance, the full and glorious consummation of God's salvation.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That then, in answer to the question, what has God done for us? But the second question that I highlighted at the beginning is this, why has God done this? Why has God done this? This question, we might say, concerns the matter of motivation. Why would God give us new birth into a living hope?

Why would He do that? It's clear that He has done that. We're grateful for it. But why would He do it? Well, we don't need to wonder. We don't need to speculate, because Peter is nothing if not explicit on this point. What does He immediately say, having uttered this great declaration of praise there in verse 3. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His great mercy, He has given us new birth. In His great mercy. Mercy alone can explain God's salvation. There is nothing in us, nothing in you, nothing in me, that merits salvation. Nothing in us that might distinguish us from others as perhaps more deserving or maybe even less undeserving. No. Mercy. God's great mercy is the only answer to the question, why? Why has God done this? Why has God given us new birth into a living hope?

[ 22 : 03 ] It takes us back to the passage that we've been referring to, and we'll do so on one or two more occasions there in Ephesians in chapter 2 and verse 4. Why? Why has God dealt with us in this way? Why has He given us new birth? Why has He given us new birth? But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ. That is why God has done this wonderful, glorious, saving work in our lives.

And this morning I would ask you a question. Has God given you new birth into a living hope? Are you a believer trusting in Jesus as your Savior and Lord? It's not a rhetorical question. It's a direct question for you to consider and to answer in your own heart and mind. If the answer to that question is, no, He has not given me new birth. I know nothing of this living hope. If your honest answer is, no, I am not a believer trusting in Jesus as my Lord and Savior. What can you do? What can you do? How can you secure God's favor? How can you catch His eye that He might save you? What arguments can you bring to the negotiating table that might persuade Him to receive you as His son and heir? You can do nothing, and you can bring nothing. There is no negotiating table. God doesn't do negotiating tables.

All you can do. All you can do. All you can do. All you must do is cry out the same words of the tax collector in the temple long ago. God have mercy on me, a sinner. You see, mercy and mercy alone is what explains why God has done what He has done. And so, as you would seek to appropriate for yourself this great saving work of God, you can come only standing on mercy's ground. God have mercy on me, a sinner. That is the only way you can approach God as you would seek to enjoy and experience His salvation.

Will you do so? Do so. Do so today. Cry out this morning. Use these very words. If you say, I don't know what to say, I don't know what to say, well, here are the words for you. You don't need to make up your own words. Use these words. God have mercy on me, a sinner. We know that these words were uttered or recorded for us in the context of a parable that Jesus was telling. And what does Jesus say of the man who so cried? He says this, I tell you that this man, this man who cried out in this way, this man went home justified before God. Why? He recognized, he was enabled to recognize that mercy and mercy alone was the grounds upon which he could approach God for forgiveness.

forgiveness. Why has God done this? Why has God given us new birth into a living hope? Why? Because of His great mercy. But there's another question, a third question that we mentioned at the beginning, and it is this, how has God done so? How has God done what He has done? How has God granted to His people new birth? How has He done that? What means has God used? Well, here again, Peter provides a very clear and unequivocal answer. In His great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope through...the word through helps us to see that we're identifying the means that God has used through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is the resurrection of Christ from the dead that secures for His people new spiritual life, resurrection life. Again, as we refer to the words of

[ 26 : 43 ] Paul in Ephesians chapter 2, believers spiritually have been raised with Christ, raised with Christ. Peter's focus on the resurrection as the means of our salvation makes sense, given that he is focusing on our new birth, on new life, and the connection is an obvious one. But it is, and it's worth making the point, it is, of course, the case that the means by which God has secured our salvation is the complete work of Christ on our behalf. His life of perfect obedience, His atoning death in our place, and, of course, His resurrection, whereby we are raised with Him. And so, we say with Peter, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There's a final question that I want us to consider and to find an answer to in our passage this morning. And the question I mentioned at the beginning, but realize that by itself, it might be a little cryptic as to what it refers to. The question is this, how can we be sure? Well, how can we be sure of what? Well, how can we be sure as believers, how can we be sure that we will ultimately receive and enjoy our inheritance? It is, after all, a future prospect. How can we be sure that we will actually receive this inheritance, the object of our living hope? And here, Peter shows his colors as a concerned pastor. Yes, an apostle, but a concerned pastor aware of the fears and doubts of his readers.

Now, some folk would see everything that we have been talking about, this future inheritance, this living hope. They would see everything that we've been talking about as pie in the sky when you die, just nice stories to help us to come to terms with our mortality and the ultimate meaninglessness of life. But I think for the believer, the issue is not likely to be the reality or not of God, the reality or not of His salvation, the existence of the inheritance, if you wish. But the issue for the believer may be, what about my part in it? How can I be sure? How can I be sure that I will receive this inheritance? What if I stumble along the way? I'm awfully prone to stumbling. And what if I stumble?

What if I mess up big time? Will I lose my inheritance? What if I don't make it across the finishing line? What if I collapse en route? Will I lose my inheritance? And to the doubting, to the timorous, to those painfully and honestly conscious of their weakness and sinfulness, Peter presents a double-lock guarantee. We've heard an awful lot about quadruple-lock guarantees that probably won't be worth the paper they're written on. But here Peter speaks of a double-lock guarantee guarding our inheritance and providing absolute certainty concerning our future enjoyment of it. He uses two verbs, both of which can be translated kept. Notice, first of all, what he says there in verse 4.

Into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you. Kept in heaven for you.

God is not working on securing your inheritance. It is there, kept in heaven. The language speaks of a completed past activity of God. Our inheritance has been secured. Our full salvation has been wrought.

[ 30 : 53 ] And now it is kept in heaven. And notice, we couldn't pass by without noticing a beautiful and intimately personal touch in the language that Peter uses. Kept in heaven for you. Kept in heaven for you.

Take these words, believer. Kept in heaven for you. Yes, you. It's kept. Your inheritance is kept. It's guarded by God in heaven for you.

So, our inheritance is kept. So, our inheritance is kept. But crucially, we are also kept for it. That's really where the doubts come in. We might say, well, yes, I don't doubt that God can keep the inheritance in heaven, but my problem is myself. But we are also kept by God for our inheritance.

Notice what the passage goes on to say. Notice what Peter goes on to say in verse 5. Immediately having identified that the inheritance is kept in heaven for you, he then says, who through faith are shielded, or it could be translated, it's a different verb, but it has the meaning of kept, who through faith are kept by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. This verb translated shielded, it can also mean, or does also mean, kept. It's from the language of the field of battle. It's military language.

[ 32 : 36 ] And this verb, shielded or kept, can be understood in two distinct but wonderfully complementary ways. It can be understood in the sense of being kept from attack. And so, as believers who are conscious of those who would do us harm, who would attack us, and perhaps our fear that they might destroy us, and so we might lose our inheritance, Peter assures us, no, we are kept. We are kept by God for our inheritance. But this language of being kept also has the idea, very helpfully, of being kept from escaping. So, it's not only that others can't grasp our inheritance from us, we ourselves, by our own folly and foolishness, can't let it slip through our fingers. We are kept from escaping. We are kept for our inheritance. Our inheritance is kept in heaven, and we are kept for it. God keeps us that we might be sure, absolutely sure, that this living hope is a hope that will be realized for us. There is a final important thing to mention in this regard, and it's really to answer the question, how does God keep us? How does God shield us? What means does he use? Well, again, Peter answers that question for us. You who through faith are shielded by God's power. It's God's power, ultimately, that keeps us, but the means that God uses that he might keep us, that he might shield us, is the faith that we exercise. God has so ordered our salvation that the means provided for being kept is our faith or trust in God. By faith we embrace and cling to the Lord who keeps us safe and secure. Might this be, or might this give us grounds for boasting or claiming some measure of personal merit? It's my faith that keeps me? Not when we appreciate that faith itself is a gift of God, as we also notice in the passage that we read in Ephesians. God gives us faith just as surely and freely and sovereignly as he gives us a new birth. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Can you say that? That was the question with which we began, it's the question with which we end. Can you say that? Do you say that? Are you here to praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

You have reasons aplenty to do so. Let us pray.