

Thanksgiving

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[0 : 00] The first chapter of 1 Peter, and verses 3 to 5. 3 to 5, where Peter says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter chapter 1 and verses 3 to 5. Now here is a man whose whole being is animated with love for Christ and with love for the gospel.

The gospel we were thinking of last night. The glorious gospel of the blessed God. And here Peter is not giving a formal report on the gospel, but he is bearing testimony to the gospel.

And he is telling us what the gospel and what gospel truths mean to him and to others. And what a testimony this is in these verses of our text.

In fact, it's a doxology. It's a peon of praise. It's charged with praise and thanksgiving. And in doing this, Peter is doing exactly what a fellow apostle does in writing to the Christians at Ephesus.

[1 : 44] Using almost the same language, Paul says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Now I want to draw attention to an interesting point in this, about this. That both these doxologies, and indeed all the doxologies, if we like to examine them in the New Testament, are full of Christian doctrine.

Praises and praising in apostolic times was not a mindless, emotional repetition of a chorus. True praise and true doxology for the apostles was something that was saturated with the scriptures.

And this is indeed a safeguard against superficial and super emotional worship. And it's quite interesting to notice just how much doctrine there is in the doxologies.

They are not just mindless words of praise. They are full of searching and edifying doctrine and teaching. Now look at the doctrines that are in this doxology here in verses 3 to 5.

[3 : 08] There is, look at the ingredients in this peon of praise. There is divine mercy. There is the new birth. There is the Christian hope.

There is Christ's resurrection. There is the final inheritance. There is the perseverance of the saints, clearly implied. And there is the time of the end.

You who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, the time of the end. It's full of doctrine. And praise that expresses biblical reasons for praise is greatly to be desired and is following the apostolic pattern.

Well now let's try and arrange these ingredients that are falling over one another for expression. And let's try and arrange them into something that is more manageable for us with our limited minds and understandings.

And we will do this by looking at three areas of doctrine that are brought before us here. And they are these. There is first the divine mercy.

[4 : 23] There is second the Christian hope. And there is thirdly the final state. The divine mercy, the Christian hope, the final state.

And these doctrines, singly or together, are cause for any one of us, if we are believers at all, for saying, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we are gathered here tonight to bless and to praise and to thank God. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look then at these three areas.

First of all, we have the divine mercy. where Peter speaks about his abundant mercy. His abundant mercy.

And here we are brought immediately to the fountainhead of all our blessings, if we are believing people, of all spiritual blessings and of all material blessings.

[5 : 23] Blessings of grace and blessings of providence. God's abundant or God's abounding mercy is the source. This fount of every blessing and these streams of blessings that flow out to us from this fountain call out for such praise as Peter expresses here when he says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And first of all, for the divine mercy. Now we ask two questions about this first doctrine. And the first is this, whose abundant mercy? Whose abundant mercy?

It is clearly stated, the mercy, the abundant mercy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, it's mercy on the highest scale.

It's mercy of the loftiest kind, of the loftiest quality. It is mercy that is superlative and supernal. It belongs to another world although it is felt and experienced in this world.

You notice that the mercy is not only from God, that would be sufficient, but it is from the God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are therefore no serious, serious contenders for dispensing this kind of mercy on needy people.

[6 : 50] it's all God's own mercy, the mercy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we've got to think of this, that divine mercy doesn't come from a God who is aloof or detached or distant from those who need his mercy.

We notice here that mercy comes from one who as God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. the Father who sent his Son as the evidence of mercy into this world to bestow mercy upon those who need it.

God manifest in flesh. The Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ sent the Lord Jesus Christ as God manifest in the flesh in order to dispense mercy to mankind at first hand as it were and to fight the battle on the ground on which it was lost.

He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who did this when he sent Jesus to die for our sins and raised him again for our justification.

It's the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who mediates all his gifts and benefits and blessings through this only begotten Son of his.

[8 : 19] And so when we realise this we say blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We don't have a God who is aloof but a God who as the Father of Jesus sent Jesus into the world to bestow upon us the blessing and the mercy we need.

That's the first thing in the first question who's abundant mercy? And the second one is what is abundant mercy? What is it?

Well of course it is abounding. It is super abounding overflowing and equaled and surpassed mercy. And that tells us both of the fullness and the freeness of God's mercy.

it speaks of its fullness because of its superabounding nature. The immensity of God's mercy is brought before us here.

And this also tells us about the freeness of God's mercy because what is overflowing and superabundant cannot be given grudgingly. This is not mercy that is dragged from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ or unwillingly bestowed but freely given.

[9 : 39] Now notice this that the blessings that God gives to us are not given merely in his mercy or because of his mercy or for the sake of his mercy but according to his mercy.

The blessings come to us in a way that is commensurate with his mercy in line with his mercy in keeping with his mercy and that just indicates not only the greatness of the mercy but the loftiness of the blessings.

So God's work of redemption is according to commensurate with God's abounding mercy. The washing of regeneration and renewing of the spirit is according to his abundant mercy.

Our justification and sanctification and adoption and glorification are all according to his abundant mercy. And the Christian hope which we're going to look at now is according to his abundant mercy and so are the blessings of the final state at the end of our text according to mercy that is commensurate.

Blessings that are commensurate with his mercy with the mercy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the highest possible mercy that's available.

[11 : 07] That's the first ingredient in these words the divine mercy. We owe everything we have and everything we hope to have to God's abounding mercy and to the fact that we receive it according to that mercy.

Now we come to the Christian hope where Peter goes on and says which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Now here we have a statement about Christian hope and we must remember that Peter was writing this letter to people who needed hope for their hope at that particular time was under a cloud.

He says in verse 6 for example he refers to the fact that you are in heaviness through manifold temptation and the temptation the testing was that the people of God scattered throughout Pontus Galatia Cappadocia Asia and Bithynia the problem was they were being persecuted they were being persecuted for their faith and so they needed to be assured that genuine Christian hope can never die because Christian hope is a living hope and in it in that hope Peter says to them you can greatly rejoice though now for a season if need be you are in heaviness through manifold temptation.

Now we have two questions to ask about this article of doctrine. The first is this what is a living hope? what is a living hope? Well for one thing a living hope is a hope without which we cannot be spiritually alive ourselves.

[13 : 01] A living hope is an essential part of our new nature. It's an essential part of God's new creation and until we receive it we are without hope and those who are without hope live not only in the world but they live for the world and those without hope have their horizons so near that they cannot think of anything more important beyond them.

There's nothing worth thinking about beyond their own very near horizons. They cannot see afar off they have no spiritual vision they are without hope. hope. But a new creation those who belong to God's new society have within them a living hope and Christian hope my dear friends is not wishful thinking.

Christian hope is not just hoping against hope it's not psychological it's not biological it is essentially spiritual and without it we are not spiritually alive.

a living hope is sure and vibrant as we read in Hebrews it is sure and steadfast and is therefore qualified to be an anchor of the soul.

But we can say this about a living hope also that a living hope is a hope that can never die. It's a hope that can never die. It's not temporary not now and then given to us it's permanent it can no more die than spiritual life in the believer can die.

[14 : 44] It can no more die than saving faith in Christ can die. It can no more die than Jesus Christ himself can die who in us is the hope of glory.

Now that is not to say for one moment that a living hope that Christian hope in the believer can never lose its luster can never slumber can never lose its vision indeed it can.

A living hope may not always be buoyant for its buoyancy is in the measure of our faith and a living hope will be as strong and no stronger than our faith.

But you see saving faith can never die. However weak it becomes it can never die and neither can a living hope die. So hope is a living hope in contrast to the world's hope that is dying and maybe dead.

But we don't have a hope that's dying or a hope that's dead. We have a hope that will never die. Because at the very heart of our hope there is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Now the second question is this.

[16 : 06] What makes hope living? A living hope is an indication that we ourselves are spiritually alive and we have what is within us that will never die.

But what makes hope living? Well we would say right away surely it must be faith. Well of course that's true. In the measure of our faith our hope is strengthened and our hope is sustained.

But even before faith there is something that makes hope a living hope. And we're told here about it.

It is the new birth, our regeneration, and Christ's resurrection. These are the two things that I mention here. According to his abundant mercy he has begotten us again into a living hope.

He has begotten us there's a regeneration. He has begotten us unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the dead.

[17 : 07] So here is a twofold indication of what makes hope living. First of all the new birth. We are begotten unto a living hope.

We are born again into a living hope in the new birth. and that is because of God's boundless mercy. That we are begotten born again into a living hope.

And in the new birth there is a change of nature. A change of nature. And part of that nature as we said before is this living hope.

And following the new birth there is adoption and there we have a change of status. We are brought into the family and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.

We are sons. We are children of God. And when we are brought into the family we are given a new prospect. In the family we have got a new prospect. Because within God's family there is a living hope.

[18 : 07] A living hope is a family feature. There is no one in the family of God without hope. Everyone in the family of God has hope.

It is one of the privileges of being children of God. It is one of the evidences that would belong to the family of God. It is something we receive through being God's children. And it all begins with our regeneration.

We are begotten. That is the way into the living hope. We are begotten. We are regenerated. We are born again by the spirit of God into this living hope. Now much is said today about the gifts of the spirit.

less is being said about the fruit of the spirit. But I believe that certainly not nearly enough is being said about the regeneration by the spirit.

For without that there could be no spiritual gifts and there will be no spiritual fruit and there will be no hope for there will be no life. Our life depends on the regenerating work of the spirit of God.

[19 : 13] God. So it is through the new birth that we have this fruit of a living hope. Living in the full certainty that what God has promised he will most certainly fulfil.

That's the first part. Now associated with our regeneration there is Christ's resurrection. Begotten unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Now if regeneration is the way in to this hope then Christ in his death and resurrection is the ground of hope and the means of it.

Without Christ's death and resurrection there will be no hope to enter into. If Christ be not risen your faith is vain and you are still in your sins and if our faith is vain then so is our hope vain.

And Peter says further on in this chapter that God raised Jesus from the dead in order that our faith and our hope might be in him.

[20 : 31] And because he is risen all who believe in him have become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. He has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Now we notice here that Christ's resurrection is connected with the death that preceded it.

Peter speaks about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Now that tells us that it wasn't the resurrection by itself that procured salvation for us or hope for us.

it was the death of Jesus that preceded the resurrection that brought salvation and purchased salvation. But the resurrection testified to the reality of that saving work and was the divine attestation of God who raised him from the dead.

And so the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is connected with his death. There would be no resurrection if there were no death. And it's the resurrection of him who died.

And the Lord who died rose again. And we must notice this too. Not only did death precede Christ's resurrection but glory followed it.

[21 : 48] Jesus was raised from the dead not to live indefinitely on earth but to ascend to the right hand of God and to enter into the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.

And in that glory he has the keys of death and the unseen world. And he can say to us with all the authority of his resurrection life and reigning power where I am there you will be also.

So our living hope is grounded on a living saviour. He is not here he is risen come see the place where the Lord lay. Jesus lives.

Thy terrors now can o death no more upon us. Jesus lives. By this we know thou O grave cannot enthrall us.

That's the great Christian truth. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the Christian hope that is based on our regeneration and on Christ's resurrection.

[22 : 57] that's the second doctrine. And the third one is this. There is the final state. The final state. Where in verses 4 and 5 we read that we have this living hope by the resurrection of Jesus to an inheritance incorruptible undefiled that does not fade away reserved in heaven for you who are kept through the power of God and to salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Now you notice here that the Christian hope is spoken of as an inheritance. Now that's what Christian hope consists of.

That's hope's objective. That's what hope hopes for and is assured of. This inheritance described in verses 4 and 5 is the fulfillment of hope and of the Christian's hope.

Let us then see what this says to us by asking again two questions. First of all, what is this inheritance? What is this inheritance? Well we know the inheritance is the final state of believers.

The inheritance is the eternal state. It is life eternal. And at the end of our text it is called the salvation which is ready to be revealed at the last time.

[24 : 26] The eternal state is our final salvation. Now certain things are said about it for our information and for our encouragement. And the first is this, that our inheritance is incorruptible.

It's incorruptible. That is, it is not composed of corruptible things like silver and gold. It can't be frittered away as the prodigal son's inheritance was frittered away.

And many a person's inheritance today is frittered away. in the far country. And this inheritance, this divine inheritance, has nothing in itself that can lead to its dissolution.

There is nothing within it that can lead to its decay because it's an inheritance of righteousness and true holiness. And there's nothing there that can lead to its dissolution.

And we can say this too, that this inheritance cannot be corrupted by any of its possessors. Because all of them, to the last man, are without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

[25 : 36] It's an inheritance that is incorruptible. And also, it is undefiled. Now, by its very nature, it is undefiled.

Because the very nature of this inheritance, I've just said, is that of righteousness and true holiness. And it cannot be anything but undefiled, because nothing from without, nothing from without is permitted to enter in to defile it.

So, within itself, it is pure and unpolluted. And the third thing is that it is unfading. It fadeth not away. It is unfading.

Now, this description might suggest that it's not only of enduring substance, is our inheritance, but it is of unfading beauty.

Perhaps that's the emphasis. Not so much the enduring substance as the unfading beauty of this inheritance. It's like a flower whose leaf never fades, whose petals never fall, whose fragrance never fails.

[26 : 48] It's like a jewel whose luster never dims, and whose brightness never dims. It's unfading.

And the fourth thing about it is that it's reserved. Reserved in heaven for you. Reserved. Now, this answers the question, how can any of us here below possess such an inheritance?

Undefiled, incorruptible, unfading. How can anyone here below enter an inheritance of that nature and of that quality? The answer is, because it's reserved.

It's reserved. It's kept safe. No harm can come to it, because the inheritance is in heaven, and therefore in heaven it is beyond the ravages of time, and beyond the uncertainties of this life, and beyond the enemies of the cross.

So what may destroy body and soul on earth cannot touch this treasure. it is and because it is reserved, then those who enter it first will not have an advantage over those who enter it later.

[28 : 15] Because the reservation is a blanket reservation, it's for all the disciples. I go to prepare a place for you, and that place every disciple will have.

so those who enter it, and have entered it hundreds of years ago, will have no advantage over those who enter it at the last moment. Because the inheritance is a reserved inheritance.

That's the inheritance, then, that's spoken of here as the outcome of the Christian hope. And the last thing I want to bring out is this. What about the inheritors? What about the inheritors? Well, not only is the inheritance reserved for them in heaven, but they are kept for the inheritance while on earth.

We have a double guarantee, making assurance doubly sure. Reserved in heaven for you, for you inheritors, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

So here we have an answer to another question. The inheritance may be secure, but is it secure for me? It may be reserved for me, but how do I know I will ever reach it?

[29 : 42] You see, we may reserve a seat on the train or on a plane, and have to change our plans, so we make no use of the reservation. But that will never happen as far as the inheritance above is concerned.

For the simple reason that not only is the inheritance kept for us, but we are kept for the inheritance. And how are we kept?

By the power of God, through faith and to salvation. In other words, God's power is given to the people of faith, and the people of faith, they hold on the power.

And the power is available for as long as it's needed, until what is now ready for us, will be revealed to us at the coming of Christ.

Kept, kept for you, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time when Jesus Christ comes.

[30 : 50] So, what is kept for us, and is already reserved for us, will be revealed to us at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The inheritance will be revealed then in all its fullness. Here we see but through a glass darkly. Here we have but a down payment of the inheritance.

But when Jesus comes, we will see it in its fullness and possess it in its fullness. For when Jesus comes at the end time, at the last time, then there will be the inauguration of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

And the revelation of the prepared inheritance in all its fullness, will be given to the prepared people. He who shall come will come and will not tarry.

Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me, the reward of the inheritance for those who serve the Lord Christ. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

[32 : 08] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father for his abounding mercy, for his regenerating grace, for the living hope, for his risen and reigning son, for the reserved inheritance, and for his kept and preserved people.

and we are among them through faith in Jesus. And if we are among them, then I ask you in closing to look at verse 30.

If you have the hope of this inheritance, wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lust in your ignorance, but as he who has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy.

We haven't reached the inheritance yet, and we have this obligation, for as long as life remains, to be holy, even as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father, is holy, so be it.

Let us pray. Our gracious God, and our Father in heaven, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[33 : 46] We give praise and thanks to thee, for what is in store for us, but we thank thee for the means by which we are qualified to enter the inheritance.

We thank thee for the divine mercy. We thank thee for the Christian hope, which we enter when we're born again, and through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

We bless thee for all this, for this that takes place in time. time. And we thank thee for all that is beyond time, and outside time, in the eternal realm, and for that inheritance that will be the ultimate fulfillment of the living hope.

Bless us each one, we pray then, and as we journey on, help us to gird up the loins of our minds, help us to live as those who have this hope residing within them, not a dying hope, not a dead hope, but a living one, and help us to show it, to show forth the praises of him who has called us from darkness into his marvellous light, and to show it by living righteously, and blamelessly, and wholly in this present evil world, to the praise of the glory of thy grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.