

The Christian in a Hostile World (Studies in 1 Peter)

The Blessings of the People of God

Intro: In the first section of Peter's epistle (1:1-2:10) Peter writes to his readers as the people of God. This is indicated by a rhetorical technique called *inclusio*, in which he both begins and ends this section with the concept of the people of God.

Not surprisingly then, Peter in his introductory greeting gives four identifying features of God's people; they those who were selected by the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, submissive to Jesus and sprinkled with His blood.

Peter seeks to strengthen them by drawing upon his own experience in denying the Lord. The question of Peter's identity had been the basis upon which he denied the Lord. The voices of the forces of evil came to him saying, "You were one of them." And Peter would answer, "I don't know what you're talking about."

But now Peter, educated by the experiences of his own temptations, writes to God's people with a clear message.

Remember who you are! You are the family or people of God. Never be ashamed of that; but instead value that above all else.

Remember what you have as the people of God. Never exchange the joy of God's salvation for any earthly benefit.

Not surprisingly then, Peter's first task is to affirm with all the people of God the blessings have through Jesus Christ and to rejoice in them.

As we hear Peter speak of these things, I hope that you too will be encouraged tonight to value and to rejoice in the blessing of being a member of the family of God.

First Peter urges God's people to remember that:

We are God's children!

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3)

Blessed be God...(an expression of Peter's joy and praise) who according to his great mercy (we deserved punishment but God pitied us in the misery of sin) caused us to be born again (God who is the Father of our souls is also our spiritual Father).

This new birth takes place through:

The seed of God which is His word

for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. (1 Peter 1:22-23)

Man's obedience to the truth

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

If you are God's child you have reason to rejoice; for there is no greater position than to be a child of God. No human honor can be bestowed upon us that is greater than that! And we need to remember and rejoice in who we are.

We have hope!

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3)

We are born to a living hope. Living conveys the idea of a hope that is not founded upon fantasy or falsehood, but reality and truth.

It is a living hope because it is the hope of eternal life!

It is a living hope because it is grounded in a living savior!--"through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"

When Jesus came forth from the grave he made salvation possible. He made it possible for us to have the hope of living forever with God.

People today are searching for something that will give them tranquility in their soul, a sense of well-being; and there are no sadder words than "no hope." If there is no great position than to be in God's family, then there is no greater peace than to know that we have the hope of heaven when we die! Regardless of what may happen to us, if we are a faithful child of God you have hope when you die! What can the world give us that can bring such peace?

We have an inheritance.

A child receives the possession of his parents upon death. In the same way, God has an inheritance for His children. Christ died and left you a fortune!

It is unlike an earthly inheritance. Human possessions perish with use.

They can be defiled by theft or damage.

They can lose their luster over time..

But God's inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, fades not away

That inheritance is reserved in heaven for you! That means it is "guarded, protected, set aside, watched over" in our behalf.

That's something to rejoice about! There is no greater position, no greater peace, there is no greater possession! What can the world give us that can compare?

Remember who you are and what God has given you!

We are protected by God.

who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:5)

Christians not only have the assurance that our inheritance is awaiting them; they can have the assurance that they will be able to receive it.

We are "kept" (a military term meaning to guard).

We are protected by the power of God.

Consequently, there is no one who can take our inheritance away!

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (John 10:27-29)

How are we protected?

God's power for salvation is exerted through the gospel itself.

By faith--We must keep walking by faith. That means that we trust the provisions made for our forgiveness in the sacrifice of Christ. It means that we pursue and live by the truth that we know. And it means that we continue to look to God for further enlightenment and growth through study and prayer.

When we trust in God's provisions we experience the greatest position, the greatest peace, the greatest possession, the great power available to human beings. Through it God is able to do "*exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think*" (Eph. 3:20). That's something to rejoice about!

We will be saved even though tried by fire.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:6-9)

Peter tells us that there are times when our faith will be tested by life!

(particularly Peter has in mind persecution for the sake of Christ, experiencing the hostility of the unbelieving world around us.. The devil may use this hostility to overcome us and make us give up; but God uses these experiences for our discipline and perfection.

The Christian can rejoice because the proof of faith results in praise, honor, and glory when Jesus comes.

When our faith is not destroyed by trial, it is like gold refined by fire.

It is faith in its purest form.

This faith results in praise, honor, and glory.

Christians can have that faith in spite of the fact that they have never seen the Lord personally!

These Christians loved the Lord & believed in the Lord through the testimony of others who did see Him.

So can we! And in this faith we can rejoice with great joy because its outcome is salvation in heaven! We can rejoice because there is no greater perfection than that which comes through the trying of our faith.

We experience what prophets and angels wanted to know about!

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10-12)

We need to rejoice simply in the unique privilege of being a Christian! Peter teaches that lesson by speaking of those who were interested in this salvation but who did not experience it in the way we have!

Prophets who were given the Holy Spirit received revelations about a person to come who would suffer and be glorified and who would bring salvation. They were eager to know who would fulfill these things and when. But they had to hear the disappointing words that the blessings of which they spoke were reserved for future generations!

Isaiah knew about the Savior! He would have given anything to read the stories of how Jesus was born of a virgin, of how he took away our diseases (the many miracle stories), of how he would die for our sins (but never knew the details).

But we can know the Savior!

It is we who have heard the gospel that are the beneficiaries of what Christ has done. Those who heard the apostles speak in the gospel what the Holy Spirit revealed to them are the ones who have reason to rejoice. These things are things in which the angels themselves have an interest and curiosity.

We have the privilege of not only knowing about salvation through Christ. But knowing Him and participating in the salvation He has brought to the world. That's reason for all of us to rejoice! There is no greater privilege than to know Christ!

Conclusion: When Peter failed the Lord, he had forgotten the value of his identity in Christ; but now he teaches God's people to let that happen. If we value and rejoice in the things we have as the people of God, then we will in that joy find the strength to overcome whatever the world may throw at us! What a strengthening paragraph! In it Peter says to us, "There is nothing that the world can give you that can replace what we have in Christ. Rejoice in it!"