

## EXPOSITION OF I PETER

Message #3

I Peter 1:3-12

**It has always been part of Christian worship to sing doxologies, to offer praise to God. This is not unusual. However, what is unusual is to do this when you are suffering .**  
You don't expect someone hurting to start singing praises to God.

When Christians were being killed in the First Century, many of them literally dumbfounded the religious and political world because they would go to their own death singing psalms and hymns. There are those rare moments, when God's people are hurting, when they choose to praise and worship God regardless of what is happening to them personally, physically or emotionally. For example, when Paul and Silas were locked up in jail, after having been beaten with rods, they started praying and singing hymns of praise to God (Acts 16:22-26). As a result, they experienced amazing power of God and made a powerful impact for God. Most believe that Silas is the shortened name for Silvanus, who is actually with Peter when he writes this great epistle (I Peter 5:12).

Peter could have begun this letter any variety of ways. He could have started by telling them what it was like to travel with Jesus Christ. He could have cited miraculous healings that he had personally seen God perform. He could have told the story of how one time he got out of a boat in the middle of a sea and walked on top of the water, or he could have told them of the private upper room meeting that he and the other apostles had with Jesus Christ. But that is not how he begins this epistle. His purpose is not to reminisce about the good old days; his purpose is to give hope to believers who were truly hurting and in order to do that he gets them to think about their salvation .

There is no question that Peter believed that one of the best things to do when scattered and suffering is to keep your focus on God and even offer praise to God, specifically for your salvation .

Notice carefully how many times Peter brings this salvation theme up in these verses - "new birth" (v. 3), "living hope through Christ's resurrection" (v. 3), "inheritance ... kept in heaven" (v. 4), "the coming of the salvation" (v. 5), "when Jesus Christ is revealed" (v. 7), "the salvation of your souls" (v. 9), "concerning this salvation" (v. 10), "preached the gospel to you" (v. 12). No matter what a believer is experiencing he may always break out in praise and worship of God for the great salvation God has given him and that is precisely what this section is all about. You may be hurting right now, you may still sing. One day you and I will be out of the hurt and struggles and we will go to glory. The key point to see is that:

**WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE ARE HURTING A KEY TO BEING A JOYFUL REFLECTION OF GOD'S GRACE IS TO CONTINUE TO EXALT GOD FOR ALL THE WONDERFUL THINGS HE HAS DONE FOR US, SPECIFICALLY FOR HIS GRACE IN CAUSING US TO BE BORN AGAIN.**

Some people tend to demean God or question God or perhaps even curse God when hurting. That person will never have joy and never reflect God's grace, for the key to this is to continue to exalt God.

**I Peter 1:3-12** is one long single massive sentence. Notice I said it was a long single sentence, not a long simple sentence. **This one sentence is amazing, filled with prepositional phrases and participial clauses and relative clauses that are all designed to teach us to get our focus off of us and get our focus onto God.**

The sentence here is much like Ephesians 1:3-14 in which Paul does exactly the same thing. What we may conclude is that this is a critical key to us reflecting God's grace when we are hurting. It is critical that we let our minds exalt God in the context of all He has done for us, specifically in saving us. **It is critical that we continue to worship and praise God for this is key to us being a tremendous award winning grace reflector and a key to our own joy.**

When the world suffers and experiences tragedy, it does not know what to do, what to say or what to think. **Often there is mourning and moaning, but no hope.** Just recently someone attended a funeral of an unsaved person, conducted by an unsaved minister. The funeral was totally depressing because there was no comfort. Through the speakers of the funeral home a song being played was "Can't Live Without You" and as the song was played the entire place was in emotional depression. There was no great text of Scripture that gave any hope to this situation, no great hymn that would comfort people, just complete and total misery. That is the way the world handles tragedy.

The one thing that the world never expects is that a believer who is suffering will continue to praise the sovereign God who has actually permitted the suffering. When a believer takes this position, it truly is a reflection of God's grace and power for all who see it. It sends a signal that there is hope, no matter what one is experiencing. **Most people want a God who only does nice things, not one who is involved in all things - both positive and negative.** When a believer continues to praise God during difficulties, it is an amazing testimony of God's grace and of one's own salvation.

Last summer we were in the midst of a drought. I risked losing my hay. I, like others, was whining about the need for rain. I don't know if you recall, but we as a church prayed that God would send rain. At that particular time, I was working through this very passage and I decided to pray about it and one of the things I decided to do was to praise God and acknowledge that He was the great sovereign God who could do whatever He wanted, including burn up the world. It was freeing for me. I stopped whining and complaining, because I felt good about the fact that all things were in His sovereign hands and He could bring rain or not bring rain. He has promised to take care of us, no matter what and it was freeing to acknowledge that.

That is what Peter is doing here. He is doing the unexpected. He is worshipping God in the midst of suffering and pain. If we will purpose to do that this week, we will truly reflect the grace of God to a world that doesn't have any hope.

When we come to **verse 3**, we see that the first word in the verse is the word "blessed." **This is a very different word than the one Matthew uses in the Sermon on the Mount.** The word used by Matthew is makarios (μακαριος) and the word used by Peter is eulogatos (ευλογητος) from which we get our English word eulogy, which means to praise. **This word is never used in reference to man.** God does not praise man, but man is to praise God even in times of trouble.

Quite frankly, if Peter expects us to praise God when we are hurting, he is going to have to present something amazing to get us to do it. He will need to present something uplifting and stimulating. And that is precisely what he does. Now in this section of Scripture, Peter gives three main reasons why believers who are struggling may continue to offer praise to God the Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ and continue to rejoice for their new birth status:

**REASON #1** – Because our born again status from God guarantees us a heavenly treasure.  
– **1:3-5**

No matter what happens to us in this life, we can always praise God for our salvation and we can always find joy in the fact that we have been guaranteed by God a heavenly treasure. Peter was very intent upon having hurting Christians recognize the sovereign miracle of God saving us and that we are on our way to heaven. One old Bible teacher used to say - “Who can really mind the journey when the road leads home.” Peter goes to great lengths to bring out four realities about it:

**Born Again Reality #1** - Our salvation is according to God’s great mercy. **1:3a**

The concept behind the term “mercy” is that God shows pity on those who are helpless and hopeless and saves them, when they were in absolutely no position to save themselves or help themselves. You will notice that every thing else in this praise is prefaced by God’s mercy. Our salvation is not based on our works or our merit, but on the mercy of God. One critical key to getting out of depression is to remember how miserable we were prior to God saving us.

**Born Again Reality #2** - Our salvation is to a living hope. **1:3b**

This is not a living wish, but a living hope. A wish is something you wish for that may or may not happen. A living hope is something we know with certainty will happen.

You hear a lot of talk about a “living will.” It is a will you have while you are alive. We have a living hope and that hope is operative when we are alive and it is realized when we are dead.

Because of the mercy of God our hope is living, not dead. A living hope has life to it. Most dreams and aspirations are deadened over time and certainly all worldly dreams and aspirations end at death, but not our hope. We have a living hope that never ends. You can berate us, banish us, bash us, burn us or bury us but we still have our hope. Death is not the end of us, it is gain for us. People can rob you of many things, but not your hope. Our hope is alive.

**Born Again Reality #3** - Our salvation is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. **1:3c**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ opens the door to life. Without that, we have no hope. Our hope is living because our Savior is living. It is through His resurrection that we have life, no matter what happens on this earth. Every false system of religion offers no hope at death. In fact, I heard a Mormon say this at a funeral - “I don’t know what I could say that would give any hope here.” There is no hope in a dead Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Mary Baker Eddy, L. Ron Hubbard. They are all dead, but not Jesus Christ. He alone is the Living resurrected Savior and we have a relationship with Him.

In my office, I have some pictures of men of God who died many years ago. Frankly, I can't wait to meet them and see them. I have a hope and an expectation that one day I will be with them. My hope is not based on what happened to them, they all died. My hope is based on Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead.

**Born Again Reality #4** - Our salvation is unto an eternal inheritance . **1:4-5**

If you have believed on Jesus Christ, you are guaranteed an eternal inheritance and this inheritance has five amazing features to it:

**(Feature #1)** - It is an inheritance that is imperishable . **1:4a**

What this means is that absolutely nothing can destroy it. No one can destroy it.

**(Feature #2)** - It is an inheritance that is undefiled . **1:4b**

Nothing can stain it or corrupt it.

**(Feature #3)** - It is an inheritance that will not fade away. **1:4c**

This is an inheritance that is permanent, lasting and eternal. There is nothing temporal about your heavenly inheritance. Whatever you are going through right now, it is temporal, but not your inheritance.

**(Feature #4)** - It is an inheritance that is reserved for us in heaven. **1:4d**

Your inheritance is absolutely reserved for you. It is guaranteed. There is no better safety box than the one you have in heaven which guarantees you an inheritance.

When you hunt in grizzly country out West, you are required to have bear-proof panniers in which to store your food. I knew this and had called a place in Jackson Hole, Wyoming and reserved two. I made my reservation and was told they would be waiting for me when I got there. When I got there, they were not there. Even though I had made reservations, someone else got them. You never have to worry about that happening to you in heaven. No one else will get your inheritance. It is waiting with your name on it. It is guaranteed by God.

**(Feature #5)** - It is an inheritance that guarantees you are protected by the power of God. **1:5**

Here, friend, is the best security system one can ever have - God protecting you. Many people think they have to keep themselves saved. **We are kept by the power of God.** I get sick and tired of people who say you must work to keep your salvation. I put no confidence in my flesh and I don't put any in your flesh either. Our salvation is not kept by us, it is kept by God. We all have an old, lousy sin nature and that sin nature cannot guarantee us one positive thing when it comes to God.

Peter knew what it was like to fail, to sin and to fall. But he believed he was kept and protected by the power of God. This truth can make us praise God in the middle of tough times. This is staggering theology.

No matter what is happening to you right now - remember you are on your way home.

**REASON #2** – Because our born again status from God enables us to rejoice and honor Jesus  
– Christ before we actually see Jesus Christ. **1:6-8**

Dr. Charles R. Swindoll made a good observation from **verse 6** when he said we see that trials are necessary (**v. 6a**), they are distressing (**v. 6b**) and they are varied (**v. 6c**) (*Hope Again*, p. 18). We also see that in the midst of them we are to rejoice.

This is the first of three references in Peter's Epistle to the subject of "rejoicing" (**1:6, 8; 4:13**). The verb "rejoice" is the most intensive form of joy, which speaks of jubilant exultation. The word (*αγαλλιαω*) actually means to rejoice at a great overjoyed level (William D. Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*, p. 573).

This concept of "rejoicing" is not some habitual or shallow feeling of hilarity, nor is it a denial of the reality of pain and suffering. This is a real, true, deep level joy one has knowing he is right with God and knowing God is actually orchestrating all things related to us.

The pronoun "this" (**v. 6**) grammatically connects to the noun "time." So this type of joy is based on the eschatological time reality that all bad things will end when we see Jesus Christ. For the believer, instead of letting troubles rob us of joy, we can continue to rejoice, because we are focused on the future time. When we are going through trials, we are able to rejoice because we can know we are actually involved in something meaningful and eternal. **God proves a God-honoring, Christ-exalting faith by trials**. The words "proof of faith" (*δοκιμαζω*) in **verse 7**, means God uses trials to prove that our faith is a genuine and successful faith (Smith, p. 120). God proves we have an award winning faith through trials. When a believer continues to praise and worship and exalt God at church when hurting, he is demonstrating a successful faith that will be eternally rewarded and honored. Spurgeon used to say "a little faith will take your soul to heaven, but a great faith will bring heaven to your soul."

In fact, Peter is clear to point out in **verse 7** that the believer who maintains his faithfulness through the trials, will one day be praised and honored when Christ comes. Trials should not cause us to doubt God or question God, but trust God, knowing that He is using these things to develop our faith. God uses trials to develop us. **The typical response in a trial is resentment, not rejoicing**. But if we can realize that our troubles prove our faith is genuine, which will bring us praise and honor in heaven, we can find joy in problems.

**Verse 8** makes it clear that Peter is writing to Christians just like us, who love Christ, but haven't physically seen Christ. Christians who believe in Christ, but at the present time don't actually see Him. What a joyous moment that will be when we get to see Jesus Christ and that moment will be especially joyful for one who has maintained faithfulness.

The song is right - "O that will be glory for me, when by His grace I shall look on His face, that will be glory, be glory for me."

**REASON #3** – Because our born again status from God, which we have experienced, is  
– something all prophets wanted. **1:9-12**

We don't even begin to grasp the amazing blessing involved in the salvation we have. We are the only dispensation to have this. When you look down through these verses, there are a series of observations we may make:

**(Observation #1)** - Our salvation is a grace salvation not works, seen by prophets. **1:10**

Each prophet had an intense, personal desire to understand the grace of God we have experienced.

**(Observation #2)** - Our salvation was time connected to the sufferings of Jesus Christ. **1:11**

The prophets all suffered. The prophets all knew what it was like to hurt and face hardship. What they could not completely understand is how this all connected to Jesus Christ. They knew they were writing about His suffering, but they couldn't connect the dots to suffering prior to glory. Now Peter says, we now know how this all works. Christ suffered first at His first coming and then went to glory where He will never suffer again. That is the way it works for us. We suffer first, just like He did and then we go to glory and we will never suffer again.

**(Observation #3)** - Our salvation was for our time not their time. **1:12**

Peter wants us to realize that prophets and angels desired to understand the grace salvation that we have experienced. We have God living in us. God has revealed to us truths about His grace that even prophets and angels did not know. The prophets had to suffer, but we get to suffer with a great understanding of why and of future glory.

This is, as D. Edmund Hiebert said, a "majestic doxology" (*First Peter*, p. 71). No matter what you are experiencing right now, by your worship and exaltation of God, you demonstrate God's grace in an award winning way and by this you experience great joy and hope.

If you are hurting, you come worship God every time the Church is open and not only will you rejoice but you will end up being a tremendous reflection of God's Grace and you'll be honored in heaven.