

Born Again

1 Peter 1:3

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

As I read these first words of verse 3 that tell us

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! (1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV)

The words of Psalm 103 come immediately to my mind, words that instruct and urge my heart and soul on to “bless” the God of my salvation with everything that is within me. Listen!

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, 3 who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, 4 who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, 5 who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. (Psalm 103:1-5 (ESV)

This Psalm 103 is a psalm that calls us to “remembrance” and to “praise”, reminding each of our “souls” of Who God really is and what our response is to be to Him and to the great love that He has shown to us. That although He is the Great and Almighty God, the creator and sustainer of all things great and small, He is also close and intimate and personal in His love and care and in His provision to us, to you, to me, personally.

Folks, it is so very, very important that we always remember all of God’s blessed benefits to us, and to not become so comfortable in our salvation and in our daily provision that we forget from whence our salvation, our peace, our joy, our provision and our deliverance has come; because, unfortunately, too often, forgetfulness is the way of our careless hearts.

So then, as we begin our worship study this morning, may we do exactly as these scriptures call us to do! May we “bless the Lord” and call to remembrance His great benefits to us. Verse 3 again,

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

Note as we begin this worship study that when God wants us to remember and to deal with a particular point of understanding of His word, He repeats Himself. And He does that here as He again reminds of how we got into our blessed condition of salvation.

And simply put, it is because He reached His own hand into our souls and “caused” us to be saved, to be “born again” from above. These words here, “caused us to be born again” are repeating the understanding that we got last week as we studied the words of verse 2 which tells us that He “elects” or “chooses” those whom He saves.

Verses 1 and 2 again,

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (1 Peter 1:1-2 (ESV))

And now here in verse 3

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again. (1 Peter 1:3 (ESV))

These words tell us clearly, and then they repeat to us, just how the Jews then, and how we now have come into this blessed condition of eternal salvation. It has come about solely by the hand of God.

There, last week, as we studied the words “foreknowledge of God”, we found that most all Christians are in accord in the belief that God does “choose” and “elect” those who come to Him for salvation. The only point of disagreement between the brethren in our various Christian denominations is about how much God influences our turning to Him and about how we then are able to obtain the faith that it takes for us to believe and receive Christ as Savior and Lord.

For me, these words here in verse 3 satisfy that question. Here we read that He, God Himself, has “caused” us to come to Him and to be born again.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again. (1 Peter 1:3 (ESV))

The KJV renders the translation of these words, “God has begotten us”. It is so very important that we understand the meaning of these words. To be “begotten” means that we ourselves had nothing to do with our being “born again”, no more than a baby has a say or choice about whether he or she is born to a woman. You and I were “begotten”

into our condition of being “born again”, “caused” by an outside Person, God Himself, to be “born again”. And praise be to God that is so.

And note these words carefully as to why this needed to take place in the way it has. God did it this way because He knew we needed “mercy”. Verse 3,

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again. (1 Peter 1:3 (ESV))

When is it that a person needs mercy? A person needs “mercy” when they are “condemned”, in this case, to eternal death, and they cannot help or save themselves. And the only way that person can be helped or saved is if someone outside of themselves is able to reach in and save them.

And here, we see that God must be that “outside help”, that in His great “foreknowledge” and “enduring love”, He, God the Father knew that we, by our own efforts, could not save ourselves from the condemnation that would surely be ours in our “dead” condition. And because of His great mercy and love, He took the initiative and “caused” us to be saved, to be “born again”.

May I give this one more degree of emphasis and put it in the simplest of terms? Before I was saved, I was completely “dead in my sins”. And being in that condition, my mind, my heart, my soul, were so dead that I couldn’t fathom my wretched condition. But thanks be to God, in His great mercy and grace, He called to me. And when He called, He also opened the eyes and the ears of my heart to hear His call. And thankfully, He didn’t stop there. He also “caused” me to have faith and to respond with my free will, and to receive Him as Savior and Lord.

You say, but those two things, God “causing” me to hear and believe, and then my freewill responding to Him sounds like conflicting statements. And yes, they do sound as if they conflict, a paradox that our small minds can never reconcile. But again, thanks be to God, He can and does make both of those concepts reconcile perfectly, with the result being that I am now saved. Praise be to God, He called and I answered. Listen to these words in Romans 8 that tell us how God makes this all take place! Verse 29,

29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

(Romans 8:29-30 (ESV))

This is every step of salvation, and it is “all of God”! He is ever and always the “cause”, the “first cause” of all that takes place in the hearts and minds of men! He is not a “responder” to the things we do. He is not the “second cause” within the activities and behaviors of men, when as we stumble and “make a mess” of our lives, He is gracious to step in and with the “Romans 8:28” provision, “work everything out for our good”. Yes, He does do that, “He works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose”. But listen! God is never “second in line”, a “second cause”. He is always the “first cause” of all that takes place. He knows and understands our condition of soul. He knows full well that we were born into this world already dead in our sins and trespasses. And He knows that unless He steps in and initiates all the steps that it takes to save our wretched souls, we will continue in our “dead” condition on into eternal damnation in hell.

As for me, I cannot accept that God has to wait around to see if we are going to do right or wrong before He can know if He is going to “choose” to save us. He did not wait with Jacob and Esau. In Romans 9 we read,

11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— 12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” 13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” (Romans 9:11-13 (ESV))

Folks, God already knows everything from first to last. And He surely knows the way of men’s hearts. So, may we please stop trying to reduce God down to someone that we can understand and anticipate. He is God, and all the matters that take place, from first to last, our misbehavior and then His help and His redemption, they are all under His guidance and part of His “first cause”. He graciously allows our hearts to go the errant ways we choose. And He allows the consequences that result from our behavior to do their painful work in us. And then, by and through it all, as we repent and turn back to Him, He mercifully works all that has taken place together for our good.

Again yes, all of these things are so very difficult to comprehend, but they are all still nonetheless, absolutely true.

Look back at these words with me and note here how God’s Amazing Grace just flows and flows through each and every word and expression in these verses, from one “grace” to another, “grace upon grace” . . . these words,

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

May I take just a few more moments and address these words “born again”, because it is ever so important that we understand their meaning? We have heard those words so often and used them in conversation so often that they sometimes lose the impact of all that has taken place within them! May I remind us that to be “born again” means a complete transformation of who we are, heart, mind, body and soul, but especially our soul. In 2 Corinthians 5 we read,

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV))

These words are simple, but they are so very meaningful. The very moment that we believe in Christ and receive Him as our Savior and Lord, we are immediately transformed into a whole new and different person, the old has “passed away”, and “behold everything within us becomes new”.

I was speaking at length about this to a “new”, “old” believer this past week. She is a lady in her mid-80s who has heard the words of God all of her life, and thought that she believed them. And perhaps to some extent did believe them. But she had never received His truth into her soul for salvation. And so she has been languishing for all these many years, somewhere between life and death.

Recently, she took the step of praying to receive Christ as Her Savior. And now there is an obvious change that is taking place within her soul. And it is as these words tell us,

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV))

This transformation is always in two forms, a once and forever salvation, but then also a beginning of an “ongoing” transformation through sanctification, that lifelong changing that only the daily presence of the Holy Spirit can bring.

As I spoke with this dear lady at length, I could see how all of those steps were taking place. And praise be to God for it. She now has what God calls here, a “living hope”.

What does “living hope” look like in a believer’s heart? It begins with the full and confident understanding that we are saved. I spoke with this dear lady about the words of 1 John 5. I asked her if she was absolutely sure that she was now saved. She said that she “hoped” so. I encouraged her that she could actually know “for sure”. And I shared these words from 1 John 5.

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13 (ESV))

Folks, God wants you and me to “know for sure” and to be convinced that we are saved, so that the “hope” that wells up within us can then become a real confidence, never wavering. Listen to these words from that same passage in 1 John 5, beginning in verse 11,

11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:11-12 (NKJV))

Again, these words are as simple as they sound. Salvation and eternal life can come through no other source or means but through Jesus Christ, His death on the cross and His resurrection. And when a person receives Christ into their soul, they receive the precious eternal life that He gives to them. That dear lady had received Christ and she now has life.

And the same is true for you and me. From that first moment that we received Christ into our souls, we also stepped into eternal life. We have “life” in us because we have Christ in us.

But may I ask . . . are you personally fully confident in your own soul that this is true for you, that you are saved, that if you died before the end of this day, you would immediately be with Christ in heaven? If you still have any doubt at all, don't let this moment go by. Surrender to all that God is telling you in these words.

11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:11-12 (NKJV))

Praise be to God!