

"Praising God"

Like Peter, there are times when we need to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today, we're exploring reasons to praise God.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We look to God's word for the answers to our chaotic and ever-changing world. He alone can make a difference in our lives and the lives of those that we love. When I think of my twelve grandchildren, I worry about the future. I want them to know the Lord and to know the truth about God's love for them. I want them to praise God and bless Him with their lives.

Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Recently my friend and fellow preacher Gary Hampton, who lives in Jackson, Mississippi, shared some ideas from 1 Peter about reasons to praise God that got me to thinking about lifting up my voice to bless and praise God. This is not a new thing for those who love God. Revelation 4 speaks of the twenty-four elders who fall down before Him who sits on the throne in heaven and they worship Him. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created" (Revelation 4 and verse 11).

We owe everything to God. He created us, He sustains us, and He saves us from sin. James 1 and verse 17 says that "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." Our God and Father is worthy of glory, honor, and power. We must never take Him for granted or fail to recognize all that He has done for us. Do you praise God regularly or have you forgotten about Him? Many have stopped worshiping or even praying. What about you?

Now we offer this study free on reasons to praise God. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from 1 Peter 1:3 to 5, and we'll explore why we should praise God.

Our reading today comes from the first letter of Peter, chapter 1, verses 3 to 5. And here he talks about how God has blessed us, and he's praising God. "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, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Oh, what a great salvation it will be. Let's pray. Father we're thankful, that You have prepared for us in this life and in the life to come. And we look forward to our inheritance with You, to live with You forever and ever, and may Your will be done. In Jesus name, Amen.

Praising God is all about recognizing God's sacred role in our lives. When we approach God to worship, we are entering holy ground. Hebrews 12:28 to 29 says, "Let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire." God is holy, and our worship and service must show that we take God seriously. Peter blessed God for all

that God has done for us. Let's also bless or praise God with reverence and awe. Peter makes three reasons known:

First, we are born again of his mercy. 1 Peter 1:3 says, "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." Now being born again as a new person in Christ and free from sin is a reason for anyone to give thanks. God gives us an opportunity for a new start and leaving the past behind. Everyone needs to come to Christ, even the strong leaders of the Jewish faith back in the days of Jesus needed it.

John 3 verses 1 to 5 tells the story of Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who saw that Jesus came from God, and because of His signs or miracles, Jesus was to him someone from God. Jesus answered and said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Well Nicodemus said to Him, 'Well how can a man be born when he's old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?' Well Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, that unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'" Now Jesus told Nicodemus in verse 7, "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

Some think our new birth is some miraculous change, accomplished by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. They suggest we are so spiritually depraved that we cannot make any choice on our own to believe or to follow Jesus; but this ignores how God causes this change in our lives. You remember, Romans 10 and verse 17 reminds us, "That faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"; Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Now our new birth comes when we hear the words of the gospel and believe it. It is the gospel, not some direct operation of the Holy Spirit, which leads us to faith and to salvation.

1 Peter 1:22 to 23 explains, "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, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." Peter notes that this is the word of God that was "preached to you" (in verse 25).

Romans 6 verses 16 to 18 also reveals a change that takes place when people obey the message of God. These verses say: "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, that you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became the slaves of righteousness."

Clearly, the change took place when they obeyed a form or pattern of teaching. Now this pattern meant that they accurately obeyed that teaching of the gospel. And these servants of sin were not so depraved they couldn't understand and obey the teaching. This obedience resulted in God freeing them from sin and making them servants of righteousness. What did they do?

Well, that change in them was explained earlier in this same chapter. Romans 6 verses 3 to 7 says, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? And therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our

body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.”

Now when we're baptized into Christ's death, God causes us to be crucified with Him, to be buried with Him, and raised up with Him so that we can walk in newness of life. And just as God raised up Jesus to have a new life, God gives us that new birth, that new life free from sin. And we must die to an old life of sin before we can be born again. We die to sin when we repent and are crucified with Christ in baptism.

Titus 3:4 to 7 reminds us that our salvation is God's work on us. Paul wrote, “But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, [and He does it] by the washing of regeneration and the renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Now out of love, God saves us. He does it through the washing that regenerates us, or baptism. And God causes us to be born again when we listen to His word and we obey it. And we should praise God for this new life!

Second, our new birth in Christ leads us to have a living hope! (1 Peter 1 and verse 3). Our hope is not in our works of righteousness but in God's mercy and grace. Because the Father raised Jesus from the dead, we can have a living hope that one day we too will rise from the grave. In Christ we have eternal life! John 20:30 to 31 says, “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” The recorded words found in Scripture lead us to believe in Jesus, and our faith leads us to life in His name. Now this life is abundant and this life is eternal. John later wrote, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5 and verse 13).

Now the living hope of eternal life is assured to be real, because God raised Jesus up from the dead. Jesus “was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1 and verse 4). And His resurrection matters. 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 14 says, “Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.” Our hope lies in God's power to raise us up, just as He did Jesus. And we should praise God for this living hope!

This matters greatly. 1 Corinthians 15:16 to 17 says, “For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is worthless; you're still in your sins.” He notes in verse 19, “If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.” Because God did raise up the Lord Jesus, we have a living hope in the power of God to raise us up. And this living hope reminds us that Jesus is coming again. Paul spoke of this on Mars Hill in Acts 17:30 to 31, he said “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

Well if we're not born again, if we've not repented, we'll face condemnation; but if we have repented and were baptized, that is born again, we have a newness of life that leads to eternal life and an eternal inheritance when we are resurrected. The Lord Jesus promised in John 5:28 to 29, “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, and those who committed the evil

deeds to a resurrection of judgment." Yes, we will face life or judgment depending on our faith and our deeds.

Third, since Christians have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, we can "obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1 verses 3 to 4). We'll inherit a home in heaven, because of the grace of God. God's grace and kindness does not end in this life; it will last forever and ever. I love Ephesians 2:4 to 7: which says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ [and then he says] (by grace you've been saved), and He raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus."

God's kindness in the heavenly places will exceed even the grace in kindness which we know here and now. Our inheritance in heaven is imperishable; nothing can ever destroy it. Our inheritance in heaven is undefiled; nothing can ruin it physically or morally. Neither moth nor rust can destroy your treasures in heaven. There will be no sin, no crime, and no war in heaven. Our inheritance will never fade away. The blessings of God will never bore us or grow dull and wearisome. God's glory and beauty will last forever and ever. More than that, God has reserved that inheritance for you personally; it has your name on it. If you are God's child, you will inherit God's blessing and care. God will also protect you, getting you ready for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time. The Lord Jesus right now is interceding, mediating, and advocating with the Father for every Christian, so that we may continue to stand right with God.

Well why does this matter? When you take notice of all the things that God has done, all that He is doing and all that He will do for us in Christ, you can then appreciate the surpassing riches of the kindness and grace of God. His grace humbles us, and makes us want to praise and serve Him, with all of our hearts. It makes us want to leave that old life of sin and to be born again. God's kindness leads us to repent of our sins (Romans 2 and verse 4). God's kindness makes us want to be better people and to lead others to grow close to God. When you know the love of God, you want everyone that you love to know God's love too! We serve and praise the God of love, and we're thankful. I hope you're praising and blessing God in your life.

Let's pray. Father, help us each day to count our blessings and to be thankful and to praise You for all the good and are doing in our lives. Father, we're thankful for the hope and the promise of our inheritance. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

If God the Father and the Lord Jesus are blessed and worthy to receive glory and honor and power, then how are you reacting to Him? Do you praise and thank Him? Do you worship Him regularly? Has the kindness of God made any difference in your attitudes or your behavior? Are you willing to be born again, so that you might become a child of God, free from sin? Are you ready for the salvation God is making ready to be revealed at the last time?

Now every day brings you one day closer to the second coming of the Lord. The Lord will raise you up from the grave. And you will either have a resurrection to eternal life or a resurrection of judgment, and whether you stand in the grace of God or not will determine your eternal destiny. Are you ready to meet Him? When He comes, will you have great joy in your heart or will you be afraid? Do you dread the Day of Judgment? God has prepared for you; are you prepared?

Now to be right with God, the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3 and verse 7 that "You must be born again!" Now must means "must." You too "must" be born of water and the Spirit, and that

means demonstrating your faith and love by repenting of your sins and being baptized into Christ Jesus, that is immersed in water, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Now after you're born again you must take up your cross daily and follow Jesus from now on. It means praising the Lord and walking in righteousness, attending worship, and serving others. It means treating others kindly and helping other people. It means being devoted to the Lord!

Well we hope that today's study about praising God has stirred you to draw close to the Lord Jesus. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. Now you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you try to get a hold of us, don't worry, we're not begging for money. We're here to try to help you to get to heaven, that's our goal and our aim.

We ask that you focus your heart on God today by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ in your area. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.