

“The Teaching is the Power of God”

1 Peter 1:3-9

October 28, 2020

SERMON 1946

by Michael David Henson

Our sermon text is from 1 Peter 1:5, “...who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today’s Epistle of 161 words begins at verse 3 and ends at verse 9. It consists of three sentences. The first sentence goes from verse 3 through verse five and consists of 71 words. Since that sentence begins with, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...,” it is considered a doxology. Although St. Paul will throw one in at the end or the middle of a letter, it is quite unusual to find one at the beginning of a letter, as St. Peter had done.

Let’s break it down.

The reason that our God is to be blessed is **that He “has begotten us again.”**

Begotten is a verb which means that we have been born. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. Our God used His Word to give us a spiritual birth.

Don’t let the word “again” fool you. In the Nicene Creed, we confess that Jesus Christ was, “raised again from the dead.” Again doesn’t mean that it was the second time that He was raised. Again means that Jesus was restored to His former position of life. Jesus was alive, then died, and now He is raised again to a position of being alive.

Due to man’s fall into sin, our former position in which we had the image of God and were pure and undefiled has been lost. Through the means of grace we have restored to that former position. He “has begotten us again.”

This new birth which we have received **includes a couple of “to” clauses.** This new birth puts us in possession of two things. The way in which St. Peter words it is that we are begotten again to something. Similarly we say that someone is born into the Henson family. Or we may see that someone is born into great wealth. St. Peter says that our new birth gives us two things.

We are begotten again **“to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” and “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you...”**

These gifts come along with a new birth. Those who are begotten by God **receive a living hope.** This hope is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Luther puts it this way, “...just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.” Our living hope is based upon our Savior’s defeat of death. Death could not hold him, and through faith in Christ it will not hold us either. We know that we shall not die, but live and proclaim what the Lord has done. Luther’s famous phrase, “This is most certainly true” is the confidence of those who have hope. Those who believe in Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead, are also those who have a living hope that they too will rise again. That hope will not be disappointed.

The second “to” phrase speaks of an inheritance. When someone is born into a family, they receive the rights of being a child of the One who begot them. An inheritance is not something which you earn over time. It is a gift that come with the begetting. When we say that our God has begotten us, by definition it means that we have become God’s children. And as God’s children, there are the rights of inheritance. St. Peter says that God has begotten you again, **“to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you...”**

An earthly inheritance can be lost or spent or taxed into oblivion. But the inheritance which God is going to give you because you are His child is secure. It cannot be corrupted by your action. It cannot be defiled by your sinfulness. It will not fade away or someone how be reduced over time. As if in a lockbox at the bank, our God has secured this inheritance in heaven. Everything in this world is tainted by sin. If it can be messed up, it will be.

But that is not the way with our inheritance. The Heavenly Father loved us so much that He had a plan to redeem us even before the world began. Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, atoned for our sins and His sacrifice was accepted. The Holy Sprit works through the Word and Sacraments that we might be begotten and made His children. The great and comforting thing is that none of those things depend upon us. The Triune God is the God of our salvation. He has accomplished it and He is keeping it in heaven.

Consider the third petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” Our Father who art in heaven is where God’s will is done. And that is where our secure inheritance awaits us. Through our death we will receive a resurrection. We will be raised incorruptible and undefiled so that we may surely receive that inheritance.

And finally, with the last phrase, St. Peter speaks of us, **“who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”** Until that time when the Lord returns or we are called home through death, our God is keeping us. Our Lord is working so that His will is done on earth, as it is in heaven. How does that happen? By the power of God through faith. The great power of God is not some raw force or mysterious spiritual influence. The power of God is the preaching of the Word of God and the administration of the sacraments. That is God’s power which creates faith. And faith is the way that God preserves us so that we will receive the heavenly inheritance.

The proper preface for today says, “Because thou didst mightily govern and protect thy holy church, which the blessed Apostles and Evangelists instructed in Thy divine and saving truth...” **God governs and protects His church through the divine and saving truth of the apostles and evangelists.** The inheritance is in heaven, but we are not. Therefore God uses his Word to keep us safe. His power to keep us safe is seen in the faith creating Word of God.

The collect for today asks, “...grant us to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable unto Thee.” Through God’s power we are taught the truth and united in the true doctrine! The one holy Christin church is not a cacophony of different beliefs, but is united in one holy divine and saving truth. Through the consistent and same message preached by all of the Apostles and Evangelists, we are kept safe until the last time. Sts. Simon and Jude preached and taught the same doctrine.

And thus St. Peter in His joy, can't but begin with a doxology of "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." Before St. Peter can even get to His teaching, he shows us the reason for our praise and rejoicing. He blesses God for our begetting and our inheritance. He thanks God for keeping us safe by His power. And He blesses God our living hope of a resurrection with Christ.

All of these gifts and blessings are the reason for which we can endure trials as St. Peter says in verses 6-8. But that will need to wait for another sermon. Today's Epistle ends with "**Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.**" Our faith in Christ will end in an eternal inheritance, which is kept secure in heaven. Though we do not see it, nor do we see Christ, who has gone before us, we believe. And it is through faith that God keeps us safe. Until then, let us sing a doxology with St. Peter. Let us proclaim our living hope in the resurrection from the dead. let us rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. Faith responds, "This is most certainly true."

1 Peter 1:3-9 (NKJV)

3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy **has begotten us again**

to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.