

Resolution for New Life: Persist In Praise

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Date: 30 December 2018

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[0:00] 2018 is winding down, as I'm guessing everybody knows, and a new year is rapidly approaching.

It's a good time to take a step back and sort of take stock of the last year and reflect on 2018 a little bit. Many of us in this room would look back and point to significant life events, whether it's difficult health things, whether it's job transitions, whether it's new life added to our family, going off to college, etc., and so forth.

Others would look back and say, we're still kind of waiting to see how this decision is going to pan out. We had to make some kind of decision here, but we're still kind of unsettled about the results that we see.

It's also not just a time to look back and reflect, but a time to look forward, right? That's why we have these New Year's resolutions that some of us will be making.

We wonder with anticipation, what is 2019 going to bring? There will be upcoming milestones, just like there are past milestones. Graduations, retirements, sending our children off to college, and so on.

[1:22] One of my favorite things to do in this season of the year is not just to reflect on kind of what has happened in my life, but to reflect on what God has done and to look forward in anticipation of what He is going to do in the future.

Commend this practice to you, church. It's so sweet. And if we're honest, we'd look back on 2018 and we'd be able to point, all of us in this room could testify to the ways that God has been faithful. Maybe He's given you strength to complete a major work project that you've been working on for a long time, and by His grace, you endured, and you persevered, and you did something that you could be proud of.

Maybe He's provided a new friend for you just at the right moment when you felt desperate for fellowship. Maybe you've just sensed His ongoing presence and comfort to you in the midst of hard things.

But even that, you'd say He's faithful. He hasn't gone anywhere. He's here. And we've all sensed His loving correction, right, that has grown us into greater and greater degrees of godliness and faithfulness to Jesus.

[2:44] We should be expecting more of the same in 2019. Our lives are just chock full of the reality of the grace of God. And it's because of this child born to us, isn't it?

The Christ who was born in a manger in the city of Bethlehem, who lived this perfect life in obedience to God the Father, who shed His blood for us on the cross and then was raised victoriously from the dead.

The past work of Jesus is why we can point to the faithfulness of God day in and day out. But not just that, right? Now the risen and radiant and reigning King Jesus is coming back one day for all of His people to redeem creation, to eradicate sin, to wipe every tear from the eyes of His long-enduring people.

These realities, the Jesus Emmanuel, God with us, and His return at some point in the future, they bookend our very lives here in Kenosha, Wisconsin on December 30th, 2018.

And they do it every single day of our lives. So we must say that He is worthy of praise. He is worthy of all of our praise day after day after day.

[4:15] His provisions, His mercy, His love, His protection and correction. We serve and know a God who is deserving of all of our thanks

and praise.

And this is what our text in 1 Peter is really all about today. The praiseworthiness of God. If you haven't, I invite you to turn to 1 Peter chapter 1.

God's call from this text this morning is pretty straightforward.

Lord, in light of the praiseworthiness of our God, church, we are to persist in praising the God of our salvation.

To persist day in and day out in the good times and in the bad, in the highs and lows, in the big transitions, in the monotonous daily routines. We are to have a heart of praise.

[5:21] We're to be postured to persist in praising Him in all things. Persist in praising the God of your salvation, church.

If you've got one resolution to make in 2019, make it this. Persist in praise. Well, the context of our passage this morning, we can kind of walk through it from verses 1 and 2.

We see that it's Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, who is writing to this group of people. Now, this is the Peter who's walked with Jesus as one of His 12 disciples. He saw Him transfigured and shiny bright on the mountain.

He saw the empty tomb and he saw the nail-pierced hands of His risen King. And he writes, with all of the authority bestowed from Jesus on an apostle.

It's the very Word of God. And we see the readers then in verse 1 as well that these folks who Peter identifies as elect exiles.

[6:35] And they're in Asia Minor, not unlike the churches that John has been writing to in the book of Revelation that we've been in. Very similar kind of location in the world.

And in calling them elect exiles, Peter essentially says, chosen nomads. They're handpicked for the kingdom of God and then they're handed a suitcase saying, you're just going to be kind of not home yet.

And yet possessed by God. Bound for an eternity in a homeland. The new Jerusalem. In verse 2, we see these amazing theological claims surrounding this status as elect exiles that we can't really get into a ton, but essentially, here's what Peter's saying in verse 2 to these folks.

Their status, their identity, is foreknown by the plan of God, the Father. And it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that they have both been handpicked out of their current situation into this new reality and will be sustained in it until the end.

That's the sanctification of the Spirit. We see the aim, the goal of it is for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood. This is covenant language.

[7:56] The obedience of the people of God that is sort of pointed to and officially kind of sanctioned by the sprinkling of sacrifice. Peter's pointing back to Exodus chapter 24.

So here's who's writing and who he's writing to. Folks not too much unlike us today. This sermon, the way we're going to walk through this passage now is a sermon brought to you by the letter R. Billy has inspired me to try and get some repeated letters. So we're going to give it a shot. So if you look in verse 3, we're going to see the first R.

It's the recipient of our praise. Peter starts out after kind of addressing formally his audience.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our praise is aimed. It doesn't meander. It's focused on the one who Peter identifies as worthy of all praise. He's the one who created the universe, sustains it powerfully right now and forever.

[9:18] He exercises sovereign control over all things. The king's heart is like water in the hand of the Lord and he makes armies do his bidding around the world.

He is present everywhere at all times. He never gets tired. He never takes naps. He never changes. He's all powerful, all knowing, all wise.

He is holy, holy, holy and righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. This God is perfect and his greatness is unsearchable.

It's no wonder that this word blessed every time it shows up in our New Testament is reserved for this person, this being, God, who is deserving of all of our praise.

He's not just somewhat worthy or sometimes worthy, right? But totally and forever worthy. the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is now and forever the only one worthy of all of our praise.

[10:27] That's who Peter says is to receive the praise of his people. And if we knew nothing else about God other than this kind of descriptive list, we'd have infinite reason to praise him.

But if we keep reading in verse 3, we come to the second R, we see the reason that Peter is going to give us to praise this God. Look at verse 3 and we see this astonishing reason.

He has caused us to be born again. There's a bunch of phrases and terminology surrounding that, but before we kind of get into all of those details, let's just kind of savor this reality.

It's the core of what Peter's saying, why God is worthy of praise. Because he has caused us to be born again. What does Peter mean by this?

Essentially, it means that God creates new life where there previously was none. It's not unique to Peter. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5.17 says it this way, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

[11:49] The old has passed away, behold, the new has come. In Ephesians 2, verse 10, he says that we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Jesus. This is sounding a lot like Genesis 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He said, let there be light and there was light. God saw the light, saw that it was good. Except this is now talking about the spiritual birth of Christians. God says, let there be a Christian and there was a Christian where there formerly was not. God. The Gospel of John gives us the same kind of language.

In John's introductory remarks of chapter 1 in verses 12 and 13, he says, for everyone who receives Jesus and who believes in Him, God has given the right to become children of God.

And then listen to how he says it's born not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. You hear the language born again, born of God, created in Christ, a new creation, a God-produced spiritual birth.

[13:16] When Peter says that God has caused us to be born again, he is speaking of a moment in time, an instantaneous occurrence in which a man a God-generated spiritual heartbeat begins.

If you're a Christian in this room, this is true of you. God has brought new life where there was none.

This is why there's no such thing as a boring testimony. If you realize you realize exactly how amazing salvation is, you won't be bored sharing it with people.

Whether you were saved when you were just a young kid, and you grew up in a Christian home, and you haven't really struggled with any kind of real hard addictions or difficulties, or whether you've got a life of just kind of doing your own thing, and you came to faith late, this is miraculous and amazing.

And it's the core of the reason why Peter says, this God is praiseworthy all the time, forever. He's caused us to be born again. You probably realize that this is fine spiritual China we're holding in our hands.

[14:38] This is a precious gem that we're talking about this morning. God is teaching us about deep realities of our life in Christ. God intends His truth to bring praise.

We're to praise Him. Christian, you are alive because God has made you alive. You don't need to turn there, but over in chapter 2 of Peter in verse 24, Peter brings his reality right to the cross.

He says that it is Jesus Himself who bore our sins in His body on the tree so that we might die to sin, the only life we ever knew, and might live to righteousness.

This life that God puts in us because of Jesus. This gift of life is precious. Jesus, and now Peter begins to kind of hold this gem up and just start kind of rotating it so that the rainbow light would just be glittering in front of our eyes as it dances around the room.

So we're going to take a look at these sort of rays of light that are shining here. Look back at verses 3 and 4. The first one is that it is according to God's great mercy.

[16:13] Does anyone in the room ever ask, why did God save me? Maybe out loud or maybe just in your heart you just kind of wonder, God, what did I ever do to deserve this?

Peter would say, absolutely nothing. Mercy is your answer. You can't manipulate it, you can't manufacture it, it is God's to freely give and instead of deciding to judge us and to punish us for the guilt of our sin, God shows mercy and he decides to save and rescue instead.

It is God's mercy, Peter says, that governs his decision to save sinners. He's praiseworthy. second ray of light off of this gem we see in verse three is that he's caused us to be born again to a living hope, present, here and now, real hope.

It's kind of a funny word, isn't it? When you and I kind of use hope, a lot of times it's, well, I've got a tea time at Muni later to hit some golf balls and I sure hope it doesn't rain.

I've checked the forecast and it's kind of 50-50. We come out of an exam that we'd studied and prepared a long time for and we say, well, I sure hope I did well on that exam. I worked really hard.

[17:43] The Bible here is using it differently for us. The hope that Peter's talking about is not a fingers crossed, wishful thinking, rabbit foot kind of hope.

hope. It's the expectation that God is faithful and he will fulfill all of his promises in Christ Jesus. Everything he's promised will come to pass.

That's the hope that Peter's getting at. It's certain to happen because God has said so. He never lies. And he wants this hope to be contrasted between something that's alive and vibrant and fresh and something that's rotting and dead and decaying.

It's like the king salmon on the end of your fishing line that's peeling off drag as it buries into deep water versus the dead half-eaten bloated one that washes up on the shore of Lake Michigan.

Living hope. Real hope. Certain hope. It's a difference between that stick that lands in your yard that you have to pick up before you mow the lawn and the giant oak tree that gives shade to all of your property.

[18:58] Living. It's oak tree hope that Peter's talking about here. There's reason to praise him.

There's another ray of light. Peter says hope isn't the only thing alive, friends. We are born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Jesus, our Lord, is alive. There's a past resurrection and a past new life, and his resurrection is how God gives new life to us.

It's the resurrection life of Jesus pulsing through your veins. Jesus isn't alive.

None of us are either. Neither do we have a living hope. But God has raised him from the dead. He's alive and so too are all of God's people.

[20:07] There's one more ray we look at in verse 4. Future inheritance. This inheritance word is family talk.

Right? You inherit what is passed down from your mother and father. Though it's not obvious, the God and Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, is calling us his children.

Rightful inheritors of all that is God's. That's everything by the way. This is our place and our possession in the kingdom of God, the new Jerusalem, where nothing wears out, where there is no lack or any need.

This is ours in Christ. Notice the descriptors that Peter gives. It's imperishable and undefiled and unfading.

It means that time will never harm it. That it's never going to be defiled or tarnished by anything impure. And it has unending beauty and value.

[21:20] It's kept in a place that's more secure than a bank vault. It's in heaven. It has our names on it. blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This mercy driven, new life given, dead raised and inheritance keeping, praiseworthy God. And as if that wasn't enough, verse 5 kind of concludes this section of the reason to praise him.

It's not just keeping an inheritance. He's keeping us too. He's keeping all of the people of God for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. See that in verse 5?

Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed. Well the thing to notice in this verse is the way that God's power and our faith kind of work in tandem.

They cooperate with one another. Sometimes we can kind of go through life sort of thinking that it's really our faith that's going to get us to the finish line.

[22:38] And in part that's true. Peter wants us to see here in verse 5 that God's power is the greater reality and our faith is the lesser. If it were dependent merely on us, we might be in trouble with the waves tossing our faith around in life.

But God's power is constant and unchanging and certain. It's an anchor for all of us that will hold. The one who raises the dead is guarding us for salvation.

And the salvation is ready. God has no finishing touches to put on it. He's not constructing it. It's ready and waiting for the moment Jesus returns for his people.

So to recap this reason, God's already caused us to be born again. God has given us a living oak tree hope.

And we have a future inheritance and salvation of epic proportions. This is the reason Peter gives to praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. Now let's look at verses 6 to 9 to see our response.

[23:55] Our response is to rejoice. It's to praise him. It's to delight in him. What I love about what Peter does, he's been talking about really deep, weighty, heavy, abstract, invisible things.

Hard to understand and really kind of imagine what he's getting at. And now Peter knocks on our front doors. And he enters our living rooms and he sits down on our couches and he props his feet up on our coffee table.

And he says, I want you to know that I'm not aloof, I'm not ignorant of any of the real problems in life. The ways that our faith is causing hardship, struggles that we're going through as Christians.

Peter's saying, I understand, I want you to know that I understand and I want you to take heart in the midst of these things. Whether you're battling a temptation that just, you can't shake free of and you're stumbling more than you're succeeding.

Whether you have family tensions because an unbelieving sibling or an unbelieving child is just kind of running amok and maybe they're distancing themselves from you because you want them to know Jesus and they're just resistant to the gospel.

[25:21] Maybe it's a godly grief that you see as you look out from your home and you say, Lord, look at all these people around here and they don't know Jesus. They're perishing in their sins.

Some of us in this room, some of us dear to this church have had unrelenting physical or mental difficulties that are threatening to dismantle our faith altogether. And around the world there's folks suffering persecution for their faith and Peter says, I know it all.

I understand it all. I'm not making light. I'm not minimizing any of this in your lives. We can say what I'm getting at here because in verse 6 he says, though you've been grieved by trials.

These are grievous, real things. Life is hard. Peter understands that. He's not living in a vacuum just saying, rejoice and praise God. I'll see you when you get through this mess.

He's in it. He understands it. And not only that, he says, there's another thing that makes it really, really hard to praise God now. If you look down at verse 8, he says, he recognizes that as an apostle, he was someone who saw Jesus.

[26:44] He walked with him. He saw the miracles. He saw him on the cross. He saw the empty tomb and then he saw him alive. And all of the recipients of this letter, they didn't have that luxury.

He says, though you have not seen him. And then he goes on, though you do not now see him.

That's the reality too, right? People going, Lord, I see hardship.

I see trials. They're right in front of my face. And Peter says, yeah, I know. I know. I know. Rejoicing and praise require faith now.

They require us to walk not by what we see, but by what God has declared in Christ to be true.

That's why four times in verses 5 to 9, Peter uses this word faith.

You can look at them. In verse 5, it's that we're being guarded through faith. Verse 7, that the tested genuineness of your faith. Verse 8, it's a little tricky because the word believe just means you have faith in him.

[27:55] You believe in him. And then verse 9, it's this inexpressible joy is because, verse 9, you're obtaining the outcome of your faith. Peter understands, church, that present circumstances and what we can see with

our two eyes always threaten to steal the praise that's due our God.

When we focus on our circumstances, the trials and sufferings of our lives, we end up focusing on ourselves. Our eyes are off of God and praise is far from our lips.

When we live by what we see, we can easily, right, become so discouraged and discontented and even deceived. Peter says, if you want to honor God and respond to this call to persist in praise, your focus needs to be here on your living hope in a future resurrection that began when God raised you to a new life.

You focus on your living hope, your oak tree hope for a future salvation because God has given you life in Christ. You rejoice by faith. Friends, if you're in the room struggling to rejoice, I just encourage you, check your faith.

It's probably on empty. Ask God by His Holy Spirit to impart faith into your hearts. strengthen your resolve to believe this truth because when you believe it, rejoicing comes.

[29:40] Just three quick things to notice in these verses. Verses 6 and 7, Peter says that legitimate faith is tested faith. Right?

God uses trials to test and refine and strengthen our faith. It's how God operates. This isn't something strange. God forges faith in the fire of affliction like a goldsmith forges and purifies gold in fire.

That's what Peter's getting at. And we see this lived out by our Lord and Savior Jesus, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.

Hebrews 12. This means that grumbling, anxiety, despair, by faith ought to be replaced with praise. If faith is precious to us, church, we can rejoice in trials, in the midst of them, because they strengthen our faith that is precious to us.

[30:49] Second thing to notice, verse 7, is that this tested faith will be celebrated by God in the last day.

God applauds the forged and purified faith of His people. That's the honor and praise and glory language there.

When Jesus comes back, God will say, well done to all of His people who by faith were tested in trials and endured, continuing to praise His name regardless.

And the last thing to notice in these verses is that our focus just matters so much. Peter starts verse 6 with this, in this you rejoice.

maybe better worded, because of this. And he's talking about these invisible spiritual realities. This new birth that God has given to us in Jesus Christ.

[31:56] The inheritance and the salvation that's coming. Peter says, in these things you're rejoicing, though right now, life is difficult. And in verse 9, he says, you're rejoicing with an inexpressible joy because you're obtaining salvation.

Faith has a finish line, friends, when Jesus comes back. Essentially, Peter is saying that rejoicing now requires a faith gaze.

We must gaze by faith to remember who God is, to remember what God has done, to remember what God is doing, and to remember what God will do. We persist in praise by faith today.

One day, we will persist in praise by sight when Jesus returns. Well, if we had time to jump into 10 to 12, the R I would use would be research.

Research that validates the praise that Peter is calling all of the people of God to. The prophets of the Old Testament and the angelic host are just dying to see the salvation of the people of God.

[33:18] Just give me a glimpse of this. Where do I have to go to figure out who they're talking about and what God means? If you don't think they're diligent inquiring and searching validates praise, I'll try and build a case a little bit later, but it's amazing.

They're just astonished by this salvation, and they want to see it. They want to look into it. And this is angels. People are in the, beings who are in the presence of God. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what Peter says. He's praiseworthy, so persist in praising him always. That's the message of our text today. To conclude, I just want to try and answer for us, how?

Okay, I see it in the text, I'm going to persist in praise, but how do I do that? Remember that first and foremost, praise is a matter of the heart.

Peter is not here primarily interested in arms waving and falling on our face, kind of external things. Right? Those are important, but he's addressing our hearts.

[34:40] Praise flows from a heart that is glad in God. God, we praise who we adore. If you're not sure how to grow in your delight for God, I just encourage you to meditate on your salvation.

Here's some scripture verses that you might want to go to. If you've got a pen, you can write them down. This passage in 1 Peter is great. There are many others. Ephesians chapters 1 and 2. Colossians 1 verse 13 and 14, and then get into some of chapter 2 as well. The book of Titus has two glorious descriptions of salvation in chapter 2 verses 11 to 14 and chapter 3 verses 5 to 8. Of course, Revelation 5 where we see the Lamb worshipped because he was slain to ransom people from every tribe, nation, language, and tongue. Reflect on these passages and ask God to fill your heart with praise.

He will. He's jealous for the praise of his name. He'll fill your heart with praise. Second, in answering how, we need to engage in it.

[35:56] Engage in praise. large variety of what this could look like. Let me give you a couple.

Prayers that tell God of his great worth. Singing praises even if you're tone deaf. Being present here in this place week after week after week for worship.

So that you join your voices and your hearts with the body of Christ and praise. Well, how do I engage in praise and hardship and hard things and trials?

You need to see them as God's means of building your faith. God intends to use them for good in your life.

You need to turn your eyes away from your circumstances and away from yourself and put them on to the God of your salvation. You'll find that praising is possible because God is good all the time.

[37:06] Even in the hardest things of life, God is good. Finally, how do we persist in praise? Well, it's really a lifestyle.

It's not like, well, from 11 in the morning until noon I'm going to praise God and then I'm going to go back to baking biscuits. It's not what the Bible would call us to.

It's a lifestyle. It goes beyond a church service on Sunday mornings. It goes beyond being in a life group. It goes beyond the singing of praise music.

It's a life aimed at him. Living for him and for his glory alone. It's a life that prioritizes the kingdom of God above all things.

Essentially, it's committing to a lifestyle that obeys God. We adore and honor God when we keep his word.

[38:07] It's praising him. It's why in verse 2 of 1 Peter 1, it says that this whole deal is for the obedience to Jesus Christ.

Peter starts with worship and the praiseworthiness of God and then the rest of the letter, he goes into all these ways that high and low, good and bad, we praise God by pressing into the world and into life and obedience and faith.

And it's a lifestyle in which we are eager to share Jesus with other people. We praise God by speaking to others about the greatness of God.

That Psalm 145, one generation shall commend your works to another. We commend the works of God over and over to our wives and husbands, to our children, to our friends, to our families. And we share him with those who don't know him. Telling them how they too can come under this glorious, precious, saving reign of God in Christ.

[39:16] That's how, church. We do it together by faith. That's what God wants for us at the end of this year, as we launch into a new year, to persist in praising the God of our salvation.

God, be praised as we do. Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word.

You're praiseworthy. And so we praise you. Thank you that we have a chance to immediately respond by opening our mouths, singing this final song. But I pray more than that.

God, as we leave this church building, we would still be poised to praise you in everything we do.

Holy Spirit, please help us. We need your help. God, as we go about our lives praising you, we pray that Jesus would be glorified and made much of.

It's in and through him we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen.