

## Week 4 - The Greatness of Salvation - 1Peter 1:10-12

### Introduction

Difficult times have a way of distilling things down for us and revealing to us just what we consider to be important

We've certainly seen that with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic as issues like freedom and compliance, self-determination and social responsibility, security, confidence, not to mention our health - things we hardly considered before - have taken on a whole new significance and level of concern

Suffering is therefore valuable in that it causes us to focus on what is really important to us

I think that's partly what the author of Ecclesiastes meant when he wrote that *"it is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting"* [Ecc 7:2]

What is essential is much clearer in the midst of affliction than they are on easy street

Here in the United States where we have a culture that is largely established on biblical principles, we have a much easier time of it than most Christ-followers in other parts of the world do

And while it may not continue to be the case most Christ-followers aren't facing serious persecution for their faith

Like most things in this world, that is both a blessing and a curse

After all, as we saw last week, no one likes to suffer because suffering stinks and so we are glad that what persecution we do face is typically relatively mild to that suffered by our fellow Christ-followers in other places

Still, our relative ease in living the Christian lifestyle has resulted in a general devaluation of our salvation

For many Christ-followers salvation has lost any sense of being an essential part of their daily lives

Don't get me wrong - I doubt you'll find any who would say that salvation is unimportant but still their lives don't show that they really and truly value their salvation

Salvation has become something more agreeable than essential for them because they've lost perspective when it comes to the greatness of salvation and have come to take it for granted

As we have seen previously in our walk through 1Peter, Peter's original audience were in the midst of various trials that were testing their faith and refining it

They may well have been wondering if being a Christ-follower was worth the pain

After all, they wouldn't be the first people, or the last, to put present comfort ahead of future profit

So Peter takes pains in this next section of his letter to get them to move their focus from the seriousness of their suffering to look at their salvation through the eyes of others so that they might see the surpassing greatness of it

With the idea being that salvation is worth the suffering

I think we would do well to likewise allow this passage to cause us to value our salvation appropriately and, maybe, avoid the suffering

I have chosen to break this passage down into three sections according to the three groups mentioned in it:

The prophets, the preachers, and the angels and how their interactions with our salvation reveal its greatness

Let's begin by reading the passage in its entirety [1Peter 1:10-12]

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

Let's see first what our passage says about the prophets and salvation

## **I. The Prophets**

The Old Testament prophets had two jobs that are closely related in that they both are functions of speaking God's words to the people

Typically, we think of a prophet as revealing future events - foretelling what is going to happen

And the prophets certainly did that but they also passed along information from God to others - speaking forth or *forth-telling* God's message as God gave it to them to share

Oftentimes, the two functions blended together in ways that the prophet himself didn't understand

And we only see the foretelling nature of their message by looking back and seeing the events that unfolded after the prophet's time was over

I would put some of the predictive Psalms in that category

Look at Psalm 78 would be one of those where the psalmist Asaph writes in verses 1-3 [Ps 78:1-3]:

*Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!  
I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,  
things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.*

Also Psalm 34 where David writes [Ps 34:19-20]:

*Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.  
He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.*

And reading what is arguably the clearest passage of Messianic prophecy, Isaiah 53; a person could hardly miss the gospel message of Jesus Christ in Isaiah's words

However, it's unclear to what extent Isaiah himself understood the significance of the words God gave him to record about the suffering servant and that he was predicting Jesus of Nazareth who would provide salvation to mankind

The prophecy is only clear to us because we have the historical fulfillment of it to refer to

Bible scholars have identified over 300 individual prophecies that relate to the coming of Jesus but our passage indicates that the prophets often, or usually, didn't understand all that they predicted

It might help if we envision the task of the Old Testament prophets as a couple of dozen men working on a large jigsaw puzzle

However, they aren't working together - in some cases they weren't just separated by miles but by centuries - and no one has access to all the pieces or the picture on the front of the box that tells them what they are working toward

They simply have the pile of pieces God chose to give them to assemble into their little section of the mosaic that, combined with all the other little sections will produce the completed picture

Our text tells us that they didn't understand and, at least in some cases, they knew they didn't understand so they "*searched and inquired carefully*" to discover the ultimate meaning behind the words God had given them

This was no mere pondering or casual wondering on the part of the prophets

The two words Peter uses here indicate an active effort in looking to find something

The prophets diligently labored in trying to understand and the word behind our English "inquired" was typically used to denote searching through something like we would hunt through our house looking for something we had misplaced

We can look to Daniel to get a feel for the type of inquiry that the prophets made in their attempt to understand

In Daniel 9:1-4 we read:

*In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.*

*Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession*

Notice that Daniel was so serious about understanding what Jeremiah had prophesied that he sought that understanding with prayer, fasting, wearing sackcloth and ashes, and confession of sin

And yet we see in **Daniel 12:8** that God still didn't give Daniel the full understanding he sought but in **Daniel 12:9** that the angel who was speaking to him told him that those things were going to be concealed until the end times

While we aren't told what the prophets in our passage searched, it seems likely they searched whatever earlier Scriptures they had along with their own prior prophecies, and I suspect they even searched the times and circumstances in which they lived

And they came to understand their prophecies were not for their own times but for some future time

Actually, our text says that what they discovered by their inquiring and searching was "revealed to them" so the natural question that should occur to us is "revealed to them by whom or by what means?"

And for the answer to that question we need to look back to verse 11 [**1Peter 1:11**]

There we read that it was "*the Spirit of Christ*" who first gave them their prophecies making it safe to deduce that it was likewise the Spirit that revealed their purpose

Another clue we have is that the term Peter uses here is used another 44 times in the New Testament and it never refers to human activity or communication but always refers to revelation that is given by divine activity

So we see that the prophets searched for understanding and the Holy Spirit revealed at least a partial answer by making it known to them that their prophecies concerning the Messiah and his kingdom referred to a later time and some future generation

Of course, that doesn't mean that their prophecies had no relevance for their own time because, as we read in **Hebrews 11:13**, they gave comfort and hope to those who were looking forward in faith

Still, they were primarily given to minister to New Testament believers because they contained the message of God's grace in sending his Son

Speaking of God's Son, another thing we want to notice from this section concerning the prophets that makes our salvation great is that it concerns the sufferings and glories of Christ

The order of those two facets of the prediction of the Holy Spirit is significant and we don't want to miss it  
Christ had to endure the suffering before he received the glory that was his because of the suffering

This is noteworthy for two reasons

First, our salvation is the fulfillment of pre-Christian Judaism and the idea of a suffering servant would have been unthinkable to a first-century Jew - they were looking for a Christ of glory

Second, the order for Christ-followers is the same as it was for Christ - suffering before glory

Neither Jesus nor his people receive the crown of glory without first enduring the crown of thorns

In the first section of his letter, which we looked at in previous weeks, Peter teaches that the goal of the suffering of the saints is the revealing and refining of their faith that they might obtain the salvation of their souls along with their imperishable inheritance that God is securing in heaven for them

Sadly, the suffering of Christ on our behalf is one of those truths we know so well we seem to gloss over its significance. We know that Jesus suffered many things on this earth culminating in his ultimate suffering upon the cross, but we forget to be in awe of it.

Part of what makes our salvation great is that, while it is free to us, it cost God a great deal.

We should be knocked flat with humility when we consider the extent to which God went in securing our salvation.

David asked the right question in **Psalm 8:4** when he cried out to God:

*What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?*

What an awe-inspiring realization it should be to know how much God esteems us and the lengths to which he went to save us so that we might have an unhindered relationship with him.

Finally, we want to consider God's grace in saving us.

Grace has become such a common word in church circles that I fear it has lost much of its force and we have the tendency to read right past it without contemplating its significance.

**And that is truly a shame because God's grace is part of what makes our salvation so great.**

Grace cannot be earned or it is no longer grace - it's a gift based on the goodness of the giver and not the receiver.

And since our salvation is based on God's grace, that means that everyone, no matter how depraved, can be saved.

The only thing that can keep one from being saved is rejecting God's gift but people have to hear the gospel in order to accept it.

The prophets played a crucial role in the timeline of salvation but those who originally received Peter's letter and those who have read it subsequently didn't learn about Christ from the prophets - that took preachers of the gospel.

## **II. The Preachers**

The apostle Paul writes in **Romans 10:14-15** -

*How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"*

And Peter writes in verse 12 that the things the prophets served were subsequently announced to Peter's readers "through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" [**1Peter 1:12a**]

Preachers were the conduits through which God worked in bringing his message to the people and the preachers proclaimed God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit - and the same is true today.

**So that we see another thing that makes our salvation great is that God chose to reveal it to mankind.**

Consider what we would know about how to be saved if God hadn't chose to reveal it.

In **Romans 1:18-20**, Paul reveals that we know a great deal about God from nature - that's God's general revelation of himself to mankind.

And, having learned what can be known about God from nature, we would know enough to be afraid of God.

But we wouldn't know about how to be reconciled to God without his special revelation found in his Word and those who explain it to us.

Consider the Ethiopian eunuch from Acts 8 who needed Philip to explain to him what he was reading from God's Word and how, after Philip explained to him the way of salvation, he accepted Christ and was baptized before heading on his way once more.

God is present in every aspect of our salvation from foreshadowing it in the words he gave to the prophets, to providing his Son to be our sacrifice, to superintending the very words of Scripture, to providing the preachers to carry the good news to those who need to hear it

The apostles were the original messengers of the gospel they received directly from Christ but it has been carried on in a kind of relay race by countless preachers since

And when we hear the term “preachers” we need to dispose of the idea of vocational ministers because they only make up a small fraction of preachers who carry the gospel to those who need to hear it

Every Christ-follower is a minister and it is the responsibility of every follower of Jesus Christ to tell others about him and about how one can be saved

I was saved as a child because of the faithfulness of a next-door neighbor lady named Virginia Lott

Mrs. Lott invited me along with my sister and brother to her home for what might be called a Backyard Bible Club the summer we moved into the house next to hers

It was there that I first heard the gospel message and had the reality of my condition and the opportunity for salvation that could be mine and accepted God’s gracious gift

Some years later, my family wound up attending the same church as Mrs. Lott and it was there that I began to be taught many more things from the Bible

But it was because of the faithful ministry of a lady who cared enough to share that I came to know the Lord

And when you consider the worldwide impact of the gospel as it began with twelve men and has been shared from mouth to mouth most generally in one-on-one conversations you can’t help but see its greatness

But another thing that makes salvation great is the awe it inspires in the angels and the focus they place upon it

### **III. The Angels**

Peter writes in verse 12 that the angels long to look into the things of salvation

The Greek word behind our English “long” denotes an intense desire to know something

This isn’t a case of mild curiosity on the part of the angels; it’s a strong desire or an intense interest on their part to know what salvation is all about

Notice that Peter uses the present tense of the verb which means when Peter wrote his letter the angels were still longing to look into and learn more about salvation

And I suspect the angels still have a holy curiosity to watch and delight in the kingdom of Christ today

God didn’t provide reconciliation for Satan and the angels who fell with him as he did for mankind

That means that whereas God demonstrates his grace toward sinful mankind, sinful angels will only know God’s justice

So that the angels in heaven still stand in awe of something that they will never experience and they want to learn all they can about it so that they can worship God more fully so they bend down to study it intently

I find it interesting to know that angels, who have been standing in God’s presence serving him since creation still have things to learn and that God’s provision of salvation is something that God uses to reveal himself more fully to the angels

We see this in **Ephesians 3:7-10** where Paul writes:

*Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God,*

*who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*

Isn't that cool?

God is using our salvation to make his manifold wisdom known to the angels!

They are learning more about God through what he has done for us through providing us with salvation

And we are told in **Luke 15:10** that the angels rejoice in heaven over the repentance of each and every sinner

The angels certainly understand just how great our salvation is

## **Conclusion**

God loves us and his provision of our great salvation shows it

How great is our salvation?

From Peter's letter we've learned three things that reveal the greatness of our salvation:

The prophets faithfully foretold our salvation without fully understanding it

Preachers continue to labor to ensure that everyone hears the gospel message

And the great desire of the angels is to study what God has done for us

We are truly privileged people in spite of whatever suffering we might presently be enduring

Today, we know what the prophets weren't able to discern and we have experienced what the angels never will

But we still have the job of the preachers before us - we have the responsibility to share the gospel with others because it's only through salvation that people can have hope

Sure, we suffer in this life as we sojourn here and long for our heavenly home - but seeing our salvation for the great thing it is should give us comfort and stamina as we endure and carry out the work God has for us to do

Imagine how thoroughly and determinedly the angels would share the gospel message if only they could even without having experienced it for themselves

Having experienced it, shouldn't our enthusiasm for it be even greater than theirs?

Like a burst of adrenaline, the realization of the greatness of our salvation should spur us to even greater witness to those around us

Next week we will begin a new section of Peter's letter that focuses on how we should live in light of the truths we've seen so far as we look at verses 13-16 and how to live a holy life

Let's pray